

## The Scribe

**OVER BLACK:**

The sound of many horses GALLOPING.

**FADE IN:**

**SUPER: RUSSIAN EMPIRE, AUGUST 1897**

(NOTE: All dialogue is in English with a Russian accent.)

**EXT. DIRT ROAD - NIGHT**

It's very dark, but in the moonlight we can see many horsemen in red Russian Royal uniforms, wool hats, tall black boots, with their long sabers holstered at their sides.

They gallop closer. Besides the sound of their HOOVES, WHINNYING and SNORTING of the horses can be heard.

Dust flies up from the dirt road as they rush through a charming rustic village of unpainted wooden houses with grass growing on the roofs.

**EXT. WOODEN HOUSE - NIGHT**

HAPPY RUSSIAN MUSIC is heard coming from one of the candlelit houses in the distance.

The music gets LOUDER as the horsemen approach the house.

**INT. WOODEN HOUSE - NIGHT**

VLADIMIR KAMINSKAYA (early 30's, in peasant tunic clothes, reddish hair, glasses, mustache, short red beard) SINGS as he plays RUSSIAN MUSIC on his BALALAIKA in a large candlelit room.

His 20-ish wife, SVETLANA (small mole on her right cheek, apron over her plain peasant skirt and blouse) dances in front of the fireplace with their four-year-old barefoot daughter, ELIZABETH (reddish-brown hair, brown eyes, in pink smocked dress).

**EXT. WOODEN HOUSE - NIGHT**

The horsemen stop in front of the house.

One rider, SERGEI ABRAMEVICH (with very long mustache) jumps off his horse. He approaches the door as another soldier holds onto Sergei's reins.

Sergei BANGS on the door. He twirls the end of his mustache then BANGS again. The music stops.

**INT. WOODEN HOUSE - NIGHT**

Vladimir looks out through the lace curtains in the window.

His eyes widen in fear.

He turns around, signals to Svetlana and Elizabeth to be quiet.

BANGING on the door again is heard inside. Svetlana angrily motions to Vladimir to go open the door.

Vladimir shakes his head. He is afraid.

Svetlana motions insisting he do.

**EXT. WOODEN HOUSE - NIGHT**

The rusty door CREAKS as it opens slowly.

Vladimir is shocked to see the man at his door.

He looks at the other men on horses behind, all look similar with long mustaches and long beards.

He notices two riderless horses.

He looks at SERGEI whose face is lit by the candlelight coming from inside.

SERGEI  
Are you Vladimir Kaminskaya?

Vladimir nods nervously, looks at the men on horses again.

SERGEI (CONT'D)

I am Sergei Abramevich of his  
Majesty's Royal Court. Tsar  
Nicolas II demands your presence.  
You are to come with us.

Vladimir's body shakes in dreaded fear.

VLADIMIR

But why? I have done nothing wrong.

Svetlana rushes to Vladimir holding Elizabeth.

She stands directly behind him, looks out to see all the  
men on horses.

SERGEI

Get on the horse. I have no time  
to explain. His Royal Highness is  
waiting.

SVETLANA

Vladimir, what's happening? Are  
you being arrested?

VLADIMIR

I don't know, Svetlana. Go back  
inside.

She stays at the door watching Vladimir and Sergei get on  
the horses and GALLOP off.

**EXT. WINTER PALACE - NIGHT**

Vladimir, Sergei, and the horsemen ride under an arch to  
enter the red with yellow trimmed palace. Only the sound of  
the horses' HOOVES on the cobblestones is heard.

**INT. GREAT THRONE ROOM - NIGHT**

Vladimir sweats profusely as he follows Sergei through

white gilded doors revealing a long ornate rectangular room. The sound of PEOPLE TALKING suddenly stops.

As Vladimir walks, he looks up at the three-tiered chandeliers and the white columns along the sides of the room.

He notices several people looking at him as they walk along the second-floor balcony that surrounds the room.

MUFFLED VOICES are heard as Vladimir sees the 29-year-old Tsar seated in the distance. TSAR NICHOLAS II, who wears a black uniform and red sash, sits on his red and gold throne as he speaks to his wife, the TSARINA, seated next to him.

Sergei stops at the bottom of the red carpeted stairs leading up to the Tsar. He quickly bows.

SERGEI

Your Majesty.

He backs up, joins many other men in black uniform with blue sashes standing to the side.

Vladimir fearfully stands alone in front of the first step to the throne. It is eerily quiet now.

He looks up, notices the wall behind the Tsar having a two-headed gold eagle on red tapestry, the Tsar's symbol of power.

Vladimir has a closer look at the handsome Tsar (well-trimmed beard, long mustache curved to the sides) wearing a jewel-encrusted hat-like crown with brown mink around the edges. The display of jewels is over-the-top displaying great wealth.

Vladimir gulps.

He eyes the Tsar's stunning German wife, ALEXANDRA (golden-brown hair, large blue eyes), seated to the left of the Tsar holding their 6-month baby daughter, TATIANA.

He notices the Tsarina's elaborately embroidered white lace

dress, blue sash, pearl necklace, diamond and pearl crown.

He watches the baby squirm in the Tsarina's lap. It CRIES.

TSARINA ALEXANDRA

Hush, Tatiana.

The Tsar furrows his brows as he takes note of Vladimir eyeing his wife.

