

Episode: #110.5

# THE GREAT

OF DIPLOMACY & DANCING BEARS

Season 1.5

Episode #110.5

Written by

Taylor Moorey

Based on The Great, by  
Tony McNamara

BLUE PAGE REVISIONS (01-18-23)

mooreytaylor@gmail.com

FADE IN:

**OMITTED**

**EXT. PALACE GROUNDS - DAY**

The Winter Palace, standing tall and proud and gleaming in the sunlight. The oppressive aura of Imperial Russia is nowhere to be found.

CATHERINE (O.S.)  
You know I want peace, and you know  
I want what's best for Russia.

A thrush FLITTERS about and lands delicately on the ethereal bough of a tree, and preens itself.

BANG!

The bird EXPLODES into a puff of pink mist and feathers.

**INT. LONG HALLWAY - DAY**

The opulent palace halls are in chaos. GUNFIRE, barricades of wooden crates, bear traps, SCREAMING MEN dying.

Like a Roman tortoise formation, a ring of SOLDIERS in uniform, bristling with bayonets, hustles down the corridor, protecting their VIP:

CATHERINE (20), brash, determined, and a tinge naive, walks with her general, VELEMENTOV (early-50's), an experienced and grizzled soldier and recovering alcoholic.

CATHERINE  
This is a coup, yes, but it is  
unlike one the world has ever seen.  
It is to be bloodless. Calm.  
Diplomatic. A ceremonial passing of  
power from one hand to another.  
Cool heads will prevail.

They travel the halls, firing the odd SHOT at the barely-distinguishable members of Peter's loyalists.

A molotov cocktail hurtles overhead, directly into Velementov's hand. He grips it, then hurls it back. It SMASHES. FWOOM! Fire devours its surroundings, and a man SCREAMS.

The ring of soldiers reaches the end of the hallway, and like a well-oiled machine, they part to allow Catherine and Velementov to exit, their protective cloister, and they walk through the giant, heavy doors of Catherine's apartments.

**INT. CATHERINE'S APARTMENT - DAY**

Catherine and Velementov enter the gaudy Russian apartments.

CATHERINE

So why the fuck is Peter being such a dickhead about it?

ORLO (O.S.)

He's a dickhead about most things.

Startled, Catherine and Velementov look up to see:

ORLO (mid-30's), bookishness personified, sitting in a chair with a rag to his bloody forehead. He is bruised and contused.

VELEMENTOV

What happened to you?

ORLO

Archie. Beat me with a Bible.

VELEMENTOV

Bit on the nose, isn't he?

CATHERINE

Can we focus? Now, I have just received word that nobles from around Russia are on their way to support my claim.

ORLO

Seems he couldn't keep his cock limited to the court.

CATHERINE

Exactly. Though, this is more a cock made of bad tax policy.

ORLO

Seems you can fuck a man's wife, but not his wallet.

VELEMENTOV

You can say that again.

CATHERINE

ANYWAY. They are bringing entire armies with them. With the opposition so clearly stacked against him, Peter will have no choice but to abdicate peacefully.

VELEMENTOV

Is that before or after we mount his head on a spike?

CATHERINE

There will be no heads on spikes. How have the traps been working, Velementov?

VELEMENTOV

As intended. We've captured two-hundred soldiers, another hundred-fifty defected, and wounded a good number of their men.

CATHERINE

See? I knew it! Diplomacy will prevail, gentlemen. Huzzah!

VELEMENTOV

Huzzah.

ORLO

Huzzah.

An awkward beat. The natural move here would be to smash your shot glass. But they are without their celebratory props.

VELEMENTOV (CONT'D)

I wish we had glasses to smash.

Orlo rises with difficulty and trudges to his Empress.

ORLO

Peter has seized all the vodka.

VELEMENTOV

Fucking monster.

CATHERINE

Indeed. Orlo, please fetch a list of all the nobles coming. I must know them intimately. Velementov, I need the halls under control before their arrival.

VELEMENTOV

Under control?

CATHERINE  
Yes! You know... clean! Cozy! Not  
reeking of blood and shit.

VELEMENTOV  
We'll do our best.

CATHERINE  
Thank you both. You are dismissed.

Both Velementov and Orlo bow and head out the door.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)  
Marial... oh right.

Catherine looks around. She is utterly alone.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)  
Shit.

**INT. LONG HALLWAY - DAY**

Orlo and Velementov walk unbothered down the hallway in  
chaos.

VELEMENTOV  
She still seems to think we can win  
this by being nice.

A bullet WHIZZES by.

ORLO  
She's an idealist. Have the traps  
really been working?

They walk past a row of heads on spikes.

VELEMENTOV  
Orlo, you must understand, the  
fluid situation of the coup  
requires many factors to come into  
play.

Velementov draws his pistol and fires off-screen. A SOLDIER'S  
head blows open. Velementov takes his musket, fires, dumps  
it.

VELEMENTOV (CONT'D)  
Meaning that one cannot always  
anticipate every moving part and  
must adapt to the situation at  
hand.

ORLO

Meaning you haven't been trying.

VELEMENTOV

Why should I? That cunt, Svenska is trying to kill us. Fights are not won with a kind word. They're won with bullets and blood.

ORLO

Books, too, apparently.

VELEMENTOV

How the hell did he beat you with a Bible, anyway?

ORLO

(beat)

It was a big Bible.

INSERT: TITLE CARD: THE GREAT\* \*AN OCCASIONALLY TRUE STORY  
IN THIS ECONOMY?!

**INT. PETER'S APARTMENT - DAY**

A NAKED SERF (mid-40's), dances lamely in front of a wall of the grandiose Emperor's apartments. A sludgy, rotten sugar beet collides with his face.

LADY SVENSKA, GEORGINA, GRIGOR, ARKADY, and TATYANA (all early to mid-30's), ranging from conniving and opportunistic vipers to just plain stupid, all divert themselves pelting dancing SERFS with rotten fruit.

LADY SVENSKA

Peter, come! Do not sit there all alone.

GEORGINA

It's oh so much fun.

GRIGOR

I once heard of a lady who could shoot apricots out of her cunt.

ARKADY

Is that true?

GRIGOR

Hand to God. Now stop pouting and start pelting.

Georgina shifts her skirts to reveal PETER (early-30's), a nightmarish, mercurial man-child, sitting between her legs.

PETER

I'm not pouting. I'm thinking.

TATYANA

Why would you do that?

PETER

Well if you haven't noticed, I am most fucking inconvenienced right now. I am a prisoner in my own apartment, it's hard to sleep because everyone is so fucking noisy all the time. I need to not be here right now. I need... I need a vacation.

TATYANA

Ooo a vacation, Arkady! We can visit my cousins in Minsk. And I've always wanted to see Milan.

GEORGINA

Well if we want to take a vacation, we have to take action.

PETER

Like an itinerary?

GEORGINA

No, I mean stop this silly coup.

LADY SVENSKA

My husband is already working on that. That speech you gave him really worked.

GRIGOR

Aw, I missed a speech?

TATYANA

Do the speech!

Peter stands, puts a foot on a chair and puts on his best magnanimous leader face.

PETER

Colonel Svenska: Kill those fucking cunts.

APPLAUSE from the lackies. The serfs enjoy the break.

PETER (CONT'D)  
 Don't stop dancing.  
 (beat)  
 I need something to stop the coup  
 and win Catherine's affection. One  
 fell swoop.

