

CRIMSON SNOW:

Written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. HOTEL EUROPE - DAY

A heavy snow falls and swirls before the grand columned façade of the Hotel Europe.

SUPER: "Hotel Europe. St. Petersburg. December 1916."

In the distance, beyond the hotel stands the colorful onion shaped domes of the Church of Spilled Blood.

SUPER: "History would be an excellent thing, if only it were true. Tolstoy."

MARIE, Mathilda-Marie Kchessinska-Prima Ballerina Assoluta of His Majesty's Imperial Ballet. World famous dancer, now enters the twilight of her professional career.

MARIE (V.O.)
Power is the ultimate high.
Especially here, in St. Petersburg.
A Venice inspired city of snow and
ice. Russia's Imperial Capital is
where our what-if story begins.

Arrives INSPECTOR RENKO of Majesty's Secret Police. Think of a buff Hercule Poirot, intense and forbidding.

SUPER: "Saturday."

INT. HOTEL EUROPE - PENTHOUSE SUITE - SAME

Blood red carpet leads Inspector Renko down a narrow door lined corridor towards a dark mahogany door.

He struts to the door and stops. Then, he BANGS! on it.

RENKO
Serge!!!

Stirs PRINCE SERGE PLATONOVICH from the other side.

MARIE (V.O.)
Prince Serge Platonovich Konstantin
is a an Officer in Her Majesty's
Chevalier Guards. A member of the
Russian aristocracy's elite.

SERGE (O.S.)
Go away.

INT. PENTHOUSE SUITE - SAME

Serge, a young prince, is a member of the Imperial House of Konstantin, where Russia's most legendary soldiers are born.

SERGE

Go away!!!

His words pour out into the frigid room like steam from a stopping train. Serge watches the cloud as it drifts up.

All the room's windows are wide open. The tall curtains bellow and dance with the invading wind.

SERGE (CONT'D)

Ah!

Then, he buries his cold shaggy head below his pillow.

SERGE (CONT'D)

Why is it so cold!

The door's bolt lock TURNS and POPS.

Renko enters immaculately dressed in a dark suit and long perfect fitting overcoat.

SERGE (CONT'D)

Who's there?

RENKO

It's Renko, Serge.

Renko replaces a small tool in its leather case.

MARIE (V.O)

Inspector Renko—General
Konstantin's second in command of
Special Branch, the Tsar's Secret
Police. Renko does most of Serge's
father's dirty work.

RENKO

I was growing tired of knocking,
Your Excellency.

SERGE

Locks are useless around you.

RENKO

Afraid so. It's freezing in here.

SERGE

I'm half drunk, Renko. What is it?

RENKO
Get up. We need to talk.

SERGE
Later.

RENKO
Now!

Serge buries himself deeper into the covers.

The inspector notices in the dim lit room piles of discarded bottles and some turned-over fine furniture.

RENKO (CONT'D)
Hell of a party.

He grabs a silver bucket filled with melted ice and dumps it's contents over the half sleeping Prince. SPLASH!

Serge SCREAMS.

Renko CHUCKLES as he lights a fresh cigarette. He cups his hands around his gold lighter crested with the Imperial seal.

RENKO (CONT'D)
Your Excellency, up.

Serge motions to Renko for a cigarette.

Renko offers him one.

Renko lights Serge's cigarette. Then, he steps back.

SERGE
(Russian)
Thank you.

RENKO
You... an officer in His Majesty's Chevalier Guards. Who distinguished himself in battle. It's hard to believe.

Renko paces.

SERGE
You judge me to harshly, Renko.

Serge rises from his bed. Bare-chested, he YAWNS as he SCRATCHES his shrub-like unkempt beard. His cigarette dangles from his lips.

Renko notices the countless purple bullet sized welts and scars that cover Serge's upper body and chest.

RENKO

Dear God, son. What have they done to you?

A self-conscious Serge tosses on his robe.

SERGE

Oh, these? My German souvenirs.

RENKO

You look more street beggar than a prince. You sure you're alright?

SERGE

Never better. Drink?

RENKO

You drink too much.

SERGE

I drink... to forget.

Renko goes to the windows that captures a snow covered square. One by one, he CLOSES them.

RENKO

Okay. Okay. With such a fine view, one might find it difficult to imagine that we are at war.

Renko closes the curtains and turns.

SERGE

The guilt game. You sound more and more like my father ever day.

RENKO

Quite a gathering.

Serge nods as he POURS himself a drink. Then, he offers a tall shot glass of vodka.

Renko refuses it.

RENKO (CONT'D)

What were you celebrating, Serge?

SERGE

Celebrating?
(downs his shot)
Ah ... life!

Renko looks again around the trashed room, then at Serge.

RENKO

Were you celebrating life, or was it more a dark celebration. Celebrating someone's death?

SERGE

What are you talking about?

RENKO

Father Rasputin is missing and feared dead.

SERGE

Her Majesty's spiritual adviser is a bigger drunk than me. And that's saying something.

RENKO

Rasputin remains many things—a liar, a mystic, a drunkard, a womanizer yet still he is the man the Empress leans on the most for advice in her tight circle of friends.

SERGE

In Her Majesty's eyes, Rasputin saved her son.

RENKO

Alexei was near death.

SERGE

The Royal physicians could do little to comfort him. So the Empress begged Rasputin to save him.

RENKO

Da, in which he did. Since Alexei's recovery, the 'good father' is incapable of doing a single wrong.

SERGE

Well, the Empress made a deal with the devil.

RENKO

These are dark days. Everything's an illusion. Everything's a dream.

RENKO (CONT'D)
Everything's not what it seems.
(beat)

SERGE
Rasputin's ties to the Empress
enrages the Russian Royal Court.

RENKO
True. So... tell me who attended
your party? Then, you can return to
the ranks of the honored dead.

SERGE
Renko, do you actually believe that
I am somehow involved in Rasputin's
disappearance?

RENKO
Answer my question.

Serge combs his fingertips through his unruly hair.

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

RENKO
(barks)
Names! I am a man accustomed to
having my questions answered. Now!

SERGE
I can't even recall.

RENKO
Regulars from the bar?

SERGE
A friend of mine arrived yesterday
on the Moscow train. The party was
in his honor.

RENKO
Is your friend, a foreigner?

SERGE
Good God, Renko! You're paranoid.

RENKO
Paranoia has kept me alive this
long. Your friend?

SERGE

Barnaby Jones. He works for the
British Consulate.

RENKO

Odd name.

SERGE

He's an odd man.

RENKO

I see. Any of your cousins present?

SERGE

No.

RENKO

What about young Yusupov?

SERGE

Felix?!? No. Why?

RENKO

Rasputin was murdered hours ago in
his home.

SERGE

Murdered? But you said?

RENKO

Yes, murdered.

SERGE

How can you be certain? Rasputin is
most likely passed out under some
whore's bed.

RENKO

No, he's dead. It's a crime scene.
I just came from Felix's palace.
There is blood everywhere.

SERGE

Is he in custody?

RENKO

He's a prince. What do you think?

SERGE

This is insane.

RENKO

I agree. The true madness is to strike at the only man the Empress thinks can save her son.

SERGE

What is the Empress going to do?

RENKO

I don't know. All I know is that Protopopov, our new Minister of the Interior, is currently en route to Tsarskoe to see the Empress personally on this matter.

SERGE

Renko, there are rumors floating around town that Protopopov is mad.

RENKO

He most definitely is, I hear, from the advanced stages of syphilis. But who else would Rasputin—I mean, Her Majesty—choose?

SERGE

Who else is involved?

RENKO

We believe Grand Duke Dmitri.

SERGE

Why? Dmitri is the Tsar's favorite. Promised to marry his own daughter, the Grand Duchess Olga.

RENKO

True. But his motorcar was seen in the area, shortly after a gendarme reported hearing gunshots coming from the Yusupov Palace.

SERGE

Renko, why are you telling me this?

RENKO

Your father wants you to leave the Capital at once.

SERGE

My father? Why didn't he bother to come himself?

RENKO
He cares in his own way.

SERGE
Really?

RENKO
The past is the past. You should
leave it there.

SERGE
Tell him thanks for his concern.

RENKO
Concern? This isn't a game, Serge.
The Empress believes the removal of
her trusted aide was just the
beginning. And, your father thinks
she may be right.

SERGE
A mutinous step by forces targeted
against her husband's teetering
regime.

RENKO
Every day I hear rumors of the
efforts of the imperial family to
replace the old regime.

SERGE
Some say Nicholas's days are
numbered.

RENKO
A changing of the Tsars.

SERGE
It's that a little last century?

RENKO
Open your eyes, boy! The imperial
family isn't going to allow
Nicholas to hand the country to the
radicals. They all have far too
much to lose.

SERGE
True.

RENKO
Serge, I require two things of you.

SERGE

What?

RENKO

One, warn Felix and Dmitri to leave the city at once.

SERGE

Why?

RENKO

I don't want them to cause any more trouble.

SERGE

And two?

RENKO

Go with them.

SERGE

Where?

RENKO

South. Out of harm's way.

SERGE

Crimea?

RENKO

Da. Head to your family estate there. Take the nine o'clock Kiev train.

Renko moves toward the door.

RENKO (CONT'D)

I must somehow attempt to control this chaos before it consumes us all.

SERGE

And my Father?

RENKO

He promises to personally see you off.

SERGE

Promises? Him? He's so bad at keeping those.

RENKO

No matter. Expect him at eight.

Serge follows the inspector to the door.

RENKO (CONT'D)
I recommend, you wear your uniform.

Serge nods.

Renko turns and hugs Serge.

SERGE
Renko, what is today?

RENKO
It's Saturday, Serge. The
seventeenth of December.

SERGE
Ah, yes. Well then...

Serge adjusts the drawstrings of his robe.

SERGE (CONT'D)
It was good to see you, Renko.

Renko hurries down the hall.

RENKO
You too, Your Excellency.

Serge watches him leave.

SERGE
A changing of Tsars? Is that even
possible?

EXT. PRIVATE TRAIN - DAY

A train speeds to the Imperial Village of Tsarskoe.

SUPER: "Tracks to Tsarskoe. Their Majesties residence."

INT. PRIVATE TRAIN - SALON CAR - SAME

ALEXANDER PROTOPOPOV watches the milky fields of snow pass by
as he plays with the waxy points of his moustache.

MARIE (V.O.)
Alexander Protopopov—Minister of
the Interior. Twisted and
opportunistic member of Rasputin's
inner circle.

(MORE)

MARIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Former Deputy Speaker of the
 Duma—Russia's Imperial Parliament.
 His peers in the Imperial Senate
 label him a traitor for a recent
 rendezvous he had with a German
 agent in Stockholm. After that
 treasonous affair, his political
 career was thought to be over.

PROTOPOPOV
 Boring! Snow is so b-o-ring!

He digs out his pocket watch and examines it.

PROTOPOPOV (CONT'D)
 Time. Time. Time. Tick-tock. Time.
 Hmm. A smudge! On my watch. Gross!

Alexander uses his thumb and removes the blot of dirt.

PROTOPOPOV (CONT'D)
 Ha! Much better. Now, a little
 music maestro.

