

*The
Legend
of
Grishka*

by
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ESTABLISH: SUPERIMPOSE: PETER & PAUL FORTRESS, 1917 - NIGHT.

NARRATION V/O

A year shall come of Russia's blackest
dread; then will the crown fall from
the royal head, the throne of Tsars
will perish in the mud, And the food
of many will be death and blood.

A hush fell over the snow flurried Petrograd skies as the Kazan Cathedral bells tolled ominously into the foreboding clatter of nervous aristocratic chatter that echoed throughout the dank corridors. A huge bullpen cell overflowing with political dissidents and the upper echelon of society was grumbling with discontent. The Tsarina and all of her children, prime ministers Sturmer & Golitsyn, minister of internal affairs Prince Andron Protopopov, Khvos and Anya Vyubova Tsarina's closet friend. Another bullpen directly across from that held the chief of police Beletsky, his assistant Alexis Vasiliev and all of his cronies, Count Fredericks, chairman of the council of state Schlegovitov, the palace castellan Voeikov, Archpriest Vostorgov Varnava, Bishop Isidor and the list went on and on, as far as the eye could see. Suddenly, a monstrous iron clank rang out and a long drag of the shaft made an echoing squeal that brought a frightening hush over the affluent captive crowd. The huge metal doors were being opened. Several guards walked in, the lead carrying a clipboard with a roster of names. Beletsky cried out.

Superimposed: Speaking Russian.

BELETSKY

Hey! HEY!! What's the meaning of
this!?! Do you know who I am!?!

GUARD

(spitting in his face)
Quiet *Mistkerl!* (swine!)

Completely shocked at the disrespect Beletsky angrily wipes his face fuming in disgust.

BELETSKY

That will cost you -- dearly.

As the Guard turned grining mockingly the Extraordinary Commission of the Provisional Government had begun convening. The First to be extracted was;

Stealthily eyeing the whole of the crowd for his first victim.

GUARD

(calling out)
Prince Andron Protopopov.

Prince Andron Protopopov looked up with defiance in his eyes, first at the guard then an expression of profound sincere devotion & respect, mingled with sadness and compassion came over him as his glance sought out the Tsarina. He spoke what everyone thought at that very moment.

PRINCE ANDRON

There is not one of us here whom
wouldn't give their life for the
Sovereign. God will not forsake him.
Remember, we alone must avenge the
blood of the just one.

The Tsarina grimaced a smile and uttered the words.

Superimposed: Speaking Russian.

TSARINA

Be strong.

He nodded and smirked a slight smile as he stood. The guard opened the cell and Prince Andron came forward to be shoved and prodded like a common criminal down the dark dank corridors of the fortress to stand before the commission. One by one they were all shunted and shuffled in front of the commission's executive council for interrogation.

INT. - COMMONHALL, PETER & PAUL FORTRESS -- NIGHT.

Five men, Tikhon, Rudnev, Muravyov, Tolstoy and Oblensky sat across from a center chair at an elevated table in the dimly lit room with the full force of their prognosticating presence bearing down on the interrogated. As the first victim came barreling through the huge iron double doors. After a mi'nute scuffle of defiance, Prince Andron was non-verbally and brutally ordered to sit.

TIKHON

I assume you know why you're here.

With a smirk of hard breath and wiping blood from the corner of his mouth he answers.

PRINCE ANDRON

The prison ball of course -- why I
wouldn't have missed it for the world.

Rudnev studies his response a moment before he answers.

RUDNEV

I head the Thirteenth. Investigating
illegal acts committed by thee, so
called -- "Dark Forces" of the Tsarist
regime, and -- to decide your fate.

PRINCE ANDRON

My fate? -- you would do well to concern yourself with thy own mortality. For you shall rue the day you were born, and when that day comes, rest assured I will be there.

TOLSTOY

Such loyalty to the Tsar.
Unbelievable.