GRIGOR  
 She likes bears.

Peter is excited!

PETER  
 Brilliant! Yes! She's probably  
 forgotten all about it, but I shot  
 her bear once.

LADY SVENSKA  
 (happily)  
 You also punched her.

PETER  
 Certainly sounds like me. But what  
 if we got some bears and trained  
 them...

**INT. PALACE HALLS PETER'S IMAGINATION - DAY**

Peter's dreamy vision of the current situation in the halls. SOLDIERS are fighting savagely, and a thin, white haze hangs over every inch of the palace halls.

PETER (O.S.)  
 They could be unstoppable killing  
 machines. Every Russian loves and  
 fears bears.

Suddenly, huge shadows fall over them.

A squad of BEARS charge through the throngs of fighting men, mauling and killing with claw and fang.

PETER (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
 They would kill that fat fuck and  
 Orlo.

Velementov and Orlo are torn apart in an exaggerated, gory spectacle.



**INT. OUTSIDE CATHERINE'S APARTMENT PETER'S IMAGINATION - DAY**

PETER (O.S.)  
And then delight Catherine with a  
dance.

Catherine opens the door of her apartment. The bear squad bows to her, then stand on their hind legs and dance in a chorus line.

**INT. PETER'S APARTMENT PETER'S IMAGINATION - DAY**

PETER (O.S.)  
And then we engage in a raucous  
fuck.

Peter and Catherine are happily fucking on a table. He smiles and gives us a thumbs up.

**INT. PETER'S APARTMENT - DAY**

PETER  
And then it's off to St. Petersburg  
for food, fun, and more fucking!

GRIGOR  
(pointing to serfs)  
Can they come?

PETER  
Can they? They have to!

Peter hurls food. SPLAT!

**EXT. FOREST - DAY**

LEO (early-20's), Catherine's stalwart court-appointed lover, is surrounded by COSSACK GUARDS.

LEO  
You hear that, right? Those shots.  
That's a revolution. That's  
progress.

RUDE GUARD  
We're not the Empress' cunt. Don't  
wag your tongue at us.

LEO

Is this all you want to do? All you want to be? Do you not want better for your families?

PETER LOYALIST

My family's dead.

LEO

And how many more families are being destroyed right now?

PETER LOYALIST

Many, I'm sure. After all, it's 'progress'.

RUDE GUARD

How about I progress a bullet into your skull?

LEO

Without the Emperor's leave? That's treason. But as free citizens of Russia, you could kill as you please...?

RUDE GUARD

(beat)

He's got a point.

**INT. CATHERINE'S BEDROOM - DAY**

Catherine sits at her desk, surrounded by books and papers, Orlo seated behind her and pouring over the documents.

ORLO

I have compiled a list of all the visiting delegates, nobles, their spouses...

Sheets and sheets of paper. Catherine feigns confidence.

CATHERINE

Oh! Well, that's quite a lot.

ORLO

Afraid so.

CATHERINE

No matter. Who do we have here?

ORLO

Well, there's Grigory Vasiliv. The south-eastern Cossacks will mostly follow his example, so gaining his support will be important.

CATHERINE

No problem.

(writes as she speaks)

Grigory... Vasiliv... important!  
Excellent. What's next?

ORLO

Well, gaining his support could mean angering Yemelyan Bryukhanov. Not as powerful or influential as Vasiliv, but they are at odds.

CATHERINE

(writing, fumbling)

Bruk-nov...

ORLO

Bryukhanov.

CATHERINE

(half-confident)

Yemelyan... Bryu...

Catherine trails off into a half-mumble.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)

I'm the Empress - I can please all my subjects.

ORLO

Oh certainly, but then you have to worry about the Voronezh who will feel as though they are being left behind. And the Voronezh are at odds with the merchant families of Poltava and Taganrog, and in Poltava, they are extremely loyal to Aleksandr Chirikov, a close friend of Grigory Vasiliv. Oh, and his wife is the Lady Tarakanova, she's probably in bed with... am I going too fast?

CATHERINE

Just a touch.

ORLO

Okay.

Orlo RUSTLES through some papers and pulls one up, TAPPING it with his finger.

ORLO (CONT'D)

There is a woman coming among them:  
Darya Nikolayevna. Her father  
was--

CATHERINE

Orlo.

ORLO

Yes?

CATHERINE

Broad strokes, please.

ORLO

Right. Darya is a monster.

CATHERINE

Like Peter?

ORLO

Worse. She beats and she murders  
serfs. But nobody dares lift a  
finger. You want their support?  
Execute her.

CATHERINE

Orlo! We are here to end violence,  
not give in to it. If we murder all  
willy-nilly, we are no better than  
Peter. I won't hear any more of  
this. Leave me to study. And for  
fuck's sake, please go see Chekov.

Orlo stands, bows, and takes up some books as he leaves.

Catherine leafs through the pages and pages before her.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)

Fuck.

#### **INT. PALACE STAIRWELL - DAY**

Before a great staircase, a trip wire lies in wait, spanned  
low across the floor in front of the staircase.

COLONEL SVENSKA (mid-30's), Peter's beleaguered general,  
leads a group of soldiers. He stops.

COLONEL SVENSKA  
It's quiet. Too quiet. You.

He beckons. Three SOLDIERS step forward, and hit the tripwire.

It SNAPS and LOGS drop from the ceiling, roll down the stairs, and bowl through Svenska's fleeing men.

COLONEL SVENSKA (CONT'D)  
Really? Logs? Fucking logs!

A volley of GUN FIRE resounds in the hall.

COLONEL SVENSKA (CONT'D)  
Shit!

Svenska presses himself to the wall, behind a column.

VELEMENTOV (O.S.)  
How do you like that, Svenska? You  
shit.

COLONEL SVENSKA  
(sarcastic and furious)  
Oh, very clever. Big sticks. Here,  
let me grab a rock and bash your  
fucking face in with it.

Velementov and a row of MEN with fresh rifles appear at the top of the stairs.

VELEMENTOV  
If it's so stupid, then why did  
your men fall for it?

COLONEL SVENSKA  
I am sorry, I thought we were  
fighting a war, not just playing at  
it.

VELEMENTOV  
Yet you march your men in a line  
down a narrow hallway, without  
regard for a chokepoint? Might as  
well shout "Kill us, please!"

COLONEL SVENSKA  
A line is the optimal method of  
infantry fire and you know it.

VELEMENTOV  
Go fuck yourself.

COLONEL SVENSKA

No! You go fuck yourself, you fat virgin!

VELEMENTOV

Virgin?!

Velementov fires. His men follow suit and a volley of GUN FIRE is exchanged on either side.

**INT. CATHERINE'S BEDROOM - DAY**

Catherine sits alone, overwhelmed and straining to remain cheerful.

SYLVANA (early-20's), the new passive and obedient maid, enters.

SYLVANA

Tea, Empress?

CATHERINE

No, thank you, Mar-- sorry, Sylvana. But come! Sit!

Sylvana sits awkwardly near Catherine.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)

I am researching famous negotiations throughout history. For instance, France and the Americas signed treaties and alliances. Can you imagine? An ocean of cultural differences between them, and they managed to come to an understanding. Marvellous!

SYLVANA

Indeed.

CATHERINE

It makes one wonder: How to bridge the gap between yourself, and another? It is interesting to ponder with the nobles on their way; we speak the same language, but also a different one: Violence. What do you think?