Vladimir sees a daughter, 2 years, named OLGA (blue eyes, light chestnut hair, short snubby nose), dressed like the Tsarina. She sits on floor next to her mother.

Alexandra looks to the plain-looking Irish Nanny, MARGARETTA, on her left who speaks with a Limerick accent.

TSARINA ALEXANDRA (CONT'D)

Margaretta, take Olga and  
Tatiana to the nursery.

MARGARETTA

(bowing)

Yes, Your Majesty.

Nicholas watches the Nanny leave with the children. He looks at Vladimir.

TSAR NICHOLAS

You are Vladimir Kaminskaya?

Vladimir nods his head slowly in a kind of bow.

VLADIMIR

I am, Your Majesty.

TSAR NICHOLAS

I am told you are the only one  
in the village who knows how to  
read and write. Is that so?

Vladimir looks at the Tsar.

VLADIMIR

Yes, Sire, in seven languages,  
French, English, Italian, Russian,  
German, Polish, and Yiddish.

The Tsar's posture straightens. He furrows his brows, looks displeased.

TSAR NICHOLAS

You are a Jew?

Vladimir looks down, fearful of what might happen if he says "yes". BIG SIGH before he looks up at the Tsar.

VLADIMIR

(sotto voce)

Yes, Sire.

Vladimir looks at Sergei, then back at the Tsar.

VLADIMIR (CONT'D)

Your Majesty, is that a problem?

TSAR NICHOLAS

I thought my father, Tsar  
Alexander, expelled all the  
Jews during the Pogrom.

Vladimir looks sadly down at the floor.

Nicholas studies Vladimir for a few silent seconds.

VLADIMIR

(raises his head)

Your Majesty, have I done  
something wrong? Am I being  
accused of something?

Nicholas looks at his wife, who is smiling. The Tsar relaxes his posture.

TSAR NICHOLAS

Vladimir Kaminskaya, I have  
heard you are a good man, that  
you are a hard worker and do  
as you are told.

Vladimir nods his head over and over nervously in agreement.

TSAR NICHOLAS (CONT'D)

I have decided that you will be my scribe. You will write the legal documents and laws as I decree. You will also write my messages so the leaders of other countries who do not speak our language will understand what I am saying. You will also translate all replies and books I wish to read. Do you understand?

Vladimir is relieved, smiles.

VLADIMIR

Yes, Sire.

TSAR NICHOLAS

You will always be available to me. You will live in a guest room at each palace with your wife and child, and you will be well-provided.

The Tsarina nods.

TSARINA ALEXANDRA

I hear your wife is a good cook.

Vladimir's eyebrows rise, surprised the Tsarina knows that.

VLADIMIR

Yes, a great cook, your Majesty. She makes the most delicious breaded cutlets.

TSAR NICHOLAS

Well then, she will cook alongside my chef, Pierre Cubat.

VLADIMIR

She will be honored, your Majesty.



Nicholas leans forward in his throne, looks sternly at Vladimir.

TSAR NICHOLAS

You will be carefully watched at all times Vladimir Kaminskaya. You and your family will not leave this palace or its gardens for any reason unless I command it. Again, do you understand?

Vladimir nods.

Tsar Nicholas motions Sergei to come forward.

TSAR NICHOLAS (CONT'D)

Sergei here, will show you to your quarters. We will start in the morning.

VLADIMIR

Yes, Sire. Thank you.

Nicholas waves them away.

Vladimir and Sergei bow as they walk backwards a few steps, then turn around, and head for the door.

Vladimir leans closer to Sergei.

VLADIMIR (CONT'D)

(sotto voce)

What happened to the last scribe?

SERGEI

He was executed for disobeying the Tsar.

Vladimir's eyes widen.

**INT. WOODEN HOUSE - NIGHT**

Svetlana, with Elizabeth on her lap, sit by the fireplace. Vladimir walks in through the door. Svetlana puts Elizabeth

down, anxiously rushes over, hugs him. Elizabeth follows.

SVETLANA

Is everything alright?

Vladimir has a serious look. He grabs her face with his two hands. He kisses her, looks into her eyes.

VLADIMIR

Everything is good, Svetlana.  
In fact, it's great. I am to be  
the Tsar's scribe.

SVETLANA

The scribe?

VLADIMIR

Yes. Can you believe it? Me, the  
Tsar's scribe.

SVETLANA

That is a very big honor, Vladimir.

He has a worried expression.

VLADIMIR

It is, but I'm afraid I'm not  
good enough. If he realizes he  
made a mistake, I'll be executed.

SVETLANA

If the Tsar chose you, then he  
was sure you would be the best  
scribe. And you would, Vladimir.  
You are very smart, the smartest  
person in the village.

He looks down as he thinks about this, then smiles broadly  
as he looks at her.

VLADIMIR

Perhaps you are right, Svetlana.  
Yes, I would make a good scribe.  
And you, Svetlana, are to be a  
cook in the palace.

SVETLANA  
Me? The Tsar's cook?

Vladimir nods.

VLADIMIR  
And Elizabeth will grow up and  
be tutored in the palace.

Svetlana clasps her hands together as if in prayer.

SVETLANA  
God has smiled on us, Vladimir.

Vladimir picks up his Balalaika and plays HAPPY RUSSIAN  
MUSIC as Svetlana and Elizabeth dance.

**FADE OUT.**