ANDRON

You dare sit in judgment of me or any of the Tsar's loyal subjects. It is thee whom has violated the empire! Thee whom will stand accused (standing defiantly) and thee whom I shall see hung by the neck until you are dead!

MURAVYOV

(smug)

Oh -- In case you haven't heard, the Tsar -- abdicated, only hours ago, to the DUMA.

ANDRON

LIAR! All of you!

OBLENSKY

(holding a teletype)

I have here before me a...

Prince Andron rushes the table and snatches the paper out of his hands. The Guards rush him. A struggle ensues as the Prince's eyes race across the page in desperate hope of quelling Oblensky's words, but all he reads are the words of his king's abdication. Suddenly, without so much as a blow Andron lost his will and became docile.

OBLENSKY (CONT'D)

Are you satisfied?

Searching his inner mind for a reasonable explanation.

ANDRON

Impossible.

RUDNEV

Impossible, but true. We the people, are Absolute rule now.

Prince Andron ebbs back into the chair hearing the words ring in his ears, shaking his head "no" in disbelief and staring blankly into nothingness.

ANDRON

Nicholas. -- What hast thou done?

RUDNEV

Well -- Pride goeth before the fall.

(beat)

So, what we want to know is, what do you know of the Romanov boy's disease?

After a long moment, the Prince dilatorily eyed each person of the five member committee, furrowed his brow and let out a tiresome sigh of defeatism. Then hung his head lowly in his chest. Feeling completely overwhelmed and with no other options he spoke.

PRINCE ANDRON

All I know is what I've been told by the heir himself.

RUDNEV

And that is?

Another long sigh.

PRINCE ANDRON

One night, back in....

FADE TO:

INT. - ALEXANDRA PALACE, PETROGRAD, -- NIGHT.

Deep in the bowels of the royal palace, the Tsarina is dressed in a lavish ceremonial garb & head dress hovering before a two tier alter. The Rhesus she is carrying squeals with fright, as she gently tucks underneath and secures his head within the circular opening in the middle of the alter. She raises and we see the top half of the animal's head protruding vicariously through. She begins to chant to the heavens above as they reciprocate to her call with a heart stopping thunder clap and a streak of lightening that blazes across the sky. The momentary flash of light reveals a small boy on the top tier of the alter bleeding profusely from his nose. The chanting gets louder and more intense. The sacrificial animal shrieks in violent terror as it tries in vain to free itself from the ties that bind. The Tsarina parts her arms like a great eagle and raises her head to the sky. Another thunderous clap roars from the skies as the heavens release the pelting ice rains to the grounds below. She lowers her right arm onto the alter and raises a golden hatchet, then her left arm with another identical hatchet. As the lightening flashes again, fast and furious, she brings her arms down and inward into both sides of the vociferously squealing animal, removing his skull completely from his brain in perfect surgical precision. Chanting continuously as she raises up what appears to be a golden challis and blesses it in a Eucharistic fashion. Next, she reaches for what appears to be surgical equipment also laden in gold and proceeds to dissect small pieces of the brain. The Jackanapes is still alive and screaming while his brain is pumping fresh blood into the challis. Now the Tsarina goes over to the top tier of the

alter and puts the cup of blood to her son's lips. Suddenly, the doors to the dank vestry burst open. It is the Abbess.

ABBESS

Alexandra, stop this madness!

Her eyes dart up and in a heavy German accent she speaks the Russian tongue.

Superimposed: Speaking Russian.

TSARINA

Madness!?! -- Is thy power greater
than mine old woman.

ABBESS

That of the unholy saint is a far
greater power than you can ever
conjure.

The Tsarina ponders the answer a moment before responding as she comes to a startling realization.

TSARINA

Zen go, bring forth zis shaman to me --
for zere is much work to be done
here.

ABBESS

But I warn you, there will be a high
price to pay.

TSARINA

Zen pay it you shall, a king's ransom
if need be. Bring me ze whole of zis
shaman or your blood I will require
by zine own hands Abbess.