SYLVANA

I don't know.

CATHERINE

You must have some idea. You've lived in Russia your entire life. What goes through your mind every day?

SYLVANA

Whether you want tea.

CATHERINE

I see. Has there been any word from Elizabeth?

SYLVANA

No.

CATHERINE

Okay. I'm going to go for a walk.

Catherine gets up and starts to leave.

SYLVANA

It's not safe, Empress.

CATHERINE

I know!

**INT. CATHERINE'S APARTMENT - DAY**

Catherine paces anxiously. In walks VOLTAIRE (late-40's), wise, vulgar, and unbothered by the palace violence.

CATHERINE

Voltaire!

VOLTAIRE

Hm. So that's what's down here.

He turns to leave.

CATHERINE

Wait, wait, wait! Can we talk?

VOLTAIRE

We can do a great many things. We are, after all, humans.

CATHERINE

Quite right. What do you think of... this whole... mess?

VOLTAIRE

War is the greatest of all crimes;  
and yet there is no aggressor who  
does not color his crime with the  
pretext of justice. To the wicked,  
everything serves as pretext.

CATHERINE

That was wonderful. And so true.

VOLTAIRE

Thank you. I thought of it. Peter  
has made his bed. But I caution  
you. Do you too want to lie in it?

CATHERINE

Certainly not. I want to be on the  
side of enlightenment and progress.

VOLTAIRE

Wonderful. I'm leaving now.

Voltaire leaves.

CATHERINE

Thank you for the advice, Voltaire!  
What a wonderful sentence. Huzzah!

Catherine turns and sees Sylvana staring back. Catherine  
smiles and waves.

**INT. CHAPEL - DAY**

ARCHIE (mid-40's), the underhanded Orthodox archbishop, spurs  
on GUARDS carrying a huge chest inside.

ARCHIE

Hurry, now. Hurry. Set it down  
here.

They put it down with a THUNK.

ARCHIE (CONT'D)

Off with you.

The guards leave. As they do, a GUNSHOT rings out and one of  
their heads EXPLODES in gore, splattering the door.

ARCHIE (CONT'D)

JESUS--

(recovering)

Christ protect you, sir.



Archie slams and barricades the door. He runs to the chest, unlocks and opens it.

MARIAL (early-30's), fiery and loyal to a fault, gets out and stretches.

MARIAL  
Are we safe here?

ARCHIE  
We are safe.

Marial looks at the bloody door.

ARCHIE (CONT'D)  
Safe-ish. It is Gods' will.

MARIAL  
Right. Speaking of God's will, for God's sake, when will Peter make me a lady again?

ARCHIE  
I'm afraid he's busy at present. If you've not noticed, the palace is in a state of flux, at the moment. A state that you helped stir up.

MARIAL  
I tried to stop it.

ARCHIE  
She's pregnant.

MARIAL  
Yes.

ARCHIE  
She is in an ill humour. I've heard Chekov say that it can lead to women acting irrationally.

MARIAL  
If every pregnancy led to war, there would be no men in charge.

ARCHIE  
Or only men.

Marial looks at Archie.

MARIAL  
It's worse - she has hope.

ARCHIE

Hope without God is a fool's hope.  
She must come to Him or die, and it  
seems she has chosen death.

MARIAL

She's my friend.

ARCHIE

She bit my fingers!

MARIAL

Because you stuck them in her!  
(sigh)  
I miss Catherine. Can we get a  
messenger here?

ARCHIE

I beg you, Marial. Do not support  
her. She is doomed to fail. She is  
a fraud, a liar, you know this.

MARIAL

Orlo, shit! What happened to him?  
Did you...?

ARCHIE

No. Ultimately, I could not. It is  
not my place to pass judgement.  
That is up to God.

Marial looks to the bloody door.

MARIAL

Or any idiot with a gun.

Linger on the blood.

**INT. PALACE HALLS - DAY**

DR. CHEKOV (early-50's), somehow both studious and a quack, is  
treating some of Catherine's wounded soldiers.

CHEKOV

Now remember, apply three thimbles  
of mercury to the wound twice a  
day. If it turns black, that means  
it's healing.

Velementov enters the hall with a retinue of SOLDIERS.

VELEMENTOV  
Chekov, we have to get the wounded  
out of here.

CHEKOV  
They're in no condition to travel.

VELEMENTOV  
What about him?

Velementov points to a clearly DEAD SOLDIER.

CHEKOV  
Him least of all.

VELEMENTOV  
The Empress needs these hallways  
cleared and presentational.

CHEKOV  
I'm just here to treat the injured.  
If you need a maid, get a serf to  
do it.

COLONEL SVENSKA (O.S.)  
There he is! Fire!

SHOTS ring out and Chekov is peppered with bullets.  
Velementov retreats.

Down the hall, Colonel Svenska stands with three of his men.

COLONEL SVENSKA (CONT'D)  
Well done, boys!

VELEMENTOV  
Svenska you fucking moron! That was  
Chekov.

COLONEL SVENSKA  
I know! Now, you cannot treat your  
wounded. Clever, was it not?

VELEMENTOV  
We share the same doctor!

A beat.

COLONEL SVENSKA  
Is that true?

SVENSKA'S MAN  
I think so, sir.

COLONEL SVENSKA

Shit.

**INT. CATHERINE'S BEDROOM - DAY**

Catherine sits, reading. Sylvana enters.

SYLVANA

Empress. They're here.

**INT. PALACE HALLS - DAY**

SERFS, SOLDIERS, and other PALACE STAFF run here and there, busying themselves with cleaning the grand halls.

Catherine walks, surrounded by soldiers, Velementov, and Orlo.

CATHERINE

Orlo, have these bullet holes patched.

ORLO

We don't have enough time.

CATHERINE

Well do something!

An ENEMY SOLDIER rushes screaming into the group with a knife.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)

Fuck off, I'm busy.

Velementov BELTS him.

VELEMENTOV

Empress, if we had just a bit more time--

CATHERINE

Well, we don't. I must dazzle them with my sparkling personality and terrifying wit, bring them inside, unmurdered, and convince my idiot husband to do the right thing for once.

They stop.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)

What is that?

To her horror and complete disapproval, there is a row of heads mounted onto bloody spikes.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)  
Take that down this instant!

Soldiers rush to do as she asks. Catherine walks on.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)  
Orlo?

Orlo rushes to catch up.

ORLO  
Yes.

**INT. PALACE GRAND STAIRWAY - DAY**

The fighting has ceased in this area, and it's the most "presentable" we've seen so far, being away from most of the fighting. Finally, the splendor of the palace can be witnessed, unsoiled.

CATHERINE  
Vasiliv and Broganoff--

ORLO  
Bryukhanov.

CATHERINE  
Do not get along; make them happy and the Voronezh happy, but ensure they do not have to spend time in the company of Poltava or Taganrog. Chirikov likes everyone, Tarakanova fucks everyone, and everyone hates Darya.

ORLO  
(stunned)  
Yes. Yes, that's right.

CATHERINE  
I know. And you've arranged their sleeping quarters accordingly?

ORLO  
I have.

CATHERINE  
Huzzah.

Orlo looks at Velementov. He has not arranged their sleeping quarters accordingly.

**EXT. PALACE GROUNDS - DAY**

The immaculate palace grounds, minus a little bit of their luster from weeks of inattention, are filled to the brim with countless hundreds of nobles, carriages, soldiers, tents, and serfs.