The Minister of the Interior HUMS Tchaikovsky's 1812 Overture
 as he swings his arms about.

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

Appears the BARONESS. She's dark. She's young. She's
 beautiful. The German royal wears all black. From her tall
 leather riding boots, her tight tights, and velvet tunic,
 they are black. A mink drips down from her shoulders to feet.

PROTOPOPOV (CONT'D)
 Ah!

The Baroness struts down the aisle.

BARONESS
 Da-da-da boom! BOOM!

Alexander looks up and smiles.

PROTOPOPOV
 Baroness! What a treat.

BARONESS
 Have room for me?

PROTOPOPOV
 But of course.

BARONESS
Then scoot.

Alexander does.

She sits and pats Alexander's leg.

BARONESS (CONT'D)
You in big trouble again?

PROTOPOPOV
Me!?! No. The country... Da!

BARONESS
So you're going to do it?

PROTOPOPOV
It's already begun.

BARONESS
Rasputin?

PROTOPOPOV
Dead. Dade-dada-dade-da-da-da-BANG!
BANG!

BARONESS
Bad boy. There's a good reason no
one trusts the government.

PROTOPOPOV
Never waste a good crisis.

BARONESS
Crises. The war. The inflation. The
food shortages. Turmoil.

PROTOPOPOV
I know. I know. It all so terrible.

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

The minister draws closer to the Baroness' red stained lips.

PROTOPOPOV
That's what I'm counting on.

EXT. ALEXANDER PALACE - LATER DAY

Protopopov's sleigh arrives from the train station.

SUPER: "Alexander Palace. Tsar Nicholas II and the Empress Alexandra's royal residence."

INT. ALEXANDER'S PALACE - MAUVE ROOM - DAY

Protopopov paces the Mauve Room. He stops before a portrait of Tsar Nicholas playing with his only son, Alexei.

PROTOPOPOV

Hi Boss. Maybe leaving your wife in charge of the day to day operations was a...

SOUND: DOOR SLAMS! OPEN.

Enters EMPRESS ALEXANDRA. She storms toward the Minister.

MARIE (V.O.)

Empress Alexandra-Tsarina of All Russia. She has ruled beside her husband for over twenty years now. Most recently, Nicholas has allowed her to handle the day-to-day operations of his government. With the Tsar's attention completely focused on the war, Alexandra feels the need for change. Any change. She leans heavily on the advice of her spiritual counselor Father Rasputin. With his help, Alexandra rearranges the Tsar's ministers more to her liking. Once a beautiful German princess, Alexandra now resembles a bitterly broken woman struggling to maintain her husband's authority. Nicholas could have chosen a better woman. Like me.

EMPRESS

Where is he!?

The Minister bows formally, low and slow.

PROTOPOPOV

We don't know, Your Majesty.

EMPRESS

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

PROTOPOPOV

We are using every available man.

EMPRESS

No. No. No.

Aimlessly the Alexandra wanders the room.

This can't be. Not Alexei's savior.
No! You must find him! At once.

PROTOPOPOV

We shall double our efforts.

Alexandra stops pacing and eyeballs Alexander and points.

EMPRESS

If he is dead, so are you.

EXT. St. PETERSBURG - RIVERFRONT - DAY

The Imperial Yacht Club near the River Neva.

SUPER: "Imperial Yacht Club."

MARIE (V.O)

Here rests Petersburg's ultra exclusive society the Imperial Yacht Club. Its members prefer to simply call it 'the Club.' It is a political playground for the regime's upper echelon. It is a place where white-gloved servants beckon to every member's call. To join this private society takes more than money—for anyone can possess that. No, power is the key to it's door. Its members come from the most distinguished families in the empire. Their ancestors reshaped Russia's borders to one sixth of the globe. The empire, which is their inheritance, is vanishing before their very eyes. And so is their control. Power is a funny thing when it is only perceived. The Club's more observant members notice their white-gloved servants are not as quick to fetch a drink as they used to be. And that scares these individuals to their core. So with the scene set, we pull back the velvet curtain and venture in.

INT. IMPERIAL CLUB - DRAWING ROOM - SAME

Deep within this imposing residence is a crowded drawing room decorated for the holidays.

A group of lumpy looking MEMBERS in freshly pressed uniforms chat as they scan this morning's paper and smoke their big fat cigars. A cloud of blue smoke lingers over their heads.

MARIE (V.O.)

Here at the Club. Fat old men in fresh pressed uniforms pass their time stroking their facial hair as often as they stroke one another's egos. They sit in their cozy chairs, as they complain about many things: the Senate, the Empress, and the Tsar--though mostly the Tsar.

Serge arrives in a fine suit.

MARIE (V.O.)

The topic on everyone's lips is Rasputin's disappearance.

Serge asks a passing WAITER.

SERGE

Excuse me. Have you seen Grand Duke Dmitri today?

WAITER

Not yet, Your Excellency. He likes to lunch at The Bear.

SERGE

I see.

Serge hands him some colorful money.

SERGE (CONT'D)

(Russian)

Thank you.

The waiter accepts the money and nods his appreciation. Then, he moves on with his day.

Serge wanders deeper into the smoky room.

In a nearby chair, a pudgy faced MAJOR explains to all.

MAJOR

I have heard this all before. And,
the beast Rasputin always
reappears—stronger and closer to
the throne.

GRAND DUKE ANDREI sits beside the Major and offers.

MARIE (V.O.)

Grand Duke Andrei Vladimirovich, my
ex. His father was Tsar Alexander
III's brother. Poor Andrei still
loves me... Mathilda-Marie
Kchessinska, and he knows my heart
will always belong forever to
Nicki.

ANDREI

But it is true. Rasputin is dead.

Serge watches on silence.

Through coils of blue smoke Andrei's brother.

VLAD appears.

MARIE (V.O)

Vlad, Grand Duke Vladimir
Vladimirovich, the Tsar's most
ambitious cousin. His father
Vladimir was the younger brother of
Tsar Alexander III, a man many
thought as a much better choice of
Tsar in contrast to Alexander's
untried son. Nonetheless Alexander
chose his own son Nicholas to
succeed him, which was his right to
do. However, since that day
Vladimir has often wondered, what-
if?

Vlad slaps Serge's back with gusto. Then, he playfully tugs
on Serge's long bread.

VLAD

Good to see you recovering from
your wounds, young Platonvitch.

Serge stares upwards to meet Vlad's smile.

Vlad wears his regiment's jet-black uniform with tall
matching riding boots.

MARIE (V.O)

Broad and tall, Vlad looks like a Russian Tsar—big, bold, extremely powerful, and ruthless. Vlad is a mountain of a man. A professional soldier. Rumors say he broke an enemy soldier in half. It is only a rumor, but the sheer size of him makes you wonder if it is true.

SERGE

Vlad. Good to see the war has not taken you yet.

Vlad LAUGHS long and hard.

VLAD

No German will best me.

Vlad joins in on his brother's current conversation.

VLAD (CONT'D)

If Rasputin is truly dead, I salute them.

Serge mistakenly enters the conversation.

SERGE

Salute?

VLAD

Oh, you're still here, Platonovitch.

SERGE

Salute the assassins?

VLAD

Rasputin is...

ANDREI

Was.

VLAD

A traitor.

VLAD/ANDREI

He got what he deserved.

SERGE

The Emperor may not see it that way. Murdering the man who saved his only son.

ANDREI

Rasputin was an opportunist. A Court Jester, at best.

VLAD

A Jester who played the Tsar and His Court as fools.

SERGE

Dangerous talk.

ANDREI

Dangerous times.

VLAD

Young Konstantin. I see you no longer find it necessary to wear your Imperial uniform.

MAJOR

Or, his metal for valor.

ANDREI

Are you still recovering from your war wounds? You look perfectly healthy to me.

SERGE

Andrei, what do you know of war? Or the Front?

VLAD

Gentlemen. Gentlemen. We are all royalty here. Our fathers and grandfathers spilled their own blood for Mother Russia. We must act now to save her.

SERGE

Against whom?

VLAD

Enough.

SERGE

I am not here to speak politics. I just want to speak to Dmitri. Have any of you seen him?

ANDREI

Too early for him here, Serge. Try the Bear.

SERGE
(in Russian)
Thank you, gentlemen.

VLAD
Today is just talk. But we can't be
the only ones in Petersburg to see
the writing on the wall.

Serge leaves the parlor.

SERGE
Hmm. Renko was right. The Imperial
family grows bold.

INT. ALEXANDER PALACE - MAUVE ROOM - DAY

Empress Alexandra and her eldest daughter OLGA talk as they
share tea in the Mauve Room.

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.

Appears an attentive SERVANT.

EMPRESS (CONT'D)
I need to cable His Majesty at
once.

SERVANT
Of course, Your Majesty.

OLGA
What news from Protopopov?

EMPRESS

Protopopov!?! Is a buffoon! Why I choose him as Minister of Interior is besides me?

OLGA

I thought Father...

EMPRESS

Enough!

Olga pops up.

OLGA

Okay. I need to go to work.

EMPRESS

Work?

OLGA

The hospital.

EMPRESS

Oh, yes. I am not myself today. I'm sorry.

OLGA

I know. I shall pray for Father Rasputin return.

Olga kisses her Mother's forehead.

EMPRESS

Thank you, child.

INT. RENKO'S MOTOR CAR - DAY

Renko's motor car snakes its way down one of Petersburg's busy side streets. He peers out his frosty window.

Grimy, layered up REFUGEES warm their hands over open bonfires. All are civilian casualties of the war.

MARIE (V.O)

Petersburg swarms with poor, powerless people. Misery dances on their drawn faces like the fiery flames. They have sacrificed much for the sake of this war: their lands, their homes, their sons, and their pride. Everything that they once cared for was now gone. They are burnt, beaten...

RENKO
The walking dead. Hmm.

EXT. THE FIREMEN'S CLUB - DAY

Renko parks his car was in front of No.14 Fontanka. The infamous Firemen's Club, a small but profitable gambling establishment. The Inspector walks in as if he owes it.

INT. FIREMEN'S CLUB - SAME

The club is packed.

MARIE (V.O)
Number Fourteen Fontanka. The Firemen's Club. A small but profitable gambling establishment filled with drugged and lifeless faces. They attempt to escape the atrocity of wartime Petersburg. As a variety of chemicals pulse through their bodies, men dress in tuxedos and women dress in elegant gowns gambled carelessly with their hearts and with their souls.

The Inspector walks through the crowd.

Approaches a cute CIGARETTE GIRL. She flirts.

CIGARETTE GIRL
Renko?!? Can I interest you in anything?

RENKO
No, Natasha. Not today.

CIGARETTE GIRL
If you're looking for Peter? He's at the high stakes table.

RENKO
(Russian)
Thanks.

Renko heads to the roulette table.

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

Renko turns.

RENKO
We still have not found a body.

CIGARETTE GIRL
You will.

Renko walks toward the high-stakes tables.

MARIE (V.O.)
Peter is the heir to one of
Russia's oldest and wealthiest
banks. The war has been good for
him and his family. The young
banker plays both sides. He enters
into secret dealings with
anarchists, German sympathizers,
and the secret police, plays one
against the other and adds to his
fortune. Of late, Peter plays in
the deep pockets of the German
Kaiser.