EXT./INT. THE YAR RESTAURANT -- STORMY NIGHT.

While the storm rages, a lively party is going on inside. An old man plays the violin with a manic energy as the small group of patrons gather round a drunken peasant dancing the infamous "Russian Dance". Everyone seems to be having a great time, entranced by a certain rhythmic mystique he possesses. Suddenly, the door to the tavern bursts open with a great gust of howling wind & rain that slightly startled the young gypsy bar maid. A prelude of a gloomy atmosphere began to seep in. She gazed into the ominous night for a moment then dilatorily ambled toward the door. An eerie mysticism crept upon the whole of the crowd as the old man's playing slowed, then came to a complete stop. One by one their eyes began to peer into the threshold of the dark stormy night. Something was very unsettling about that foreboding moment which had begun to mesmerize them all. Then a silhouette image appeared in the embrasure, a ghostly image, hauntingly hovering, dauntingly striking fear and terror into the very hearts of

the tavern patrons witnessing this apparition. Then it slowly materialized into the solid form of a cloaked & hooded figure. The eyes glistened but there was no face to be seen inside the vision before them. The whole crowd gasped in fear. Everyone, except the dancing peasant, of course, whom appeared to be more curious than frightened. The figure seemed to float vicariously across the room and speak the raspy words.

ABBESS

Come forth sinner who heals. -- You
have been chosen.

Bishop Feofan quickly jumps in front of Rasputin holding his cross firmly in front of him as if to stave off this evil.

FEOFAN

There will be no grim reaping here
this night! Get thee behind me demon!

ABBESS

(roaring)
BLASPHEMER!!! (Ominously speaking)
Impede this destiny and the wrath of
God will befall you all!

Rasputin lays his hand on the shoulder of his friend and assures him in motion that he will be okay as he slowly comes forward.

RASPUTIN

Be not afraid. -- Amongst those of
you whom stand before me now, some
will remain loyal and True. Others
will seek to Destroy me. But know
this, I will always remember you as
you are this very evening. Loving
And true. For thee 'morrow Brings,
the pain of the future.

With that, Rasputin and the Abbess disappeared into the stormy winter night.

CU - BACK TO: ALEXANDRA PALACE -- NIGHT.

The Abbess returned to the dank dark tunnels of the palace below with Rasputin. She found the Empress and the Montenegro women chanting over the alter. The Empress sensed their presence and turns.

EMPRESS

Are you ze Necromancer brought fought
in ze vision of ze soothsayer?

RASPUTIN

I am he. (Bowing) Saint Gregory --
at your service.

EMPRESS

And you know of zis illness zat has
befallen ze heir apparent?

RASPUTIN

I know of "the cure".

CU-TO: MILITZA PRODUCES A BALL OF FLAMES IN THE PALM OF HER
HANDS AND TOSSES IT AT RASPUTIN'S UNFLINCHING FEET.

RASPUTIN (CONT'D)

This dark magic you Black women create
serves only to weaken the heir
apparent's resolve to live. If you
do not cease this blasphemy the child
shall surely die - this night.

STANA

(shrieking contempt)

Yooooour words beguile ze Empress...

EMPRESS

Silence! -- Ze Abbess shall speak.
(@ Abbess) Is his magic true?

ABBESS

His is no magic at all. For he is
the truth. The true power to heal,
lay within him.

Pondering a moment.

EMPRESS

Zen it is he whom shall vork his
vonders upon my son zis night.

MILITZA

Heed my warning Empress. From this
night forth, there is no return.

EMPRESS

From zis night forth, I gladly go to
ze unknown, to spare ze one true
heir to ze throne, an untimely death.
(@ Rasputin) So I command you peasant.
If it is saint zat you truly be, do
as you must, save my son.

To the total chagrin of the Montenegro sisters Rasputin is
directed to take their place atop the alter. He surveys the
primitive tribal like ceremony in disgust.

RASPUTIN

This will not do. The child must be
brought to the highest point in the
palace. (@ Empress) Where might that
be?