Catherine and her entourage are met by three lead nobles - GRIGORY VASILIV (late-30's), YEMELYAN BRYUKHANOV (late-50's), and DARYA NIKOLAYEVNA (late-20's), who has a hideous smile plastered on an attractive face.

CATHERINE

My friends. You are all most welcome here. As your Empress, I thank you for coming here in this difficult time. You have all been wronged by Peter, and that we have in common. He is the past, and we - you and I, working together for a peaceful exchange of power and the betterment of Russia, are the future.

A beat.

BRYUKHANOV

So this is the kraut.

VASILIV

I thought you'd be taller.

Vasiliv bows properly, Bryukhanov casually.

Catherine curtsies with all the finesse and tact that her position demands.

CATHERINE

A pleasure to make your acquaintance, Lord Vasiliv, Lady Nikolayevna, Lord Brackniff.

Catherine turns subtly to Orlo and winks at him.

Orlo just musters a fake smile.

DARYA

Would you bow? Where are your fucking manners?

Darya reveals a dagger from her sleeve and digs it roughly into her SERF'S shoulder. The serf bows.

Catherine is mortified, but stifles it.

DARYA (CONT'D)  
 Thank you, Empress, for the invitation. And Yemelyan Bryukhanov, so lovely to see you again.

Darya, still smiling, plunges her knife into Bryukhanov's eye. Blood pours out, he MURMURS something inaudibly, and crumples to the ground.

There is a palpable, silent horror in the air, but nobody moves. All eyes are on Catherine.

DARYA (CONT'D)  
 It's such an honour to be here, Empress and to finally meet you. I've heard wonderful things!  
 (NEIGHS quietly)  
 I think we'll make fast friends.

CATHERINE  
 (sputtering)  
 Indeed. Of course. Huzzah. May we show you to your quarters?

VASILIV  
 Ah, armed men to escort us to bed. Peter giving you a bit of trouble, eh, Empress?

CATHERINE  
 Oh, you all know how he can be a bit... blah! Shall we?

**INT. PETER'S APARTMENT - DAY**

Peter and his cronies watch the procession of nobles from a window, as they walk back towards the palace entrance.

GRIGOR  
 We could shoot her from here, Peter!

PETER  
 Stop trying to shoot my fucking wife, Grigor. She has grown on me. Besides, you'll break the window.

LADY SVENSKA

This is bad. This is very fucking bad.

PETER

Is it?

GEORGINA

She's got half of Russia down there!

PETER

And we've got the other half up here.

There are maybe thirty PEOPLE in the room.

GEORGINA

Be that as it may...

PETER

I see this as an absolute win.

ARKADY

How so?

PETER

See her? That's Darya Nikolayevna.

GRIGOR

The one who put your mother's pearls up her ass?

PETER

Quite right. She's also an absolute bitch. I mean a real cunt. If we stir the proverbial pot--

ARKADY

Metaphorical.

PETER

(beat)

Gesundheit. If you fuck with Catherine, Darya will drive her to give up this silly coup of hers, and seek solace in my bed. Tatyana!

TATYANA

(too hopeful)

Yes?

PETER

What do you like in St. Petersburg?



TATYANA  
I like the Marinsky Ballet!

PETER  
Mmm. Ballerinas. Excellent choice.

The cronies exchange concerned looks.

**INT. PALACE HALLS - DAY**

Catherine, the nobles, and her entourage walk back into the grand palace.

CATHERINE  
Here you will find the beginnings  
of a new Russia. Even our soldiers  
find time in this chaos to chat and  
make friends.

One of the heads on spikes has been disguised, with a soldier's uniform. A living SOLDIER stands with his arm around his "friend's" shoulders, smiling.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)  
The Russia of the future respects  
art and science. We believe they  
are not at odds at all with God or  
the Church.

DARYA  
I've made it my life's duty to  
patronize the sciences. They are  
the future, Empress.

VASILIV  
Darya, if you pull those pearls out  
your arse, you might have a  
diamond.

DARYA  
You'd like that, wouldn't you?

From a distance, a SOLDIER signals Velementov.

Velementov signs back.

VELEMENTOV  
(whispering to Catherine)  
There's a body.

CATHERINE  
Excuse me a moment.  
(to Velementov)  
Get him the fuck out of here!

VELEMENTOV  
(whispering)  
We have no time; Svenska's men  
could be close.

CATHERINE  
(whispering)  
Figure it out!

Catherine turns back to her guests and smiles.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)  
Busy as ever!

VASILIV  
Of course, Empress.

Velementov signals to the soldier, getting closer.

The soldier panics as Catherine et al close in.

**INT. LONG HALLWAY - DAY**

Catherine and her group crest the stairs, and come to the opulent hall that separates the wings of the palace.

CATHERINE  
Off this very hall, you will find  
all your apartments that befit you,  
as friends of the Empress.

The soldier stands smiling at the end of a long rug, obscuring the body that has been stuffed underneath.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)  
Orlo?

Catherine's eyes dart to the wall, peppered with bulletholes, then to Orlo.

Orlo's eyes from Catherine, to the wall, to Catherine.

He darts out of the entourage, and does his best to place his hand casually against the wall, covering the holes.

ORLO  
Right this way, please.

Catherine smiles at him.

VASILIV  
New Russia's a bit sterile, no?

DARYA  
Quit whining. Door.

Darya gives her serf another poke. Blood. Door opens. The nobles go into their quarters to rest.

VELEMENTOV  
Sure you don't want to kill her?

CATHERINE  
It was never a matter of "want",  
Velementov. For instance, I want to  
push her off a cliff. But I shan't.  
We reason, because this is the New  
Russia.

Velementov looks off to the soldier stuffed under the rug.

VELEMENTOV  
Indeed.

**EXT. FOREST - DAY**

Leo is looking more tired, dirty, but spirited.

LEO  
So boys, what's on the agenda  
today?

PETER LOYALIST  
Shut the fuck up.

LEO  
No, that was yesterday. And the day  
before that. And the day before.

RUDE GUARD  
I heard you have a tree. In your  
bedroom.

PETER LOYALIST  
What's the fucking point of that?

LEO  
It's true. A linden tree. What is  
the point of anything a man does?  
(MORE)

LEO (CONT'D)

A living thing of great beauty to look upon as he gives in to sleep, and the first thing to see as he awakes. To woo a woman and fuck and fall in love beneath it.

PETER LOYALIST

I'll never understand all you lords and ladies.

RUDE GUARD

(beat)

How exactly does one get a tree in in their bedroom?

PETER LOYALIST

Get your head out of your ass, we don't even have bedrooms large enough to fit a tree.

LEO

But you could. Why should Peter dictate the size of your quarters?

PETER LOYALIST

Because he's the Emperor.

LEO

And Catherine is the Empress.

Peter Loyalist's resolve is beginning to crumble in front of us. Leo smiles.

RUDE GUARD

Did your father really stick a carrot up Peter's ass?

Leo offers up a shrug and half-hearted smile.

**EXT. COURTYARD - DAY**

Peter, surrounded by guards, stands at a freshly-constructed pen. Inside are four perfectly docile Kamchatka brown bears. They look like they could have formed a chorus line in the wild.

PETER

Bears! Actual fucking bears! Huzzah. Tell me, where did you get them? How many were killed in retrieving these brutes?