Peter notices Renko eyeing his mountain of blue chips.

PETER
Say the word, and they are yours,
Renko. Feeling lucky?

RENKO
Peter, the trick is to live long
enough to enjoy your wealth.

The Inspector laughs, embraces Peter.

RENKO (CONT'D)
Good to see you're in one piece. I
heard you were arrested.

PETER
Oh, that. Just a misunderstanding.
Me and our beloved Minister of
Justice.

RENKO
Makarov believes you're a traitor.

PETER
Me?!?

RENKO
I thought you paid everyone off?

PETER
Makarov is Makarov. Above reproach.
Yet, it was so nice of Grigory to
convince the Empress to drop all
charges.

Renko turns. He looks directly at...

The BRIT AGENT. He stands at the small stakes table.

RENKO
Makarov hasn't given up.

Peter peers over Renko's shoulder.

PETER
Oh, him. That's a Brit.

RENKO
They're interested in you too?

PETER
I'm a popular man.

RENKO
I heard Justice Makarov wasn't too
happy to sign your release.

PETER
No, he wasn't.

RENKO
Rasputin can no longer protect
you.

PETER
The Siberian foolishly trusted
Protopopov. Bad bet. Let's walk.

Peter gathers up his chips.

Together, they walk toward the cashier's table.

RENKO
Does the Kaiser get his cut?

PETER
You know I don't like to share.

Peter draws closer to Renko's ear.

PETER (CONT'D)
The Germans want peace.

They reach the cashier's table.

RENKO
From whom?

Before a female CASHIER in a long flowing gown.

The cashier counts Peter's chips.

PETER
Guess?

RENKO
I see why Sir George has men
following you.

The cashier counts out Peter's money.

PETER
I need protection.

RENKO
Rasputin had protection.

PETER
Men. Your men.

Renko nods.

RENKO
You shall have it.

PETER
(in Russian)
Thank you.

RENKO
My men will stop by your flat.

PETER
When?

RENKO
Soon.

PETER
Good. Monday, you travel to
Helsinki. From there, you will be
ferried across to Germany.

PETER (CONT'D)
A boat?!? The Baltic isn't exactly
the safest of spots.

RENKO

You worry too much, Peter. As long as you have the armistice in your procession, you will be safe.

The two find the exit...

ALLEYWAY.

PETER

Just think, Renko. Soon, the war will be over.

The two walk down the alley's center.

Behind them, a DOOR CREAKS.

Exits the Brit Agent.

Renko turns back and waves at him.

RENKO

For us, Peter. For us.

INT. THE BEAR - DAY

An upscale bistro lavishly decorated for the holidays.

MARIE (V.O.)

The Bear Bistro is no stranger to excess. In this place, the lunch crowds' egos are fed along with their appetites.

Sits a nearby table EATER #1 says to...

EATER #2 as he scoops up peas from a gold bordered plate.

EATER #1

We're heading for revolution.

EATER #2

We're heading for anarchy.

EATER #1

What's the difference?

Eater #2 ponders this as he reaches for his wine glass full of dandelion-colored wine.

EATER #2

The revolutionary means to reconstruct. The anarchist thinks only of destroying.

MARIE (V.O.)

At the other tables, discussions focused on Father Grigory's whereabouts.

TABLES of gossip montage of dialogues.

TABLE #1 WOMEN

It must have been an affair of the heart.

TABLE #2 WOMEN

No. It was a jealous husband.

TABLE #3 MAN

No. It was the gypsies that killed him. Black magic.

TABLE #4 MAN

Gypsies?!? Please, we all know the real culprits. The royal family.

TABLE #1/#2/#3

Really?!?

MARIE (V.O.)

The most imaginative and therefore the best received was that Alexandra and Rasputin were having an affair. The truth is that no one knew anything except that Rasputin was still missing, and presumed dead. Though, at a small table in back, two men sat with an informed perspective on Rasputin's current whereabouts.

Asks DMITRI, the Tsar's favorite Nephew. He wears his Imperial Horse Guards uniform.

DMITRI

What happened?

MARIE (V.O.)

Grand Duke Dmitri Pavelovich—the Tsar's favorite nephew. Rumors say to be the man Their Majesties wish their eldest daughter Olga to marry.

(MORE)

MARIE (V.O) (CONT'D)

A talented equestrian and model soldier, the Duke serves as an Officer in His Majesty's Horse Guards, the Imperial forces elite. He is a friend and confidant to Prince Felix. A true hater of Rasputin's widening influence over the Royal Family.

FELIX answers. He wears a well-cut cadet uniform of the Imperial Corps of Pages with high Pershing collar and white leather belt. His 'soldier' costume is complete.

FELIX

(yawns)

I overslept.

MARIE (V.O)

Prince Felix Yusupov, the sole heir to Russia's wealthiest family. His young, bright and extremely good-looking. The prince is considered to be Europe's most eligible bachelor before his recent marriage to Princess Irina, Sandro's daughter.

Felix plays with the stem of his flute glass.

FELIX

I had barely opened my eyes, when I was told the police were here to see me.

DMITRI

And?

FELIX

I asked him if his visit was connected with the shots fired?

Felix changes his voice to act out the police's reply.

FELIX (CONT'D)

Exactly! My objective is to ask you for a detailed account of what happened. Wasn't Rasputin among the guests?

Felix switches back to his own voice.

FELIX (CONT'D)

I replied... Rasputin in my house?!? Never.

DMITRI
And the gunfire?

FELIX
I told the truth, of course.

Dmitri chokes on his champagne.

DMITRI
You did what?!?

FELIX
I was bound by my oath, as a
gentlemen.

DMITRI
Felix?

FELIX
Dmitri relax. I shared a drunk
nobleman shot a hound of mine. The
beast's blood leaked everywhere.

DMITRI
Did he believe you?

FELIX
Does it matter?

Felix reaches under the table.

FELIX (CONT'D)
I brought you a present. It's not
much. Though, I hope you like it.

DMITRI
Spasibo, I wish I had brought
something for you.

Felix leans across the table.

FELIX
(whispers)
Rasputin's head was enough.

Then, Felix hands Dmitri his gift.

Dmitri unwraps it.

DMITRI
The compete works of Oscar Wilde.

The Duke pages through its text.

DMITRI (CONT'D)
Your favorite author.

FELIX
Now, all I possess is yours. Words.
I am the fictitious creation of a
brilliant man. But, enough about my
problems.

Dmitri turns to the preface of the book. He reads out loud
Felix's inscription.

DMITRI
May I steal from The Ballad of
Reading Goal. Each man kills the
thing he loves. Some do it with a
bitter look. Some with a flattering
word. The coward does it with a
kiss. The brave man with the sword.
Spasibo, Felix. We need to warn the
Tsar.

FELIX
Why?

DMITRI
A civil war threatens to tear the
empire in two.

FELIX
We have been down this path before,
my dear friend. And now, more than
ever, we teeter on the edge of
oblivion. At least Rasputin is no
longer a concern. He's off the
board.

DMITRI
Yes, but other treasonous dogs
circle. Vlad.

FELIX
There is no good in Vlad but he is
no threat. Mere talk.

Felix eyes move down to his drink.

DMITRI
Are you blind? Vlad speaks freely
of a coup. He wants to be Tsar!

Felix grabs his glass and raises it.

FELIX

A toast. Good, conquers evil.
Always. Long Live the Tsar.

Dmitri raises his glass.

DMITRI

Long Live the Tsar! And victory!

FELIX

Yes, victory.

SOUND: CLING!

INT. GERMAN HIGH COMMAND - DAY

KAISER WILHELM II of Germany hunches his small body over a table blanketed by an outstretched map. He braces himself up with his good arm, as he inches closer to the map.

KAISER

Hmm. Victory.

NOTE: The Kaiser is the Grandson of Queen Victoria of England and cousin to both Tsar Nicholas and King George.

MARIE (V.O.)

The Kaiser has always held an overly romantic view of war. He dreams of a Germany-dominated Europe. His armies are at war with Great Britain, France, and Russia. German casualties are appalling, matching those of Russia. Both sides realize it is difficult to take over the world when you are running out of men. His armies on the western front have been at a stalemate for over a year now. Though, in the east, his war with Russia... he is winning. Though, he cares only about the front that counts—the . At all costs, he needs to break the stalemate in before the United States enters into the war.

KAISER

I am running out of time. Of a German led Europe. The war has lasted longer than anyone had expected. Schlieffen Plan failed.

(MORE)

KAISER (CONT'D)

Hmm. Lunch in Paris. Dinner in St.
Petersburg, was over optimistic.

He looks down upon the map and his legions marked along the
long Russian front.

KAISER (CONT'D)

But soon, victory will be ours. As
over sixty of my best divisions
will be freed from the east. For we
can endure another summer like
last. Jutland. Verdun. Both
bloodbaths. My legions are not
limitless. We just need one
decisive battle.

The Kaiser SIGHS.

A heavy hand KNOCKS on his chamber's door.

KAISER (CONT'D)

Enter.

Appears GENERAL PAUL VON HINDENBURG and bows.

MARIE (V.O)

General Paul von Hindenburg, the
Kaiser's new Chief of Staff.

HINDENBURG

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

KAISER

And? Must I read it myself?!

HINDENBURG

They want Constantinople and the
Balkan Straits.

KAISER

Expected. They can have them.

HINDENBURG

But your Majesty?!? These terms.
They're far too favorable for our
enemy.

KAISER

Why?

HINDENBURG

Our Armies are advancing. Their
forces are retreating.

(MORE)

HINDENBURG (CONT'D)

Russia's supply-lines are in utter disarray. Come spring, the Russian Bear's exposed throat will be under our heel.

KAISER

Spring, General? No. No. No. It shall all be over by then?

Kaiser LAUGHS.

HINDENBURG

Their people are near revolution.

KAISER

Revolution? Sir, you forget. Who is financing this so-called rebellion? Me.

HINDENBURG

Your Grace, our troops shall march victorious through the streets of Paris, soon. But first, allow our armies of the east the glory deserved by us conquering a defeated Moscow. We have sacrificed too much German blood to simply abandon it!

KAISER

No, General. My Russian Cousin is a Religious fool. He wants so badly to liberate Constantinople and its Great Church. Let him have it. The city is irrelevant.

HINDENBURG

But, Your Majesty, our enemy's back is nearly broken.

KAISER

Perhaps. But General Von Hindenburg, we have wasted enough men and time over the Russians. We need those sixty divisions on the front that matters. By early spring at the latest. That means this treaty needs to be signed soon. Have our man in St. Petersburg agree to whatever terms.

HINDENBURG

Of course, Your Grace.

The general salutes and turns to leave.

KAISER

Fear not General Hindenburg. We shall deal with my dear cousin... later.

Hindenburg stops and turns.

The Kaiser's attention returns to his map.

KAISER (CONT'D)

Poor old Russia will pay dearly for Niki's Byzantine dream of Constantinople. Offering it up to him was my masterstroke. You see, I knew he could not resist it. How many of his men were butchered to reach that inconsequential Turkish stronghold?