EMPRESS

Ze rooftop gardens.

RASPUTIN

Then we must hurry, time is of the essence if we are to save the heir apparent tonight. I will need a bible, some holy water and (grasping his oversized wooden cross hanging from his neck) this.

Rasputin lifts the boy off the alter and hastily exits the bowels of the palace for the rooftop.

CU-TO: THE ROOFTOP OF ALEXANDRA PALACE -- STORMY NIGHT.

It's still pouring and the electrical storm has become more turbulent. Rasputin steps away from the others with the young heir in his arms. Quickly, he places the boy on the ground and opens the bible. He searches frantically for a certain scripture, looks to the heavens above for guidance, makes the stations of the cross and begins to pray. Then he opens the small vile of holy water, pours some into the child's mouth and he drinks the rest. Again he looks to the heavens above as if he were searching the skies for an answer, running out of time. He desperately grabs the bible again and rips the pages out of them. He licks them with his tongue and sticks the pages to the child's forehead and bleeding nose. Then He perches himself upon the highest ledge and raises the boy up in a sacrificial offering to the heavens above. He begins to chant feverishly as the storm rages on. The Empress watches in hopeless despair, the Abbess in admiration and the Montenegro sisters in bitter resentment. Suddenly, a bolt of lightening crashes down striking a column just inches from Rasputin and shattering it to pieces. Rasputin is unfazed by the violent display of mother nature as he continues to pray. He moves closer still to the edge of the palace wall, balancing himself like a tightrope walker on a high wire, holding the child even higher.

POV - RASPUTIN - A QUICK GLANCE AT A PEBBLE AS IT FELL AWAY FROM THE LEDGE REVEALED CERTAIN DOOM WITH ONE WRONG STEP.

Then another streak of lightening blazes from the heavens above, this time hitting Rasputin and the child with a blinding light singeing the ground beneath them. The Empress screams in fright. Everyone falls back in anticipation of total destruction of the two people. But to the onlookers amazement, everything around Rasputin and the boy has been burnt to a searing crisp except them. As the billowing smoke dissipates the Empress just barely makes out Rasputin's luminescent eyes ominously glowing and peering deep into the boy's soul. Rasputin and the child come down from the perched position. He cradles the heir in his arms rocking back and forth falling to his knees and sinking his head into the chest of the boy weeping deep emotional sobs of despair. The Empress races toward them.

EMPRESS
 Noooooooooooo!!!!!! You promised!

Rasputin raises his head, eyes spellbinding, stopping the Empress in her tracks. Stealthly raising from the ground with the boy in his arms.

EMPRESS (CONT'D)
 (trembling voice)
 Vhat (swallowing) have you done
 Necromancer?

Beat.

RASPUTIN
 (humbly)
 Only what was asked of me, my lady.

As Rasputin offers the boy out to the Empress, the dawn of a new day breaks over the horizon and snow flurries cloud the skies. She notices there isn't a scratch on either of them. But -- more importantly, there's no movement from the Heir.

EMPRESS
 (Eyeing his motionless body) You
 have betrayed me!

RASPUTIN
 Have I? -- it is not me whom you
 bargain with, but your own deity. I
 am just the vessel in which he chooses
 to perform. -- Look closer, not with
 your eyes, but with your heart. --
 With your heart.

The Heir stirs in his arms, opens his eyes and smiles. No signs of bleeding anywhere. The Empress realizes Rasputin didn't kill her child.

EMPRESS
 (sobbing)
 Aloysha, my God...

As Rasputin's words echoed through her sobbs she clutched away her child in a deep emotional embrace.

NARRATION V/O
 And so it began, the Empress's
 covenant with the unholy saint. The
 Rasputa legends. The coming days and
 months would bring great changes
 within the royal dynasty. The crosses
 of Kazan and St. Isaac's cathedral
 would surely bend, and the fall of
 an empire would be contributed to --
 a peasant.