COLONEL SVENSKA  
Uh, well, none, Emperor. We  
purchased them.

PETER  
You fucking what?

Peter immediately gets in Svenska's face.

COLONEL SVENSKA  
We bought them from a circus.  
They're already quite trained. It  
seemed the most expedient solution.

PETER  
Circus bears? In this economy?!

COLONEL SVENSKA  
You want them to dance, do you not?

PETER  
Yes, but they have to fight first,  
you dumb fuck! Circus bears aren't  
warriors. Entertainers and  
thespians, yes, but not fucking  
warriors. Look at that lobcock.

Peter points to a bear. It looks exactly like the others.

PETER (CONT'D)  
Look at him. That face.

COLONEL SVENSKA  
Emperor--

PETER  
Listen to me, you go out into the  
forest, and you find me some proper  
fighting bears and bring them here.  
Good God, anybody else would have  
done that in the first fucking  
place.

COLONEL SVENSKA  
What do you want me to do with  
these bears?

PETER  
Just let them go. They'll find  
their way home.

Peter and his men head back into the palace.

PETER (CONT'D)  
 I hope you like ballet, Svenska!  
 Because we're going to fuck some  
 ballerinas after this!

**INT. PALACE HALLS PETER'S SIDE - DAY**

Archie attends to a DYING MAN, while other wounded soldiers lie in makeshift cots or on the floor, scattered and GROANING. Marial scribbles on a piece of paper.

ARCHIE  
 Blessed is our God, always now and  
 ever, and unto the ages. Amen. Holy  
 God, holy Mighty, holy Immortal,  
 have mercy on us.

Archie bows at the waist.

ARCHIE (CONT'D)  
 (whispering harshly to  
 Marial)  
 Bow!

MARIAL  
 This is your thing.

ARCHIE  
 (annoyed)  
 O All-Holy Trinity, have mercy on  
 us; O Lord, blot out our sins...

MARIAL  
 Do you think she'll want to hear  
 from me?

ARCHIE  
 (more annoyed)  
 ...O Master, pardon our iniquities;  
 O Holy One, visit and heal our  
 infirmities for Thy Name's sake.

MARIAL  
 I need someone who can travel  
 freely. Between both sides.

ARCHIE  
 Well, I'm afraid Chekov is dead.

MARIAL  
 Don't fucking remind me. I wouldn't  
 be doing this shit, otherwise.

The Dying Soldier looks up to Marial, offended.

MARIAL (CONT'D)  
 Godspeed, child. Catherine is my friend. I was trying to protect her, she'll understand... won't she?

VOLTAIRE (O.S.)  
 We are all full of weakness and errors; let us mutually pardon each other our follies.

Voltaire waltzes into view.

MARIAL  
 (under her breath)  
 Ugh, this French cunt.  
 Wait! Voltaire, can you give a letter to Catherine?

Voltaire stares at Marial. Down to the letter. Back up to her.

VOLTAIRE  
 (beat)  
 What sort of friendship is mended by an intermediary?

MARIAL  
 (getting desperate)  
 The one where I can't get to the other side of the fucking palace.

ARCHIE  
 (loudly)  
 Tring to bless a dying man, here.

VOLTAIRE  
 I cannot do this for you. One must take decisive action to see the world change as would please them.

MARIAL  
 Well it would please me to see your balls ripped off your screaming body.

VOLTAIRE  
 We all look for happiness, but without knowing where to find it: like drunks who look for their house, knowing dimly that they have one.

(MORE)

VOLTAIRE (CONT'D)

(beat)  
Au revoir.

Voltaire tips his hat to the dying man, and turns to leave. As he walks in a zen-like state, he spies a painting of naked people in various acts of copulation, and regards it for a moment.

VOLTAIRE (CONT'D)

(to himself)  
Splendid.

MARIAL

God damnit, he's good. I hate it.

**INT. PALACE HALLWAY - NIGHT**

Marial approaches a NIGHT GUARD (early-20's), rigid but easily manipulated, with a rolled paper in her hand.

MARIAL

Hey there, handsome. Do me a favour?

NIGHT GUARD

I-I'm on duty, my lady.

MARIAL

I'll let you touch my tits.

Night Guard's face says: "Maybe".

**INT. PALACE HALLS - NIGHT**

Night Guard sneaks through the shadows.

He stealthily avoids light cast through windows.

CATHERINE'S SUPPORTERS ahead! He hides. They pass. He continues on.

Night Guard hugs the wall as he tiptoes. Suddenly...

BANG!

Night Guard slams against the wall, then slumps down.

Velementov walks into view, his flintlock smoking.

VELEMENTOV

Oh, how I've missed you.  
(kisses the barrel;  
(MORE)



VELEMENTOV (CONT'D)  
it's hot)  
Ow! Shit.

**INT. STATE ROOM - DAY**

Catherine sits, flanked by Orlo, Velementov, at the head desk of the huge gilded state room. Nobles file in for their audience, attended to by their serfs, as Catherine's guards watch over everyone, steely eyed.

CATHERINE  
Have you found Leo?

VELEMENTOV  
We can't get close enough, Empress.  
Peter's men keep moving him, and we  
can't risk an outright attack.

ORLO  
I'm sorry, Empress, but we must  
focus on the task at hand. Namely,  
Darya.

CATHERINE  
I told you, Orlo! We're not killing  
her.

As if gifted with some preternatural sense, Darya catches Catherine's eye and offers her gruesome smile and a little wave.

ORLO  
We'll never get their full support  
if we don't deal with her. She  
murdered Bryukhanov in full view of  
everyone, and nothing happened.

CATHERINE  
She will be reasoned with - just  
like Peter.

Catherine stands and addresses her audience.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)  
Thank you all for being here. You  
have come because you support a  
change in your country, and we must  
embody that change.

VASILIV  
Of course we want change. Yet,  
Peter remains Emperor. Why?

CATHERINE

Because to embody change, we must sue for peace. Get Peter to agree to a cease-fire, and negotiate with him. Use diplomacy where once we would use guns.

Velementov silently telegraphs his disapproval.

DARYA

Your love and vision for Russia is astounding, Empress, and is so inspiring. But a leader must rule with her head, not her heart. Peter and his supporters does not take you seriously because they don't believe you're a legitimate threat.

CATHERINE

Do you?

DARYA

I will pledge my army to the effort the moment I see you willing to use them.

CATHERINE

I suspect you might be waiting for a long time.

DARYA

(laughing slightly)  
Have you heard the old Russian proverb? Trust but verify.

Darya's unsettling smile burns deep into Catherine.

**EXT. DEEP FORESTS - DAY**

A squadron of Peter's soldiers, stalk quietly through the woods.

They stop. A soldier puts his finger to his lips, then points. Up ahead...

A bear. Big.

They spread out a net between them.

HUFF. HUFF. HUFF.

They turn... to reveal:

A bigger, angrier bear.

Birds fly away as SCREAMS pierce the air.

PRE-LAP:

PETER (O.S.)  
Are you fucking kidding me?

**INT. PETER'S APARTMENT - DAY**

Colonel Svenska stands with Peter, just ready for a brow-beating.

PETER  
A cease-fire?

COLONEL SVENSKA  
Yes, Emperor.

PETER  
Are we winning?

COLONEL SVENSKA  
It appears Catherine and the nobles  
want to, um... negotiate.

PETER  
And if we don't?