MARIE (V.O.)

Last year, hoping to breach the outer defenses at Dardanelle, located only a hundred miles south of Constantinople, some six hundred thousand British had thrown themselves at this second front. Never establishing a secure beachhead, the invasion had failed miserably. The human cost had been too much. King George withdrew his troops in total defeat.

KAISER

Come spring. Thanks to Russia's departure from the war, Germany will march over two hundred battle tested divisions against the weakened fortifications of a war-torn front. You see, with a mere stroke of a pen, my dear general, victory becomes a mathematical certainty.

HINDENBURG

Victory.

KAISER

A new German era will engulf Europe. A long-lasting Reich, that would lead the world deep into the Twentieth Century, a German century.

MARIE (V.O.)

The General now realizes he had underestimated the Kaiser. It would be a revised version of the Schlieffen Plan. Settling with Russia now would free up the required divisions to end the stalemate in the . The war would be over before the Americans could even enter it. Then, when the Russian army had amassed near Constantinople, the full German Imperial Army would storm east through Poland and capture the Russian Bear off guard. As they dealt with the Turks, Moscow would be unguarded... and exposed.

HINDENBURG

Brilliant.

Kaiser eyes his trophy wall full of dead animals and antlers.

KAISER

A year from now, I shall have the head of a stuffed bear mounted on my wall.

HINDENBURG

Right beside your British Lion.

The General beams with pride as he salutes his leader.

KAISER

On your way out, General, tell Alfred I need a word. Someone must warn the Turks that the Russians are coming.

The General leaves.

The Kaiser starts to move the wooden pieces that represent his armies to the .

KAISER (CONT'D)

Ah, better. I maybe be crazy. But I am no fool.

EXT. NO. 41 NEVSKY PROSPECT - DAY

Sits off the banks of the River Fontanka a palace.

Serge CLIMBS the steps.

A gigantic Red Cross banner drapes down from its roof.

MARIE (V.O.)

Serge missed Dmitri at the Bear. So he's trying his home, a palace converted into one of Petersburg's premier health facilities.

INT. NO. 41 NEVSKY PROSPECT - MARBLE FOYER - SAME

Serge strolls under a huge chandelier that hangs like huge from the sky-colored ceiling into a...

PATIENTS' WARD.

Serge wears a fine-fitting suit. Instantly, he appears out of place to the lined beds full of...

BANDAGED PATIENTS seeking care.

The prince passes them.

The patients gaze back at him. Silently, they stare. Hatred and envy fills their eyes and body motions. For Serge is young and whole.

Olga approaches in her nurse uniform and saves him.

OLGA

Serge!

SERGE

Olga!

The two hug.

SERGE (CONT'D)

You look great... as a nurse.

OLGA

I know.

SERGE

How vain of you.

OLGA

It's not vanity if it's truth.

The Duchess twirls.

SERGE

You're teasing?

OLGA
Da. I am. How are you?

SERGE
Been better.

Serge looks around.

SERGE (CONT'D)
I'm impressed by the palace's
transformation.

OLGA
Dmitri converted his home into a
hospital.

SERGE
He spared no expense.

OLGA
I know. It could be in any premier
medical facility in Petersburg.

SERGE
Except for a few tiny differences.

Olga points up.

OLGA
Like the chandeliers hanging from
the sky-colored ceiling.

SERGE
Exactly.

OLGA
Dmitri financed it himself. The
staff. The equipment. The medicine.

SERGE
So... You still love him?

OLGA
Terribly.

SERGE
Good.

A DOCTOR waves Olga over.

Olga gives Serge another hug.

OLGA
I have to go.

SERGE
I wish you and Dmitri...

OLGA
I know. Love you too, Cousin. Even
that dreaded beard of yours! I half
expect a pigeon to fly out of it.

Serge strolls into a new...

WARD of PATIENTS.

MARIE approaches him from the other side of the ward. She's
dressed in a nurse's uniform too. As she walks over, her dark
curls bounced upon her narrow shoulders.

She wipes her stained hands with a fresh towel.

MARIE
Prince Serge. It is I. Marie.

SERGE
The woman who first stole my heart.

MARIE
I know. I'm such a terrible flirt.

SERGE
Have you seen the grand duke?

MARIE
You try the Bear?

SERGE
Just missed him.

MARIE
Well, if I see him...

Another NURSE waves Marie over.

SERGE
(in Russian)
Thank you. Go.

MARIE
Great seeing you.

SERGE
Nurse Marie! You can still steal a
man's heart with a gaze.

MARIE
 Little good it does me here.
 (in Russian)
 Bye, Serge.

EXT. WAR MINISTRY BUILDING - DAY

Two IMPERIAL SOLDIERS stand guard to the building's entrance. Ice and snow covers their faces and uniforms.

EXT. WAR MINISTRY BUILDING - SAME

A corner office that overlooks Senate Square.

GENERAL PLATON ALEXANDROVICH KONSTANTIN sits behind his paper-strewn desk. He's smoking. He's heavily starched uniform is two sizes too big.

MARIE (V.O.)
 The offices of the War Ministry were extraordinarily busy for a Saturday afternoon. General Konstantin's office, which houses the offices of His Majesty's Secret Police, were no exception. General Platon Alexandrovich Konstantin, Serge's father would rather be at the Front. But the Tsar selected him personally as Head of His Secret Police.

The General sets down his cigarette. Then, he passes his boney fingertips through his heavy slate gray hair.

PLATON
 Renko, everything in order?

RENKO
 On our side... Da.

PLATON
 Sides? There will no longer be sides soon.

RENKO
 True.

PLATON
 And the banker?

The General moves some papers along his desk.

RENKO
Half the city knows about his
release. Sir George has men
shadowing him.

PLATON
Excellent news. It gives them
someone to chase.

RENKO
He has asked for protection.

PLATON
Providing it legitimates Burmin as
our messenger. More good news.

The General's attention moves down to a paper before him.

PLATON (CONT'D)
And my Son?

RENKO
He's drinking himself to death.

PLATON
That's what I have heard. Hmm...

Platon eyes Renko.

PLATON (CONT'D)
I don't know what to do. Since his
Mother passed, I've lost the only
means of contact with him.

RENKO
He can't come to grips with the
loss of Sophia.

PLATON
One never fully recovers from the
loss of a wife, a soulmate.

The General SIGHS.

RENKO
Tonight?

PLATON
Tonight. Make certain he makes his
train.

RENKO
Sir, I thought we both were going
to escort him to the station.

The General's eyes move from Renko to the papers on his desk.

PLATON
I don't think it's best for him to
see me like this.

Platon removes an envelope from his desk. Then, he hands it
over to Renko and eyeballs him.

PLATON (CONT'D)
Give him this.

Renko hesitates to grab it.

RENKO
General. He shouldn't find out like
this. You still have time.

GENERAL
(sighs again)
No. My time is up.

RENKO
Sir, he needs you. More now than
ever.

PLATON
I know. I know. But so does Russia.

Renko attempts to counter this point but the General motions
him with his hand to stop.

PLATON (CONT'D)
You certain he was not involved in
the Rasputin affair?

RENKO
Yes. Throughout the years, I can
tell when he's lying.

PLATON
You know him more than I, Renko.
Hmm. That's a hard thing for a
father to admit. Okay. Back to the
Rasputin. The missing
correspondence?

RENKO
Someone ransack his apartment this
morning.

PLATON

Minister Protopopov appears to have freed himself from his slave master. Keep an eye on him. He most likely has the letters.

Renko nods and moves to the door.

PLATON (CONT'D)

Inspector...

Renko turns.

PLATON (CONT'D)

(hard pause)

That will be all.

RENKO

Of course, Your Grace.

Renko leaves.

The General walks to the mirror and examines his appearance.

His uniform is too large for him. His once rich head of gray hair is thinning. He moves his eyes to the certificate for bravery he had received from the Tsar during Russia's war with Japan over the Pacific.

MARIE (V.O.)

Serge's Father had always been a complicated man. Born a soldier, Platon carries on his family's tradition. He and over four hundred thousand Russian troops headed East after the Japanese sneak attack on Port Arthur. To the Tsar, the attack presented an opportunity to squash Japan. Thus, like so many others, General Konstantin, only a Colonel at the time, left for Port Arthur. He was one of the few to return. Russia's imperial dream turned into a nightmare. The Russian High Command did not take into account the new battleships the Japanese had purchased from Britain. Britain wanted to maintain her dominance in the Orient and gave Japan every weapon she desired. Konstantin emerged as a national hero. His escapades in Manchuria were legendary.

(MORE)

MARIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Every small child knows his tales of valor. It took three weeks, but he led his men two hundred miles at incredible odds to Port Arthur—only to learn their commanding General was dead, the Tsar's Pacific Fleet was at the bottom of the China Sea, and the city had already surrendered.

The old warrior walks to the massive fireplace.

MARIE (V.O.)

Above the mantle is a samurai sword that he had liberated from a fellow warrior some time ago. With aching hands, he reaches for his sword. The cold steel felt wonderful against his warm flesh.

Grabbing the sword, the General mutters.

PLATON

This is the way a soldier should die, in combat, not slowly from a hidden enemy, cancer.

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

PLATON (CONT'D)

My boy. My Serge.

MARIE (V.O.)

As Platon inspects the sword's fine blade, an old friend walks in the room, Sandro. Platon had summoned Grand Duke Alexander Mikhailovich, his dead wife's Brother, here from Kiev two days ago. Nicknamed Sandro since his youth, the dark bearded Duke was a tall, lanky warrior with a poet's heart.

SANDRO

Platon-son. Reliving past glory, my friend?

PLATON
It was anything but glorious,
Sandro.

The General returns the sword to its sleeve.

PLATON (CONT'D)
I am glad the war has not harmed
you.
(laughs)
You still wasting your time on
those foolish flying machines?

SANDRO
Platon, why are you so afraid of
the...

Konstantin turns from the fire.

This gives Alexander a better view of the gaunt figure before
him. Sandro's smile erodes from his face.

SANDRO (CONT'D)
Future?

PLATON
I have my reasons.

SANDRO
You're not looking well, my friend?

PLATON
According to my doctors, I don't
have much time left, Sandro.

SANDRO
I see.

PLATON
They say I won't see summer.

Sandro gives Platon a huge hug.

SANDRO
Ah! Summer is so overrated.

Platon CHUCKLES.

PLATON
Spasibo, Sandro. I haven't laughed
in quite some time.

SANDRO
Is there anything I can do?

PLATON

I will need your help with Serge.

SANDRO

Of course. Speaking of Serge. Do you remember the time he and Olga were found dancing alone in the garden...

EXT. THE WOODS - DAY

NICHOLAS ALEXANDROVICH ROMANOV, the Emperor of all Russia hikes with his son...

ALEXEI, the Heir Apparent, in the woods outside Staff Headquarters. Behind him is the picturesque village of Moghilev, a cluster of cobblestone buildings covered in a blanket of fresh new snow.

MARIE (V.O)

Alexei loves to play like every other twelve-year-old boy. Though, he is so thin and frail. He suffers from hemophilia, a blood disorder so prevalent in the reigning houses of Europe that it is known as the royal disease. Poor Nicki.

