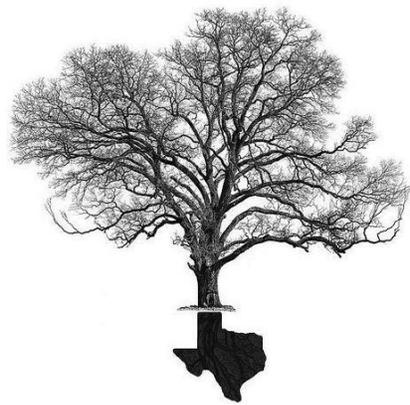


# The Little Black Dress

ALAN NAFZGER



Pecan Street Press  
LUBBOCK • AUSTIN • FORT WORTH

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, businesses, places, events, locales, and incidents are either the products of the author's imagination or used in a fictitious manner. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, or actual events is purely coincidental.

Amazon edition

Copyright © 2014 Alan Nafzger  
All rights reserved.  
ISBN: 9781072134435

the little black dress

Written by  
Alan Nafzger

Copyright, 2016  
PH: 214-875-1305  
alan.nafzger@gmail.com

FADE IN

TITLE SEQUENCE BEGINS

**INT. MOSCOW VOGUE MAGAZINE OFFICE - DAY - 2015**

ZINA is the most beautiful character in this film. She is the first of the women that the audience will see and then also the last they will see before leaving the theater. Later, in the film's last scene, she is wearing the little black dress and it will look like it was made for her. This film is about three women who lived through the Russian Revolution, but it is primarily about ZINA and her dress.

ZINA works as an associate editor at Russia's most popular fashion magazine - VOGUE. We see her busy at her desk.

An INTERN from the mailroom brings some clothes by ZINA's desk.

INTERN

What do you want me to do with these?

ZINA

Let me see them?

Evidently people randomly send them clothes, looking for publicity. The INTERN holds them up, modeling them. They look okay but ZINA and VOGUE have very sophisticated style. ZINA wrinkles her nose. The INTERN automatically agrees with ZINA; they aren't very attractive.

ZINA

Throw them in there, please.

The INTERN opens the door and throws them into the closet.

ZINA looks at the clock on the wall. It is almost time to leave for the day.

ZINA gets up from her desk and walks to the window. She looks down and across the street. There is a female vagrant. However, she is Moscow's most fashionable vagrant. She is wearing bright colors and from a distance might look very trendy.

ZINA goes to the strange closet opens it and take out some clothes. It is the "lost and found" closet of VOGUE. Clothes come in and are photographed and evaluated and then generally not returned. They are placed in the closet. Models steal many of the clothes but there always seems to be clothes in the closet that are never photographed.

**EXT. MOSCOW STREET - DAY**

ZINA, in normal work attire, leaves her work and walks on the sidewalk. She glances at her watch.

If he will kindly agree, there is a cameo appearance by ALEXANDRE VASSILIEV. ALEXANDRE gives this film instant credibility. He has a flare for life and style and this will transfer to the character of ZINA. ALEXANDRE's presence in the first scene, will communicate a lot of important information to the audience in only a few seconds.

ALEXANDRE is leaving the building at the same time ZINA is leaving. ALEXANDRE is wearing a beautiful scarf and he is wearing his trademark rings on both hands. He speaks very well, soft and with humor! I would recommend that the director allow ALEXANDRE to adlib as he has insight into this story. ALEXANDRE will also make a great art/costume director.

ALEXANDRE

Zina, I meant to tell you today; you look great. How very sharp you are dressing this season. Have a nice weekend.

ZINA

Oh, thank you Alexandre. Nice scarf. You too.

ALEXANDRE moves on about his business.

ZINA looks back at the office building and seems to be glad to be out of there. There is a faint smile as she has escaped for the weekend. She knows her weekend will not be monotonous.

ZINA walks across the street and greets the homeless woman. BARBARA drinks too much and isn't a totally mentally able person. Her skin is like leather and seriously wrinkled. Her skin is dark from exposure to the sun. She has an odd body type and while she has nice clothes, they are ill fitting. However, the fashion industry seems to have adopted the woman.

ZINA

My! Barbara, you look nice today. Look at those colours? Your jacket is so nifty.

BARBARA

Thank you!

ZINA

This is nicer than the outfit you were wearing this morning.

BARBARA

You think so?

ZINA

I do. I really do.

BARBARA

Natalia Valevskaya gave me this!

BARBARA points in the direction of VALEVSKAYA'S studio and she models her outfit.

ZINA

What are you going to wear tonight?

BARBARA hold ups the clothes she was just handed. She looks questioningly at ZINA.

ZINA

You have a date tonight?

BARBARA

(laughing)

No, not tonight. The men need to rest tonight.

ZINA

Well sure, that might be fine for  
tonight?

BARBARA smiles.

ZINA

Tomorrow I will bring you a nice dress,  
in case you have a date.

BARBARA giggles like a young girl.

ZINA

May I take your picture?

BARBARA

I always let you, Zina. Of course!

ZINA takes a photo of BARBARA and her outfit every time they run into each other, giving the homeless woman 150 rubles in return for each portrait.

ZINA is compassionate and unafraid. The implication is that ZINA must be a friend with everyone. Also you can look at this act of charity and also art. BARBARA is a canvas and ZINA paints with the discarded clothes.

ZINA has a theory that even the most destitute women can be made to feel valuable if given a nice outfit.