COLONEL SVENSKA  
They'll overrun the palace and kill  
us all.

PETER  
Fuck me. Well done, Catherine. Her  
ruthless side makes my cock hard.  
Very well. I will meet her.

LADY SVENSKA  
You can't be serious.

PETER  
I am fucking serious. If those  
lobcocks have a problem with me,  
they can tell it to my face. How  
else am I to fuck Catherine if I  
don't see her? Svenska, have your  
men cease firing.

PRE-LAP:

VELEMENTOV (O.S.)  
Ceasefire?

**INT. CATHERINE'S APARTMENTS - DAY**

Velementov stands with Catherine, ready to deliver a browbeating.

CATHERINE  
Yes. Did you think I was bluffing when I spoke about it? Tell your men to stand down.

VELEMENTOV  
Why should I have to? Svenska's been gunning for us the whole time, and we're using traps, capturing his men. It's fucking bullshit!

CATHERINE  
Listen to me, Velementov. You will not fuck this up for us. If we are to espouse the virtues of a New Russia, then we will live by it.

VELEMENTOV  
Empress--

CATHERINE  
Enough! Escort our guests to the state room, and for God's sake, if you attack Svenska, I will never let you look into my eyes again.

VELEMENTOV  
(beat)  
Fair enough.

Velementov leaves.

Catherine takes a DEEP BREATH. Sylvana stands silently in the background.

SYLVANA  
More tea?

Catherine puts on a pained smile.

**INT. PALACE HALLS - DAY**

Soldiers of all stripes march together down the length of the halls.

Velementov and Colonel Svenska come face-to-face.

COLONEL SVENSKA  
 Try not to murder my men,  
 Velementov. It is unbecoming of the  
 Empress' general.

VELEMENTOV  
 Try not to be a massive cunt,  
 Svenska. It is unbecoming of a  
 second-rate soldier.

COLONEL SVENSKA  
 Second rate?!

VELEMENTOV  
 You're right, my apologies. Third-  
 rate.

COLONEL SVENSKA  
 Fat fuck.

VELEMENTOV  
 How original.

DARYA (O.S.)  
 Good day, gentlemen.

Darya walks up between them with her attendants, towards the  
 state room.

DARYA (CONT'D)  
 I look forward to speaking with  
 both of you. Perhaps privately,  
 later?

Darya heads into the state room.

VELEMENTOV  
 She makes my cock shrivel up.

COLONEL SVENSKA  
 How can you tell, you fat fuck?

Velementov smiles slightly.

**INT. STATE ROOM - DAY**

There are hundreds inside; nobles busying their attendant  
 serfs with menial tasks, soldiers, and serfs.

The two parties have been organized into separate camps, like a court, with Voltaire presiding in the middle. His natural charisma silences the audience.

VOLTAIRE

Good day to you all. We are here to discuss the peaceful transfer of power from Emperor Peter to his wife, Empress Catherine. I will moderate this discussion.

PETER

Traitorous-French-fuck-says-"What?"

Peter's cronies smile and giggle.

VOLTAIRE

Dites "quoi" si vous êtes un eunuque.

Peter frowns.

PETER

(beat)  
What?

Archie, firmly in Peter's camp, rises.

ARCHIE

The matter of succession is a matter for God and the Church. If I may--

CATHERINE

You may not.

PETER

Sit the fuck down.

Archie sits, humiliated.

PETER (CONT'D)

Look at that, my love. Finishing each other's commands.

Catherine ignores him.

VOLTAIRE

Please, keep your speech civil.  
Empress Catherine has the floor.

Catherine stands, and approaches the large, open neutral zone between the two groups.

CATHERINE

Thank you.

GRIGOR

Booo.

The cronies giggle and smile nastily again.

CATHERINE

My time as Empress has been fraught with conflict, nasty rumours, and bloodshed. But it has been eye-opening. As soon as I set foot in these lands, I fell in love with Russia. I love its mountains, its people--

LADY SVENSKA

Its horses...

Catherine steels herself and pushes down the bubbling rage.

CATHERINE

Its hard-won resilience. And yet it is immaturity like that which has kept Russia from becoming the greatest power on Earth. My husband, Peter, has allowed this attitude to fester.

PETER

Boo-yah.

CATHERINE

Not a compliment. Peter, if you abdicate, we can avoid further hostilities. There is no reason for more bloodshed. I promise no reprisals if you do so. You will be allowed residence at the palace, but you will be under guard at all times. I am not a heartless and vindictive woman. Thank you.

Catherine gracefully returns to her seat.

VOLTAIRE

Peter, how do you respond?

With bravado and swagger, Peter stands and struts into the neutral space.

PETER

Counter offer: No, but I will happily eat figs out of your pussy.

VASILIV

Still thinking with your cock, you pathetic child?

DARYA

Quiet!

Darya shows a blade.

CATHERINE

This is the sort of nonsense that holds us back.

PETER

Darya, lovely to see you again.

Darya smiles sarcastically.

DARYA

A joy, Peter.

PETER

I'll not negotiate until these traitorous fucks provide us a doctor. Chekov is dead because of you all.

VELEMENTOV

Because your men shot him.

Peter is taken aback for a moment and turns to Colonel Svenska.

PETER

You didn't tell me that.

COLONEL SVENSKA

There was a lot of shooting, it was hard to tell...

DARYA

Very well. I will provide my personal physician. Vinodel.

DR. VINODEL (mid-40's), more of a quack than Chekov ever was, steps forward from the throng.

DARYA (CONT'D)

You work here now. Try not to kill this one.



VINODEL

As much as it pains me to leave  
your service, I will do as you ask,  
Lady Nikolayevna.

PETER

Fuck, that was easy. Darya, suck my  
cock.

DARYA

(gesturing to Catherine)  
She is your wife, you fucking  
degenerate.

CATHERINE

Don't remind me.

PETER

It was worth a shot.

VOLTAIRE

We have made progress. It seems a  
recess is in order.

CATHERINE

We've only just begun.

VOLTAIRE

Empress...

Voltaire swaggers over to Catherine.

VOLTAIRE (CONT'D)

(whispering)  
I have to shit.

CATHERINE

Very well. We will reconvene soon.

PETER

Do you have the hammer thing?

CATHERINE

You mean a gavel?

PETER

You know what I mean.

CATHERINE

This isn't court. Just... fuck off,  
and come back.

Catherine rises and stalks off, flustered.

**INT. PALACE HALLS - DAY**

Catherine paces uncomfortably, surrounded by guards as nobles  
CHAT NOISILY in the halls.

PETER

Pfff... crazy stuff in there, eh?

CATHERINE

Yes and now the crazy stuff has  
found me out here.

PETER

I know. That Darya is batshit  
crazy.

CATHERINE

For once, you and I agree.

PETER

May I say hello to Paul?

CATHERINE

If you tell me where Leo is.

PETER

Who? Oh, right. I don't know where  
Voronsky is.

CATHERINE

What?

PETER

I'm too busy to keep track of every  
hired cock.

CATHERINE

You're a fucking monster.

PETER

Me? You know who's a monster? The  
Marinsky Ballet master. Won't let  
any of his girls fuck. We're going  
to St. Petersburg; want to come?

Catherine stomps off, GROWLING.

PETER (CONT'D)

Women.

Among the crowd, Vinodel speaks with Orlo.

VINODEL  
How does one get beaten with a  
Bible?