Nicholas enjoys the last drag from his cigarette.

MARIE (V.O.)

He still processes a flawlessly trimmed red beard, or perhaps it is brown... depends on the light. Though his eyes have grown remote. Even sad.

NICHOLAS

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

MARIE (V.O.)

It was his army he refers to. Nicholas Alexandrovich Romanov. The Emperor of all Russia. Never asked to be the Tsar. In fact, he accepted the title of Tsar with as much enthusiasm as one reserves for an unwanted gift. For the last twenty years he has grown tired of it.

(MORE)

MARIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

His reign to this point was pretty much summed by words like: scandal, death, defeat, riot, sneak attack, sunk, burned out, blackened, stampeded or bruised, all in an interchangeable order. His mark is less than the Renaissance-style reign he envisioned so long ago. God-like power is a heavy load to bear for any mere man, especially for my Nicki.

As Nicholas exhales an icy cloud of smoke, his deep blue eyes watch the shifting snow dance upon the nearby rooftops.

NICHOLAS

Alexei, led the way! Hmm... What a gift God gives you to see the world once again through the eyes of a twelve-year-old boy.

MARIE (V.O.)

Romanovs have reigned over Russia for three hundred years. One day, Nicholas would hand the Crown down to his son. At least, that was the plan.

The Tsar stops and removes the crumpled letter from his pocket. The letter is from Father Rasputin.

RASPUTIN (V.O.)

My Tsar. I feel I shall leave life before January First. I want to make known to the Russian people, to Papa, to the Russian Mother and to the children, to the land of Russia, what they must understand. If I am killed by common assassins, and especially by my brothers the Russian peasants, you, Tsar of Russia, have nothing to fear. Remain on your throne and govern. And you have nothing to fear for your children, they will reign for hundreds of years in Russia. But if I am murdered by boyars, by nobles, if they shed my blood, their hands will remain soiled with blood, for twenty-five years they will not wash their hands of my blood. Brothers will kill their brothers...

(MORE)

RASPUTIN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 your children or relations, will
 not remain alive for more than two
 years. They will be killed by the
 Russian people. You must reflect
 and act prudently. Pray, pray, be
 strong, and think of your blessed
 family. Grigory.

Young Alexei reaches the top of the hill.

ALEXEI
 Try to catch me, Papa!

NICHOLAS
 You must be part goat, son. No
 human can climb faster than you!

MARIE (V.O.)
 The Tsarevich suffers from
 hemophilia. It stops blood cells
 from clotting naturally, a tiny
 scrape or fall could be lethal.

NICHOLAS(V.O.)
 Alexei must be saved. Is there no
 specialist in Europe who can cure
 my son? Let him name his own price.
 Let him stay forever in my palace.

MARIE (V.O.)
 But modern medicine had no cure.
 The Empress blames herself for her
 son's condition. Her German
 bloodline caused his pain. Her
 grandmother was Queen Victoria of
 England, and this disease had
 riddled the Queen's descendants.
 Since Alexei's birth, an army of
 Europe's finest physicians had
 attempted to heal him. But only
 Rasputin was able to help.

NICHOLAS
 How wonderful it is to see him run
 again. No pain. Only joy.

MARIE (V.O.)
 The Royal Physicians all said
 Alexei would never see his tenth
 birthday. That's when Rasputin
 entered their lives. His old world
 cures promised life, when modern
 science only offered death.

Nicholas final reaches his son on the summit. Beneath them, is the snow-covered village of Moghilev.

Nicholas gazes down at the town's ancient cathedral.

NICHOLAS

Alexi. One day, all this beauty and
spectacle shall be yours to uphold.

ALEXEI

Papa, you shall reign over this
land forever and ever.

The Tsar places his arm around his son and draws him closer.

NICHOLAS

This is Russia. In it's best and
purest form. Simple. Abundant.
Good.

ALEXEI

Papa. Is Rasputin as bad as
everyone says?

NICHOLAS

He saved you.

ALEXI

Oh yes. I forgot.

NICHOLAS

Ah! It's glorious. Everything seems
clearer when I am in the woods.
Quiet. Peaceful. Whole. And nearer
to God.

MARIE (V.O.)

Word of Rasputin's disappearance
has yet reached Moghilev.

EXT. THE BRITISH CHANCELLERY - DAY

Off the banks of Neva, the British Embassy is an island in
St. Petersburg's sea of uncertainty. Its staunch frame,
reinforced with burnt brick, braces itself for the worst.

MARIE (V.O.)

Throughout the Chancery, the
British knew their Russian Ally's
knees were buckling.

(MORE)

MARIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

A fierce battle was being waged to keep Mother Russia, and her fifteen million sons, in this war, at least until spring.

INT. BRITISH CHANCELLORY - AMBASSADOR'S OFFICE - SAME

SIR GEORGE BUCHANAN, British Envoy to the Russian Court. He sits behind his big desk and ponders. He stares across the room to a badly painted portrait of The Charge of the Light Brigade that hangs on the wall.

MARIE (V.O.)

Through their well-informed sources, the British were aware of secret negotiations between high-ranking members of the Tsar's cabinet and the German government. These negotiations only purpose was to find a noble way to get Russia out of the war. The British Ambassador had been instructed at the very highest level to use every available means to sever these peace talks. If Russia were out of the war, the Kaiser could send at least sixty battle-tested divisions up against the allies. The British and French troops would be forced to retreat, and the Germans would flood the French countryside like locusts. Trapped with their backs against a wall of water that was the English Channel, the British fate would be sealed. Within weeks, the war would be over. A new dark age would sweep across the civilized world. With this in mind, Sir George Buchanan, the British Ambassador to the Russian Imperial Court, was fully aware of his patriotic duty to keep the flames of war raging in the east, at least until spring. By then, the Americans and their fresh troops should be in the war.

Sir George plays with the waxy tip of his large white moustache.

Benjy, his second, sits across from him.

SIR GEORGE
Benjy, I no longer trust them.

BENJY
We are surrounded by thugs, clowns,
and liars.

SIR GEORGE
And murders. Lord Kitchener's death
is proof of that. Only a handful of
people were aware of his mission.

BENJY
Yet... him and his ship rests at
the bottom of the Baltic Sea.

SIR GEORGE
Indeed. Their German-born Empress
is blame for this affair. I'm
certain of it.

BRUCE LOCKHART, an intelligence officer, KNOCKS on the door.

SIR GEORGE (CONT'D)
Come in!

Bruce Lockhart enters the dark, wood-paneled room in a panic.

SIR GEORGE (CONT'D)
Bruce, what is it?

BRUCE
Ambassador, Father Rasputin.

BENJY
Great.

BRUCE
He's dead.

SIR GEORGE
How?

BRUCE
Murdered.

BENJY
Jealous husband I hope.

BRUCE
No. Members of high office.

SIR GEORGE
Not royalty?!?

Bruce hesitates.

BRUCE
A prince and a duke.

SIR GEORGE
We're in Russia, Bruce. Princes are
a dime a dozen here.

BRUCE
Prince Felix Yusupov and Grand Duke
Dmitri Pavlovich.

SIR GEORGE
Dear god!

BENJY
Prince Felix, heir to Russia's
wealthiest families.

BRUCE
Grand Duke Dmitri, promised to the
Tsar's eldest daughter. Not ideal.

SIR GEORGE
What do you make of this, Benjy?

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

BRUCE
I won't be here Sir if I believed
that.

BENJY
Two. Rasputin is dead, and these
men of their own accord removed
what they believed to be an
embarrassment to the Crown.

Sir George and Bruce nod in agreement.

BENJY (CONT'D)
Three...

SIR GEORGE
This is the first act of a power
struggle and perhaps a Russian
Civil War.

BENJY
Exactly.

SIR GEORGE
Anything else?

BRUCE
Yes. The banker Burmin met with
Inspector Renko today.

BENJY
Of His Majesty's Secret Police.

SIR GEORGE
I thought Burmin was in jail.

BRUCE
He was released earlier this week.
By orders of...

SIR GEORGE
Her Royal Majesty.

BENJY
Perfect timing.

SIR GEORGE
Watch him closely.

BRUCE
Yes, Sir!

The Ambassador TAPS his bony fingers atop his desk.

SIR GEORGE
Benjy. Find me, Mister Jones.

Benjy leaves.

As the door CLOSES, the Ambassador looks out his window.

Across the semi-frozen waters of the great Neva stands the
red stone bastions of the Fortress of Peter and Paul.

SIR GEORGE (CONT'D)
Lord have mercy on us all.

INT. GRAND DUKE'S DMITRI' PALACE - DAY

Olga walks down the hallway to the...

BALLROOM'S ENTRANCE.

She stops and peers in.

Dmitri stands near a large window.

PLAYS: CHAMBER MUSIC.

1914 SPRING
FLASHBACK
BEGINS:

In this space, before the war, a Spring Ball takes place.

Women in colorful gowns and men in just as vivid uniforms dance together as one. Oh, the pageantry.

SOPHIA, Serge's wife wanders up.

SOPHIA
Have you seen Serge?

OLGA
Sophia?!? Where have you been
hiding?

Serge wears his Imperial Uniform. He looks dashing. He stands with Dmitri, Felix, and Sandro.

SOPHIA
There he is. I wish to dance.

OLGA
Lead the way.

Sophia and Olga grab Serge and Dmitri. Then, they escort them to the dance floor. Then, they bow to one another and begin to move as one.

In the midst of the first twirl...

Dmitri and Olga:

OLGA (CONT'D)
Promise me you will come back to
me.

DMITRI
There is not an army large enough
to stop me of that.

OLGA
Let's hope.

Serge and Sophia dance and twirl too.

Olga watches on.

SOPHIA
Hubie?

SERGE
Da, Wifey.

SOPHIA
Promise me you will love me
forever.

SERGE
I promise.

SOPHIA
Good. Let's never stop dancing.

The other DANCERS nod and smile as the music's pitch and frequencies increases to a feverish pace.

Together, Serge and Sophia swirl faster and faster.

SERGE
I miss you!

SOPHIA
I know.

Olga holds Dmitri tightly. She acts as if she's afraid he might slip away.

THE CHAMBER MUSIC STOPS.

END OF 1914
SPRING
FLASHBACK:

Olga pauses at the Ballroom's door. The room is empty now except for one. This is when he HEARS a familiar tune again.

Dmitri HUMS cheery CHAMBER MUSIC.

Olga enters the circular ballroom. His silhouette dances like a fallen ghost along the polished parquet floors.

The Duke sees Olga.

DMITRI
My love.

OLGA
Dmitri...

DMITRI
Da.

OLGA
Mother says...

Dmitri uses his forefinger to lovely silence her.

DMITRI
Everything I have done, I have done
for us.

OLGA
But...

DMITRI
Remember, the last Spring Ball?

OLGA
Before the War.

DMITRI
Soon, this room shall come alive
again. With dance and music. We
will win this war. Soon.

OLGA
So many that attended the last
Spring Ball are dead now.

DMITRI
I know. I know. We are so close to
victory. I can feel it.