ORLO  
(humiliated)  
It was a big Bible.

VINODEL  
Have you seen a doctor?

ORLO  
Not before his brains were blown  
out.

VINODEL  
And you're still feeling pain?

Orlo wavers, but nods. Suddenly...

ORLO  
Ow! What the fuck?

Vinodel has stuck a needle in Orlo's arm.

VINODEL  
Shots are easier to administer when  
the patient doesn't know it's  
coming. But a bit of opium will do  
the trick.

ORLO  
Opium? I'm the Empress' advisor!

VINODEL  
And you're in pain.

GRIGOR (O.S.)  
Orlo!

Orlo turns. Grigor and the other cronies stand with drinks.

GRIGOR (CONT'D)  
Feel better soon.

They all raise their glasses and drink.

Catherine paces, flanked by guards. Then she sees Marial  
standing close-by.

CATHERINE  
Marial.

MARIAL  
Empress. Are you well?

CATHERINE  
I am. Sylvana is exceptional. I don't know why she wasn't brought to me sooner.

MARIAL  
Good. Good.  
(beat)  
I am well, too. Peter's going to make me a lady again.

CATHERINE  
How wonderful for you. Elevated to your rightful place among Lady Svenska and those other vipers.

MARIAL  
Indeed.

An awkward beat.

A MESSENGER (early-20's), wiry and nervous, arrives.

MESSENGER  
Empress. Lady Nikolayevna requests a moment of your time.

CATHERINE  
Very well.  
(turns to Marial)  
I hope to see you soon.

MARIAL  
(tearfully)  
You as well.

Catherine walks away, leaving Marial alone.

MARIAL (CONT'D)  
Fuck...

**INT. DARYA'S APARTMENTS - DAY**

Catherine's guards wait outside in the hall as she enters Darya's beautiful guest apartment alone and the doors shut.

CATHERINE  
Lady Nikolayevna?

She stifles a GASP.

Darya's serf is mutilated and dead with a slit throat, propped against the bed, and seated on the edge, Darya holds her dagger in one bloody hand, and her other hand is busy beneath her skirts.

Her BREATH is ragged.

DARYA

Ah, Empress... Please, have a seat.  
Sorry for the mess.

Catherine sits rigidly in her seat.

DARYA (CONT'D)

Listen... There is a reason I am... here. You are alone.

CATHERINE

I am not alone.

DARYA

Are you... certain? You are... at war with your husband... Velementov, Orlo... weak. Weak men. And a little... bird told me your little... spat with... Marial, was it?

CATHERINE

Leave Marial out of this, Lady Nikolayevna.

Darya quickly plunges her dagger into the head of the dead serf as she GROANS in ecstasy, and recovers.

Catherine's stomach is roiling.

Darya rises and walks to Catherine.

DARYA

Your true potential is being held back, Empress. By your connections to the old Russia. Embrace your better instincts, embrace New Russia.

She offers her hand.

Catherine looks at Darya, Darya's hand, back to her eyes.

DARYA (CONT'D)

Oh! How rude of me.

Darya swaps her dagger over, and offers her bloody hand. Smiling.

Catherine looks at the bloody hand.

**INT. STATE ROOM - DAY**

Catherine sits as the meeting reconvenes.

CATHERINE  
(whispering)  
Orlo. Orlo?

Orlo is nodding off in his seat. He makes an INDISTINGUISHABLE GRUNT of acknowledgement.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)  
Orlo, wake up. We're starting.

ORLO  
(slurring)  
Peter's a fucking lobcock.

CATHERINE  
What's wrong with him?

Velementov shrugs.

Voltaire takes center stage and silences the crowd with his hands.

VOLTAIRE  
What is a man? Some legs, a cock. A few words that float away to nothing as they are said? An empire? A land? This is much more. Many men. Many legs, cocks, and the words and ideas of all those men.

Off-screen: SNORING.

Grigor is pretending to fall asleep, getting a LAUGH out of Peter and his cronies.

VOLTAIRE (CONT'D)  
Sorry. Too many big words?

PETER  
(points to Orlo)  
He's doing it, too!

Orlo's head is rolling over his shoulder.

CATHERINE

Husband, would you tell your friends to shut the fuck up while the adults talk?

PETER

Adults? Really! How's this for an adult: Cut this bullshit coup, or I will have Voronsky's fucking head cut off and hung above your bed.

VELEMENTOV

You would threaten the Empress?

CATHERINE

Velementov, stand down!

Catherine is shaking, but trying to hold back.

COLONEL SVENSKA

He threatened the Empress' boyfriend, you fat fuck. Pay attention.

PETER

Oh shut up, Svenska.

VOLTAIRE

Enough, all of you!

PETER

Oh, go powder your wig, you horse's bitch.

TATYANA

How does he get his wig so white?

Arkady puts his hand on her shoulder.

VASILIV

Peter, you should get your affairs in order.

PETER

And now you threaten the Emperor. The Emperor with a secret fucking weapon!

CATHERINE

You are no Emperor!

Everyone is YELLING now. People are pushing and shoving, getting in each other's face.

Colonel Svenska turns to Peter and his cronies.

COLONEL SVENSKA

It's not safe. You all need to go.  
Now.

PETER

You are a brave man, Svenska. I  
will fuck your wife if you die.

LADY SVENSKA

Ooo.

Colonel Svenska is crestfallen.

The chaos is punctuated by a SNORT from a sleeping Orlo, as Peter and his cronies are led away by guards.

VELEMENTOV

Empress, we need to get you out of  
here.

CATHERINE

We can do this. We must.

DARYA (O.S.)

Empress!

Catherine's head snaps up to see Darya, holding Marial by her hair and pressing her dagger to Marial's throat.

DARYA (CONT'D)

Now is the time! Now is the time to  
sever your connection to the old  
Russia, and make these luddites  
understand!

CATHERINE

No! Leave her!

Catherine rushes forward, but Velementov holds her back.

VELEMENTOV

It's too dangerous!

The shoving has turned into a push, punches are being thrown, people are being trampled.

Darya's frightening smile is replaced with a grim sneer.

In a flash, Catherine escapes Velementov's grasp and pulls his pistol.

She aims.



BANG!

Darya's dagger CLATTERS to the floor.

CATHERINE

(commanding)

You were right, Lady Nikolayevna.  
You want action. You want  
assurances. You said it yourself,  
Darya: Trust, but verify. I learn,  
and I learn, every day how Russia  
operates. And I will learn and  
learn how to best represent you.

Both camps are in stunned silence, staring at Catherine.

Catherine lowers the gun. She looks to Velementov, then to the crowd gathered before her.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)

But first you must learn: I am  
terrifying.

At last we see: Darya is bleeding profusely from the shoulder, and has released her grip on Marial.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)

Dr. Vinodel, patch up Lady  
Nikolayevna. Guards, arrest this  
woman and take her far away from  
me.

VINODEL

Yes, Empress.

Vinodel and a group of soldiers forcibly take Darya away. She struggles and glares at Catherine, turning into a wild animal.

DARYA

Someone will kill me, Catherine!  
Don't think that your orders  
insulate you from the blood on your  
hands! You're just like me!

Vasiliv stands, and bows to Catherine.

Hundreds of soldiers stand, guns in hand, and face Peter's soldiers. GUNSHOTS ring out as Velementov leads Catherine away out the back.

**EXT. FOREST - DAY**

A LIGHT BREEZE through the bows of the trees.

Guards surround Leo. They're LAUGHING, smiling.

RUDE GUARD

And I said "That's no Ottoman,  
that's my mother-in-law!"

Leo's laugh is cut short.

In the distance, the sound of GUNFIRE.

His face falls.

The guards look in the direction of the sound, then to Leo.

**EXT. COURTYARD - DAY**

Soldiers stand around the bear pen, rifles aimed at ten new bears. Big, tough-looking bastards. Peter and Grigor walk up.

PETER

Now these are bears... what was  
your name, again?

PAVEL

Pavel, sir.

Pavel is bandaged and bloody. Arm in a sling. Missing an eye.

GRIGOR

Bravo, old chap.

Grigor slaps Pavel's back. It clearly hurts a lot.

PETER

Excellent. Ohh, look at this son of  
a bitch, right here.

One bear is bigger than the rest. A mean face and torn ear.

PETER (CONT'D)

You? You are my favourite. You  
shall be called Boris.

Peter leans up against the pen.

PAVEL

Emperor!

GRIGOR

Peter...

PETER  
Quiet, Pasha--

PAVEL  
Pavel.

PETER  
Boris and I are talking.  
(to Boris)  
Now listen closely, I've got a very important job for you. You're going to kill my enemies and convince my wife that she, in fact, loves me.

Peter snaps his fingers, and a soldier brings in a large, framed portrait of Catherine. He takes it.

PETER (CONT'D)  
This is Catherine. You do not kill her, understand. She's carrying my son. His name is Paul. One day, you will meet him.

GRIGOR  
Are you sure this will work?

Peter places the portrait inside the pen.

PETER  
Of course it will. I'm the fucking Emperor of Russia, these bears are Russian, ergo...

Boris SNIFFS the portrait.

PETER (CONT'D)  
Good boy! Get the scent. Pasha, I expect you to have these bears in fighting condition by tomorrow!  
(turning to Grigor)  
Brilliant! Now, where's George? I much wish to fuck.

**OMITTED**

**EXT. FOREST - DAY**

Leo sits, writing feverishly on paper that rests on his knee.

He rolls the paper up, ties it with a ribbon. Hands it to the Rude Guard.

LEO

Here. Please, get this to her.

The Rude Guard regards him for a moment. Gravity weighs heavily on him.

LEO (CONT'D)

Oh! And this. Please.

From his pocket, Leo produces a peach.

**INT. PALACE HALLS PETER'S SIDE - DAY**

Marial follows a SERF to a set of huge doors. Serfs open the doors to reveal...

**INT. MARIAL'S QUARTERS - DAY**

Marial walks into her luxurious apartments. She looks around. So opulent, so beautiful.

So empty.

She stands alone.

**EXT. PALACE GROUNDS - DAY**

Catherine oversees the hustle and bustle of soldiers, running this way and that.

Vasiliv, now in uniform, and Velementov approach her.

VASILIV

Empress, more of Peter's men have defected. What do you want done with them?

CATHERINE

Grant them leniency. But we will test their loyalty. Put them in the vanguard. And bring me a uniform.

VASILIV

What for?

Vasiliv looks to Catherine, to Velementov, back to Catherine.

CATHERINE

For I am your Empress.

VELEMENTOV

Right away.

**EXT. COURTYARD - DAY**

Peter strolls towards the pen, his cronies in tow.

PETER

Ladies and gentlemen, think of what this could do for us; fucking whales to attack by sea. Pigeons to peck out eyes. And so, I present to you, the first of many animal-based squads.

Peter does the big reveal:

Boris has smashed Catherine's portrait, and is humping it.

GEORGINA

Well done.

She leads the cronies in a smattering of APPLAUSE.

PETER

What the fuck, Boris? I specifically told you to help her love me, not... fuck!

Grigor puts a hand on Peter's shoulder.

GRIGOR

Peter, I think you must let it go.

PETER

(beat)

I have not put in all this work and toil just to free them.

Pavel is aghast, but hides it.

PETER (CONT'D)

Pushka, set them loose. I will crush Catherine's army. Fuck a vacation. We dig in and make our stand here.

PAVEL

It's Pavel, Emperor.

PETER

No, the bear's name is Boris. Keep up.

Peter et al turn to leave.

Pavel is absolutely crushed.

PAVEL  
God damnit...

**EXT. PALACE GROUNDS - DAY**

Far back from the palace, some 14 000 soldiers have gathered, bristling with rifles, under command of Velementov and Vasiliv.

A white horse steps into view, and the two commanders look up with reverence.

VOLTAIRE (V.O.)  
It is important you heed this,  
Empress...

**INT. MARIAL'S QUARTERS - DAY**

Marial sits on the edge of her bed, in a fine dress, her hair styled.

VOLTAIRE (V.O.)  
Someone once said "It is difficult  
to free fools from the chains they  
revere."

Marial raises her head.

**EXT. COURTYARD - DAY**

The bears are released from their pen... and run rampant through the courtyard, tearing apart Peter's men as they charge headfirst into the palace.

VOLTAIRE (V.O.)  
That someone was me. It is  
dangerous to be right in matters on  
which the established authorities  
are wrong. And, Catherine, you are  
in danger.

**INT. PALACE HALLS - DAY**

Marial runs down the corridor amidst chaos and gunfire.

VOLTAIRE (V.O.)  
What folly there is in believing  
you improve humanity, by crafting  
newer, better chains.

**EXT. PALACE GROUNDS - DAY**

The soldiers ROAR in unison and we REVEAL:

Catherine, in a soldier's uniform with a pistol, astride a white horse.

VOLTAIRE (V.O.)  
You are kind and you are fierce.  
Bold, ambitious, and wise beyond  
your years. Beautiful, inside and  
out. You will be remembered.

She CRIES OUT!

They charge.

**INT. PALACE HALLS PETER'S SIDE - DAY**

Marial is suddenly caught. She SCREAMS out and kicks. Archie overpowers her, catching her from behind, and dragging her away from the fray.

**EXT. PALACE GROUNDS - DAY**

The wild bears tear through Peter's men, but...

The smaller circus bears appear from the treeline and attack the wild bears in a violent, vicious battle. But Boris slips away and charges alone.

**INT. GRAND STAIRCASE - DAY**

Catherine leads the charge, with Boris charging towards her.

**INT. PETER'S APARTMENTS - NIGHT**

Peter stands with consternation on his face, by his fireplace.

VOLTAIRE (V.O.)  
How do you want to be remembered?  
Catherine the Terrible? Catherine  
the Mighty? Catherine...

**INT. GRAND STAIRCASE - DAY**

Catherine fires a SHOT from her gun.

Blood splatters her horse.

Boris tumbles down the steps.

**INT. PALACE HALLS - DAY**

Catherine leads the charge. GUNFIRE. Chaos. She rises above it all.

**OMITTED**

**INT. VOLTAIRE'S QUARTERS - DAY**

Voltaire sits at his desk, pen in hand, and scribbling. He stops, looks up, lost in thought.

VOLTAIRE  
Bah! Too preachy.

He gathers the papers, and rising to his feet, he approaches his fireplace, and burns his writings.

**EXT. PALACE GROUNDS - DAY**

A discarded peach lies forgotten and alone in the grass.

We see Leo's hand on the ground. Perfectly still.

The peach is crushed underfoot.

FADE OUT.