OLGA
My dear. I fear, Russia is ready to
explode. Hold me. Tightly.

Dmitri does. Then, he HUMS the Waltz of the Flowers.

DMITRI
Let's dance. Forever intertwined.

Tears form in Olga's eyes as she twirls about with Dmitri.
She HEARS the faint echo of LAUGHTER and party CHATTER.

EXT. GRAND DUKE ALEXANDER'S PALACE - NIGHT

Warm light escapes the library's tall windows.

INT. G.D. ALEXANDER'S PALACE - LIBRARY - SAME

Serge sits before the raging fire in a big backed chair.

MARIE (V.O.)
During Sandro's life, he has
collected as many books as friends.
(MORE)

MARIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

It is rumored that this wing alone houses nearly twenty thousand rare editions in every language. I believe it. Every inch of the high walls are lined with books. As a child, Serge spent a great deal of his days in a study very much like this one. The Duke is more than Uncle. He was the Prince's closest friend. Waiting for his Father's return from the empire's far-off provinces, he always seemed to find himself in this mysterious place, home to one of the finest collections of rare books in all of Russia. His adventure always began by strolling through this library of wondrous possibilities, then stopping in front of one of its crammed bookcases to grab a tale that was full of dusty dreams, penned so long ago by forgotten men now long dead. Serge loved this place. This living library was the perfect sanctuary for a lonely child who's father always seemed to be away.

The fire crackles. The flame flickers. Serge's head slowly dips, as he closes his eyes.

FLASHBACK
BEGINS:

INT. SERGE HOME - NIGHT

Sophia appears in a white lace nightgown before the fireplace. She holds a lit candle and glows.

SOPHIA
Serge, return to bed.

Serge looks up at her and smiles.

SERGE
You are so beautiful.

SOPHIA
Come.

Serge takes her hand. He follows her and the tiny light into the surrounding darkness.

SERGE
Sophia?

SOPHIA
Yes.

SERGE
Is this a dream?

Sophia stops, turns, and nods.

SOPHIA
Serge, come back to me.

Then, she BLOWS out the candle.

SERGE
Sophia?!?

END OF
FLASHBACK:

Serge opens his eyes to the sight of...

LEO, one of Sandro's trusted servants.

LEO
Your Excellency, Prince Felix has
arrived. He instructed me to tell
you that he would only be a moment.

SERGE
(in Russian)
Thank you, Leo.

LEO
Will that will be all, Your Grace?

Serge nods as FOOTSTEPS skim across the atrium's marble
floor. The large French doors swing open.

Enters Felix.

FELIX
Serge! Are you here to see me off?

SERGE
Why?

FELIX
Why what?

SERGE
Rasputin?

FELIX
Rasputin! He played the game. He
knew the risks.

SERGE
Game? Felix, you destroy all that
you are afraid of?

FELIX
Whatever do you mean by that?!?

SERGE
You leaving the Capital?

FELIX
I do miss the warm Crimean sun. It
beckons me.

SERGE
Do you think that's far enough away
from the Empress' reach?

FELIX
In one swoop, I saved her and the
monarchy.

SERGE
A prison cell might open your
perspective on the subject?

FELIX
I think not. I'm the sole heir to
one of Russia's wealthiest
families.

SERGE
And the Tsar?

FELIX
The Tsar?!? He has larger concerns
than me.

Felix walks away.

FELIX (CONT'D)
(in Russian)
Good bye.

SERGE
God. Please save us.

Sandro's rusty voice rings down from the heavens.

SANDRO
The Lord wants nothing to do with
this mess.

Sandro hides among dark mahogany shelves overcrowded with books.

SANDRO (CONT'D)
Charming boy, my son-in-law. I
can't see what my daughter finds
appealing in him. Perhaps his
absence.

Sandro LAUGHS hard at this.

SANDRO (CONT'D)
Young Konstantin.

SERGE
Uncle Sandro!

Serge pops out of his chair and rushes up the spiral steps.

SERGE (CONT'D)
I thought you were in Kiev!

SANDRO
And miss all of this? Someone needs
to run this lunatic asylum that we
once called Russia.

Sandro hugs Serge. When he pulls from the embrace, he examines Serge.

SANDRO (CONT'D)
Killer beard. I'm thankful the war
has returned you in one piece.

Serge looks down to his shoes.

SERGE
I did things that I'm not proud of.

SANDRO
Da. Haven't we all.

SERGE
The good has died in me.

SANDRO
Serge, we are all being tested.

SERGE
The unrest grows and grows.

SANDRO

That is why I am here. Someone needs to warn Nicki before its too late.

SERGE

Rasputin?

SANDRO

Rasputin, that poor peasant, is nothing compared with the sinister forces that confront us. The Tsar's own government wants him gone.

SERGE

Gone?

SANDRO

We're watching an unprecedented spectacle of malcontents. Revolution is coming from above, not below.

SERGE

His own government?

SANDRO

And members of his own family.

SERGE

Vlad?

Sandro nods.

SANDRO

These puppeteers are manipulating events. Food shortages in the city. While mountains of wheat rot in the countryside. Factions in the military due to poor morale caused by lies of scandal in the Court.

SERGE

What else?

SANDRO

I believe it all stems from the changing of the ministers. None that are loyal remain.

SERGE

Protopopov?

SANDRO

Protopopov is a sexual pervert. A formal liberal turned orthodox conservative by Rasputin's own black magic.

SERGE

So there is no hope?

SANDRO

There is always hope.

Sandro tugs on Serge's long beard.

SANDRO (CONT'D)

Do tell me more about this fascinating beard.

SERGE

I know. I look ridiculous.

SANDRO

Ridiculous? No. You are alive. For which, I am grateful.

Sandro walks amongst his books.

Serge follows.

SANDRO (CONT'D)

Hmm. Now Serge, have I ever told you about the time your father and I marched through the jungles on a rescue mission to Port Arthur?

INSERT IF NEEDED:

SANDRO (CONT'D)

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. A revolution coming from above, not below. It all stems from the new ministers loyal to Rasputin.

SERGE

Minister 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

Protopopov enters his apartment as party is in full effect.

INTERESTING GUESTS: MEN DRESSED LIKE WOMEN. WOMEN DRESSED LIKE MEN. TRANSGENDERS. All dance with Champagne glasses in their hands. Some wear masks. Others don't. One WOMAN stands naked with a long snake draped around her neck.

PROTOPOPOV

Sorry, I'm late!!!

The Baroness emerges from the crowd. She joins him. As she does, she offers him her full flute glass.

BARONESS

Busy day dear?

PROTOPOPOV

Work, work, work.

Protopopov accepts the Champagne and downs it.

PROTOPOPOV (CONT'D)

Ah!!!

SNAKE WOMAN

Hey, shouldn't you be looking for Rasputin?

BARONESS

(purrs)

Shouldn't you?

The Minister walks deeper into the party.

PROTOPOPOV

Oh, him? He will turn up.

Three GUESTS sexual eye Protopopov as he passes.

Protopopov waves at them and they advance.

The Baroness joins in and gropes Protopopov.

The others' limbs entangle him, as if his flesh is being swallowed alive by the people.

Protopopov winks at US.

PROTOPOPOV (CONT'D)
Work. Work. Work. Sin knows no
holiday.

INT. BRITISH CHANCELLERY - SIR GEORGE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

The door opens to Sir George's study.

Enters BARNABY JONES. A towering young man with bright orange-colored hair with composed blue eyes.

JONES
Sir George, I was told that you
needed to see me.

SIR GEORGE
Yes. Welcome, Mr. Jones, to St.
Petersburg. Is it true, Barnaby you
come from one of the wealthiest and
most influential families in Wales?

JONES
My Father, F.W. Jones, is a self-
made man.

SIR GEORGE
Yes. Manufacturing. So, the war has
been good for him?

JONES
Good?!? He's lost two sons, and me
two Brothers.

SIR GEORGE
I see. Dreadful business war.
Though, I don't need to tell you
how important Russia is in this
fight, do I?

JONES
No, Sir. We need to keep Germany on
two fronts. Not one.

SIR GEORGE
Exactly! Though, never since the
war began. Have I felt so depressed
about the situation here.

JONES
I agree. The future of Anglo-
Russian relations is in disarray.
The Russians are losing their will
to fight.

SIR GEORGE

The Germans have changed their tactics. They are now representing that Britain is bent on prolonging the war for her own ambitions. I am sure that you have heard all of this in Moscow. It is Great Britain that is forcing Russia to continue the war. Forbidding her to accept the favorable terms that Germany is ready to offer. It is Britain, therefore, that is responsible for their sufferings of her people. This insidious campaign is much more difficult to contract than the old lies about our inaction.

JONES

How can I be of service, Sir?

SIR GEORGE

Jones, you're an Oxford man, aren't you?

JONES

Yes, I am. I graduated right before the war. Class of Fourteen.

SIR GEORGE

Then you were in Oxford at the same time as Prince Felix?

JONES

Yes. But he graduated ahead of me.

SIR GEORGE

I see.

The Ambassador looks down at his dossier.

SIR GEORGE (CONT'D)

How about Prince Serge?

JONES

We roomed together.

SIR GEORGE

It is not only on the battlefields of Europe that the war must be fought. The final victory must also be won over the more insidious enemy within our gates.

JONES

Sir George, how does this involve Prince Serge?

SIR GEORGE

Your country requires a great service from you, young man. A great service.

INT. GRAND DUKE'S PALACE - SANDRO'S STUDY - NIGHT

Serge and Sandro sit by the fire as the clock over the mantel CHIRPS the hour.

SANDRO

Everything is swinging out of control.

SERGE

That's why I'm not leaving the city.

SANDRO

Good. We need you in this fight.

SERGE

I will do what I can.

SANDRO

Serge, have I ever told you about my American dream?

SERGE

Your lost notion of the Americanization of Russia.

SANDRO

Yes. When I was just a little older than you, I sailed with the vast Imperial Navy.

SERGE

Sadly, most of those magnificent vessels are gone.

SANDRO

They rest peacefully at the bottom of the Pacific.

SERGE

Lost in the sea battle of Tsushima.

SANDRO
True, but that is another story.

SERGE
A sad one.

Sandro grows quiet.

SERGE (CONT'D)
The Americanization of Russia?

SANDRO
Yes. I was just twenty-seven on that misty morning in Eighteen-Ninety-Three when H.I.M.S. Dmitri Donskoi dropped anchor in the Hudson River. Officially, I came to express to President Cleveland the gratitude of my Imperial Cousin, Tsar Alexander III, for the help extended by the American nation during the Russian famine. Unofficially, I wanted to get an advance taste of the future.

The Duke pops up to remove a book from his shelf. Then, he CHUCKLES as he returns to his chair.

SANDRO (CONT'D)
The World's Fair was about to open in Chicago, and the whole country was sizzling with excitement, the visit of the Infanta Eulalie being featured as the star attraction of the fair. Kaiser Wilhelm dispatched Germany's most famous composer Von Burlew to counterbalance the 'Spanish intrigue.' The Scottish Highlanders sounded their bagpipes in Battery Place as part of an upcoming naval review in New York harbor, and the French answered with a specially picked orchestra of the 'Garde Republicaine.' There was something tremendously significant in this spectacle of all the great powers fighting for American friendship and goodwill.
(MORE)

SANDRO (CONT'D)

On a hot June night, while driving up gaily decorated Fifth Avenue toward the residence of John Jacob Astor, and looking at the endless rows of illuminated mansions, I suddenly felt the mysterious breath of a new epoch.

SERGE

Astor... the millionaire who died on the Titanic?

SANDRO

Da, the very one. But that's another tale. The founding of their Central Bank. We shall see how that turns out.

SERGE

New York?

SANDRO

Yes. The land of my dreams! It was hard to believe that only twenty-nine years earlier this very land had gone through the terrors and privations of a civil war. I thought of the Tsars. They reigned over an empire that was even richer than this new country, confronting the same problems, such as an immense population of scores of nationalities and religions, tremendous distances between the industrial centers and the agricultural hinterlands, crying necessity for extensive railroad building. American liabilities were greater than ours. Our assets, larger. Russia possesses gold. Ore. Copper. Coal. Iron. Our soil, if properly cultivated, should have been able to feed the whole world. What was the matter with us? Why did we not follow the American way of doing things? We had no business bothering with Europe and imitating the methods befitting nations forced by their poverty to live off their wits. So, right then and there, during the remaining few minutes of my ride in Eighteen-Ninety-Three.

(MORE)

SANDRO (CONT'D)
I commenced working out a plan for
the Americanization of Russia.

Sandro hands Serge the book.

The Prince gives it a quick glance.

SANDRO (CONT'D)
It was intoxicating to be alive. It
was a joy to repeat over and over
again that the old, bloodstained
nineteenth century was drawing to a
close and leaving the stage clear
for the irresistible efforts of
coming generations.

SERGE
What happened?

SANDRO
I prepared a model for a proposed
Constitutional Monarchy centered
around this principle.

Sandro gets up again. He strolls over to a document encased
in heavy glass.

SANDRO (CONT'D)
This document is a copy of the
Loris-Melikov Constitution of
Eighteen-Eighty-One. It was my
noble blue print. Drafted by order
of Alexander II, my Father's
Brother. Ironically, it was to be
signed the very next day before he
was assassinated. Nicholas's Father
could not find the courage to sign
it after his Father's brutal death
at the hands of the radicals.

SERGE
What a wasted opportunity.

SANDRO
Da, it was. Wasted.

SERGE
Is this the real reason your here
in the Capital?

SANDRO
Nicholas has to find the courage
his Father did not possess.

SERGE

Declare a people's Constitution?

SANDRO

With Rasputin's disappearance, I am certain he shall soon return from the front to console the Empress.

SERGE

Constitution? Hmm. Uncle Sandro, did you ever go back to America?

SANDRO

Da, three years ago. I was having a hard time with reporters who wanted to know what I had to say about the phenomenal changes that had occurred in New York since my last visit. I was supposed to compliment them on the new skyline, to comment upon the progress of the suffragist movement, to shed a tear or two over the passing of historical landmarks, and to wax enthusiastic about the future of the automobile. As a matter of fact, there was one startling change which seemed to have escaped the attention of native observers. The building of the Panama Canal and the stupendous development of the Pacific Coast had created a new form of American pioneering. Their industries had grown to the point where foreign outlets had become a sheer necessity. Their financiers who used to borrow money in London, Paris, and Amsterdam had suddenly found themselves in the position of creditors. The rustic republic of Jefferson was rapidly giving way to the empire of the Rockefellers.

SERGE

The American dream.

SANDRO

Da. A nation is only as strong as her dreams. Imperial Russia's dreams are nearly dead. If we do nothing to correct this the century shall be America's. By all rights, it should be ours, Serge. Pity.

INT. GRAND DUKE'S PALACE - SECOND FLOOR - SAME

Felix watches two SERVANTS carry his traveling trunk.

MARIE (V.O.)

Who is Prince Felix? Young and complicated. The prince is not yet thirty years of age and is the only surviving child of the wealthiest and most affluent family in Petersburg, the Yusupovs. Spoiled and sheltered since his youth, the prince was struggling to find his own identity. He felt insignificant and insecure. He had been forced to live in his elder brother's shadow for most of his life. His father, General Yusupov, not known for his kindness, exhausted the little love he did possess on his first son, Nicholas. The day that Nicholas died in a duel, his father's love turned to hate-directed at Felix. With the death of the perfect one, the heavy burden of the Yusupov name shifted onto Felix's shoulders like a dead weight.

Two small suitcases teeter atop the trunk.

FELIX

Allow me to help you with that.

Felix liberates both suitcases and tosses them over the second floor rail to the foyer's marble floor.

SOUND: BAM! BAM!

INT. GRAND DUKE'S PALACE - SANDRO'S STUDY - SAME

Leo appears and rushes the Duke and the Prince near the fire.

SANDRO

Leo! Have the Germans started bombing us?

LEO

Your Excellency. Prince Felix is leaving for the Nine o'clock train.

SANDRO

And the ruckus?

LEO
His Grace thought it was wise to
throw down his luggage from the
second floor.

SANDRO
I see. He has more money than
brains. Doesn't he Leo?

A poker faced Leo stands at perfect attention.

SANDRO (CONT'D)
(in Russian)
Thank you, Leo.

LEO
Your Grace.

Leo leaves.

SANDRO
You haven't spoke of Sophia today.

SERGE
What is there to say, Uncle? She's
gone.

Felix enters the study.

FELIX
Father-in-law, I must go now. To
catch my train.

SANDRO
You can't miss that.

Sandro CLEARS his throat.

SANDRO (CONT'D)
Do give my regards to my daughter.

FELIX
Of course.
(in Russian)
Good-bye.

SANDRO/SERGE
(in Russian)
Good-bye.

Felix leaves.

Sandro leans over toward Serge.

SANDRO
Go with him. Make certain he
doesn't miss his train.

INT. HOTEL EUROPE - THE READING ROOM - NIGHT

The journalist ROBERT WILTON writes his article on the disappearance of Rasputin. He sits in the corner of the lobby of the Hotel Europe.

ROBERT
This is front-page material.

MARIE (V.O.)
It was a great murder mystery set
in Petersburg. And like all good
mysteries, it would have to have a
few twists. His editor at The Times
in London would love it, and so
would his readers.

Robert checks his notebook as his world turns dark.

Barnaby Jones obstructs his light.

JONES
Good evening, Robert.

ROBERT
Barnaby. I thought you were in
Moscow.

Jones sits on the corner on the table.

JONES
I still am. They just brought me up
to help out with the conference.

ROBERT
I see. Anything my readers should
know about?

JONES
Nope.

ROBERT
Pity. Rumor has it, the Tsar is
considering the Kaiser's terms for
peace.

JONES
Robert, your mind is meant for
fiction.

ROBERT

I don't know, Jones. Reality around here is much stranger than fiction, more interesting.

JONES

Agreed.

Jones glances at Wilton's notes.

JONES (CONT'D)

Young princes of death? What's all this?

Robert shields his notes.

ROBERT

I'm not finished yet.

JONES

Please. Why stoke the fire?

ROBERT

Jones, a story doesn't get any hotter than this.

JONES

This is merely speculation.

ROBERT

A man of the cloth murdered by royalty.

JONES

Man of the cloth? Rasputin?

ROBERT

True. Though, the story plays better if he was good, and they were bad.

JONES

I see. Any predictions on the coming year?

ROBERT

Nothing good. The Empress is in charge. The Tsar allows this. So, I predict a revolution from within the royal family or one from the streets.

JONES

How long do we have?

ROBERT
Two. Maybe three months, tops.

JONES
Wow. That fast?

ROBERT
That's how I see it.

JONES
Hmm. Any chance you've seen Prince
Serge today? He's not in his room.

ROBERT
No. But that boy is worse off than
Russia.

JONES
He lost his wife and child.

ROBERT
I heard. Influenza.

JONES
Yeah.

ROBERT
That explains things.

JONES
His excess drinking?

ROBERT
Yes. If you want to find Serge,
Jones. Try the hotel bar.

INT. RUSSIAN STAFF HEADQUARTERS - NIGHT

Russian and Ally STAFF OFFICERS sit with Tsar Nicholas.

Nicholas stifles a YAWN.

MARIE (V.O.)
A meeting of Gods and Generals
rages on. Each general's ego
extends the briefing. More and
more. Every one of them blames
another, and is worries the Tsar.

The Generals stare at their spring offensive maps.

GENERAL #1
We just need to hold out until
America enters the war.

GENERAL #2
America's entry will be irrelevant
if we can't resupply our men.

Nicholas leans back in his chair.

NICHOLAS
Yes, we will get there. Let's
discuss our new Ally.

GENERAL GOURKO, a short and serious fellow with a bushy white
moustache, reads his prepared statement.

GENERAL GOURKO
Romania's entry into the field was
not... ideal.

He glares at the...

ROMANIAN GENERAL across the table. Nervously, he reaches for
his water glass. Sweat is on his brow.

GENERAL GOURKO (CONT'D)
The Romanians ignored our plan.
Our suggestions, were disregarded.

The Romanian general CLEARS his throat, as his face radiates
an odd mixture of shame and hate.

GENERAL GOURKO (CONT'D)
We are forced to recognize that the
military value of our ally did not
match our hopes and expectations.

The Romanian General drinks from his glass.

GENERAL GOURKO (CONT'D)
Their feeble powers...

The Romanian tightens his grip on his water glass.

SOUND: SMASH!

ROMANIAN GENERAL
Feeble powers!

GENERAL GOURKO
Yes. Your army's lack of training
and feeble powers of resistance
have upset our calculations.

General #1 tosses the Romanian a napkin.

The Romanian shrinks back into his seat. Blood drips from his meaty palm.

NICHOLAS

Should we have someone look at that?

ROMANIAN GENERAL

Not necessary, Your Majesty. My apologies.

GENERAL #2

General Gourko speaks the truth. The Romanian Army is in utter disarray.

MARIE (V.O.)

Only three short months ago, Romania entered the war. Their task to finish off the already-beaten forces of Austria and Hungary. While their army looted the Austrians, the Romanians had forgotten about the Germans. Instead of a quick victory, the remains of the Romanian Army were barely able to return to the protection of their own borders. Without Russian counter-offensive, the Romanian Army would have been encircled and destroyed by the Germans.

The chamber's doors OPEN as the city's cathedral BELL toll sounding off the hours.

Intelligence OFFICER KRAKOVSKY appears.

GENERAL #1

Krakovsky!?! Can't you see that we are in the middle of a meeting?

The Tsar is thankful for the intrusion.

NICHOLAS

Come.

KRAKOVSKY

I apologize, Your Grace.

Krakovsky bows and hands the Sovereign a dispatch.

KRAKOVSKY (CONT'D)
It's a cable marked most urgent,
and from Her Majesty the Empress.

NICHOLAS
(in Russian)
Thank you, Krakovsky.
(in English)
You're dismissed.

The Tsar reads it.

EMPRESS (V.O.)
Our Friend has disappeared.
Yesterday Anna saw Him and he told
her that Felix had asked Him to
come to him at night; that a
motorcar, a military one, came to
take Him with two civilians, and he
left. Last night a great scandal at
Yusupov's house—a great gathering,
Dmitri, etc.—all drunk. Police
heard shots. 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 on us all. Felix came
often to him lately. Come quickly
home. Kisses. Sunny.

Nicholas turns white. His hands start to shake.

GENERAL GOURKO
Your Grace, is everything all
right?

Nicholas drops the dispatch to the floor.

NICHOLAS
(whispers)
Father Rasputin has disappeared.

The men around the table look at one another.

ROMANIAN GENERAL
This is the first good news we have
had in some time. No?!?

GENERAL GOURKO
 You forget that it was he that
 cured our Heir Apparent, General.

ROMANIAN GENERAL
 Ah, yes. My apologies, Your Grace.

NICHOLAS
 If he is truly dead, I fear the
 repercussions.

Alarmed, the Generals look at one another.

NICHOLAS (CONT'D)
 Prepare my train. I am needed back
 in the Capital.

SOUND: STEAM WHISTLE.

EXT. NICHOLAS STATION - NIGHT

Train STEAM WHISTLE.

INT. LIMO - NIGHT

A CHAUFFEUR driven limo heads to Nicholas's Station.

CHAUFFEUR
 Your train departs within the hour.

They drive along the Moika embankment.

Prince Felix peers out of his slightly frosted window.

FELIX
 Remember when we were boys, Serge?

The car approaches stops. The railroad station entrance is
 bloated with PEOPLE.

SERGE
 What's the commotion?

CHAFFEAUR
 Soldiers, Your Grace.

The Nicholas Station swarms with armed SOLDIERS checking
 every PASSENGER boarding the train to Crimea.

A COLONEL of the military police approaches the vehicle.

COLONEL
Prince Felix?

FELIX
Y-e-s.

COLONEL
By orders of Her Majesty the
Empress, you are forbidden to leave
the city.

FELIX
I am sorry, but that doesn't suit
me at all. My Wife and the warm
Crimean sun beckons me home.

COLONEL
Those are my orders.

Felix debates the situation.

FELIX
Serge, what would you do?

SERGE
Driver. Hotel Europe.

FELIX
Drinks! Splendid idea. Bye,
Colonel.

INT. HOTEL EUROPE - CAVIAR BAR - NIGHT

Caviar Bar is full and alive with GUESTS.

MARIE (V.O.)
A warped wake for Father Rasputin
is in full swing. All dressed in
their stiff, freshly pressed
uniforms. These regulars of the
rear salute one another with toasts
of God save Russia, the beast is
slain, and the ever clever, the dog
is dead. Exchanging smiles and
downing drinks, this rowdy crowd's
voices grows louder and louder. As
the bartenders open magnum after
magnum of Champagne. POP! POP! POP!
A new front on the home front,
opens up.

Felix and Serge sit in silence. Before them, rests a half
empty bottle of vodka.

Felix grabs the bottle and POURS into their glasses.

FELIX
One last toast and I must go.

SERGE
Any thing but Rasputin.

FELIX
S-e-r-g-e. You know I could not
hurt a fly. Fine.

SERGE
No. But could easily talk Dmitri
to.

Felix lowers his head in a salute.

FELIX
To Russia.

SERGE
To Russia.

FELIX/SERGE
(in Russian)
Cheers!

Felix and Serge down their drinks.

FELIX/SERGE (CONT'D)
Ahh!

FELIX
What are you going to tell Sandro?

SERGE
The truth.

FELIX
I tried to leave, but...

SERGE
I'm sure it will all get sorted out
soon.

FELIX
Most definitely.

Felix rises from his seat.

FELIX (CONT'D)
Thanks for the drinks Serge.

SERGE
(in Russian)
Good night.

FELIX
(in Russian)
Good night.

Serge POURS himself another drink. In the bar's mirror, he sees his old Oxford roommate strolling in.

SERGE
Barnaby Jones.

FELIX
Where?!? Oh, my.

SERGE
The hellion Welshmen lives on.

FELIX
Barely graduated from Oxford yet
he's fluent in five languages.

SERGE
Jones was never interested in the
academics.

FELIX
He prefers the energy of the
streets.

SERGE
His true major was rugby.

Jones waves to them.

BARNABY
Serge! Felix!

FELIX
Oh, shit. He sees me. I need to
vanish Serge.

SERGE
Why?

FELIX
The last time I drank with Jones,
it took me a week to recover.

SERGE
I will give him your regards. You
better run.

Felix waves to Jones and flees.

FELIX
Thanks Serge.

Felix disappears into the crowd.

He passes a table with Olga and Marie.

JONES
Felix was always a coward.
(In Russian)
Hi, Serge. Where have you been all day?

SERGE
Around. Jones, please take a seat.

JONES
Great party last night. At least, what I remember of it. The last thing I recall was you dancing on a table. Then, I blacked out.

SERGE
The sword dance?!? Brilliant. I am such a child at times.

JONES
Nonsense. The war has stolen our youth. Half our rugby roster is gone. The Somme.

SERGE
I know. So, what's up?

JONES
Today. Sir George pulled me into his office.

SERGE
Is he sending you back to Moscow already?

JONES
No. Worse.

SERGE
Worse?

JONES
He told me you Russians are negotiating a separate peace.

SERGE

Really. That's news to me.

JONES

Yep. Crazy fucking days. He said, certain ministers and members of your military have created this chaos that we're currently drowning in. As we speak, your Home Minister, Protopopov, is in known communication with Berlin.

SERGE

The Tsar will never accept a treaty as long as Germans stand on Russian land. That includes Poland.

JONES

Trust me. Something rotten is going on. The Monarchy is in jeopardy.

SERGE

Who's Monarchy, mine or yours?

JONES

Does it really matter?

SERGE

If what you say is true, why doesn't Sir George share this information with His Majesty at once?

JONES

He's at the Front.

SERGE

Jones, why are you telling me all this? I haven't left this bar in months.

JONES

It's your Father that's orchestrating the deal.

SERGE

What?!? Impossible.

Jones stands up.

JONES

That's what I was told.

SERGE
You know my Father.

JONES
He's a patriot. I know.

SERGE
None of this makes sense.

JONES
Nonetheless. Could you try to
arrange a meeting? Sir George
thinks...

SERGE
Jones, you know my family history.

JONES
I know. Try. For me.
(in Russian)
Good-bye.

Serge nods.

Jones leaves.

Serge waves down the BARTENDER.

SERGE
Another bottle.

NT. IMPERIAL YACHT CLUB - DRAWING ROOM - NIGHT

Vlad and Andrei sit in leather chairs facing one another.

MARIE (V.O.)
Cigar smoke lingers overhead like
spent thoughts of what could have
been. In 1894, when Nicholas's
father Tsar Alexander III was on
his deathbed, many questions had
been asked on the right of
secession. Most throughout the
Court supported Alexander's
brother, Grand Duke Vladimir,
Vlad's father and namesake. But,
before his death, Alexander told
the Court that he was passing the
Crown to his eldest son Nicholas
instead. At the time, Nicholas was
only twenty-six years of age, and
appeared to all to be too weak a
candidate to rule Russia.

(MORE)

MARIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Many disagreed with the Tsar's decision. But even on his deathbed, Alexander was a man to be feared. Passed over, Vladimir swore his vengeance. Jealousy quickly turned to hate after Alexander's death. Sadly, Vladimir the older was now dead. But, in his sons his hate lives on.

Vlad squeezes his massive bear-like body out of his tiny chair and approaches the mantelpiece.

VLAD

Nicki has sat in my seat long enough. We need to win this war. At all costs. A generation of young Russian boys lay butchered in fields of mud, and for what gain? Nothing! Morale is down, and poor morale can kill an army worse than any enemy's bayonets. We need a plan, and a new leader to administrate it.

ANDREI

I agree.

Andrei pulls down a fresh cigarette out from his case.

VLAD

Our fight is with the Austrians regarding the Balkan Straits and Constantinople.

ANDREI

I wish the Germans had captured Paris in 'Fourteen. The war in the would have been over before it started. How many millions have been slaughtered protecting that distant city of light?

VLAD

Four million, five? More?

ANDREI

I just returned from an inspection tour of the front. I did not like what I saw.

VLAD

The war is being run by fools.

ANDREI
Exactly, Brother.

VLAD
Pathetic. They are becoming experts
at retreat.

ANDREI
The butchery must end.

VLAD
We Russians have two Allies in this
world. Our Army, and our Navy.
Since our Navy was destroyed off
China's shores a decade ago, that
only leaves us our Army.

ANDREI
We sat back in 'O Four, and watched
Nicholas and his admirals destroy
our Pacific Fleet.

VLAD
We must ask ourselves, Brother.
Here and now, in the last hours of
Sixteen, if we are going to sit
back again and watch Nicholas and
his generals destroy the greatest
army in all the world?

ANDREI
Hell no!

VLAD
Good. For there was once a time not
so long ago when the Empire was
feared. So was its Emperor.

INT. HOTEL EUROPE - CAVIAR BAR - LATER

Serge's elbows rest on the bar. He refills his drink with the
last of the second bottle. SLASH. He is noticeably drunk.

SERGE
Ah, the fog of forgiveness returns.
Thank you.

Marie and Olga appear in the mirror.

Serge looks up to their reflection.

OLGA
Serge, why do you do this to
yourself?

SERGE
You see... I'm already dead. I
never survived the charge across...

Serge falls off his barstool.

SERGE (CONT'D)
I'm an imposter.

Marie and Olga catch him.

MARIE
Let's get you to bed, Serge.

FLASHBACK
BEGINS:

EXT. RUSSIAN FRONT - TRENCHES - DAY

Serge reads a dispatch.

SERGE
This can not be!?!

His best friend, MICHAEL RENKO looks up.

MICHAEL
What is it Serge?

SERGE
Sophia & Leo are...

Michael grabs the dispatch.

PLATON (V.O)
Son, I am heart broken to share
this with you. But this morning,
your dearest Sophia and Leo were
taken from us. They have been sick
all week...

MICHAEL
Serge, I am so...

SERGE
She's not dead!

Other RUSSIANS watch Serge as he springs up.

SERGE (CONT'D)
Both of them... gone.

Serge grabs his rifle. He inspects it.

MICHAEL
What do you think you're doing?

Serge climbs to top of the trenches.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
Serge, the Snipers!

SERGE
(in Russian)
Good-bye, Michael.

Michael attempts to grab Serge's leg but misses. His body slides down the mud wall.

MICHAEL
This fucking war.

EXT. GERMAN LINES - MACHINE GUN NEST - SAME TIME

German SOLIDERS watches Serge emerge.

CORPORAL
(in German)
Another Crazy Ivan, Sir!

Serge works his way in a zig zag fashion through the debris, the barbed wire, and the countless DEAD of No Man's Land.

A German CAPTAIN raises his binoculars.

CAPTAIN
(in German)
Madness. Hold your fire! Hold your fire. I'm up for some sport.

SERGE
Sophia!!!

CORPORAL
(in German)
Target practice, Sir?

SOLDIER #1
(in German)
Passes the time.