Over the course of a couple of years, the two women have formed a unique friendship, somehow managing to regularly find each other on the Moscow streets to exchange a clothes, few words and have a quick photo.

BARBARA, of course, is the best-dressed homeless woman in Moscow. For more on BARBARA visit <http://wp.me/p4CWwY-Hm>

#### **INT. MOSCOW METRO - DAY**

ZINA enters the underground and then enters a car. It is the typical day after work and she is not animated. Of course her feet hurt and she is tired. She, like everyone else in the car, shows no emotion. Their feet hurt also. ZINA again glances at her watch.

**EXT. MOSCOW STREET - DAY**

ZINA exits the Metro and walks a block or two.

TITLE SEQUENCE IS SUSPENDED

**INT. MOSCOW DRY CLEANERS - DAY**

ZINA enters the shop and produces a ticket. The LADY working there fetches the titular "little black dress" on a hanger. It is wrapped in a semi-transparent plastic wrap.

ZINA is a little nervous. The dress is delicate and also it is important to her personally. The dress is also historic.

LADY  
It cleaned well.

ZINA is relieved and pays.

ZINA  
I was afraid it wouldn't be ready. Or that it wouldn't stand up to the cleaning.

LADY  
It is delicate but I can't find a flaw on it at all.

ZINA  
That is good. I have a big date tonight.

LADY  
Can I ask you about this dress?

ZINA  
I'm afraid that I don't know too much. It was my great-grandmother's. She was in the revolution.

LADY  
(smiling)  
It is marvellous. This dress must have seen some interesting times. Have a nice time, dear.

TITLE SEQUENCE CONTINUES

**EXT. MOSCOW STREET - DAY**

ZINA exits the Metro and walks a block or two to her apartment. She has the dress over her shoulder and she is somewhat animated. She walks with more life now. Just carrying the dress gives ZINA a certain vitality. She looks up to the sun. She actually smiles. Her confidence and euphoria are obvious. She really does have a date tonight!

**INT. MOSCOW APARTMENT - DAY**

ZINA enters her Moscow apartment. She takes the dress out of the plastic and hangs it on the exterior of her wardrobe. She glances at her old shoes. She takes a new pair of shoes out of a box. She places them under the dress. She steps back and looks at them together.

ZINA undresses and enters the shower.

END TITLE SEQUENCE

**ACT ONE**

**INT. SHIP MOVING IN THE NORTH SEA - DAY - 1915**

NEWSPAPER HEADLINE "Lusitania Torpedoed Without Warning"

ELIZABETH is the second most beautiful woman in this film. She is a dark-haired, dark-eyed Petrograd beauty keenly sought by the young and fashionable men. She is in a parlor area with a GOVERNESS/COMPANION and an older RUSSIAN COUPLE.

ELIZABETH is from an aristocratic family; she is 20 and this is her first trip to Europe. Her father an AMBASSADOR, with business in London. He is on board.

The RUSSIAN COUPLE must bite their lips to keep from laughing as the COMPANION is reading a list of rules.

COMPANION

A proper family will train a lady early  
in life to prepare herself for a life

dedicated to home and family if she is married, and charity if she doesn't.

ELIZABETH

I'm going to be married.

COMPANION

Let's hope.

ELIZABETH

(almost whispering)

Well we are going to England.

Clearly the reason she is on the trip, as she sees it, is to find a husband. As her father sees it, she is on the trip to become more refined.

COMPANION

And young ladies, though advised on the importance of catching a man, are warned not to be too liberal in display of their charms. Meekness and modesty were considered beautiful virtues.

ELIZABETH

Well, okay if you insist.

COMPANION

Invitations will be sent at least seven to ten days before the day fixed for a social event, and should be replied to within three days of their receipt, accepting or declining with regrets.

ELIZABETH

How many events will there be?

The AMBASSADOR enters the room with several other young men - his staff. Everyone stands up - the COMPANION, ELIZABETH, the RUSSIAN COUPLE.

RUSSIAN MAN

Mr. Ambassador. How are you?

AMBASSADOR

Fine. Fine. No worries.

RUSSIAN MAN  
Have they spotted any submarines?

AMBASSADOR  
Oh, No. No. No worries.

RUSSIAN WOMAN  
The Lusitania?

The AMBASSADOR looks annoyed at the RUSSIAN MAN.

AMBASSADOR  
No. No. That was a lucky fluke. We are perfectly safe now we are in the wide open North Sea. There isn't a German submarine for hundreds of miles. I understand they have been chased back to Germany.

The RUSSIAN WOMAN doesn't look less worried.

The AMBASSADOR looks at the RUSSIAN MAN as if he needs to keep his wife under control. The men on the ship are just are nervous as the women.

The AMBASSADOR turns but then returns to face the woman.

AMBASSADOR  
Everyone is worried. Of course. But we are out in the open sea now. It would be very difficult for them to even find us out here.

The AMBASSADOR walks over to the COMPANION. She is nervous and places the book at her side. It almost looks as if she is hiding it. The AMBASSADOR takes the book and reads the cover title. He gives a strange look at the COMPANION; she seems an odd bird. There isn't any reason to hide the book. It is very proper. The COMPANION is very nervous. And the AMBASSADOR glances at ELIZABETH who is also intimidated.

The AMBASSADOR is a stern no nonsense man. Perhaps he is more loving at home, and it may be the war and the stress of his job. We don't know the weight of his mission but we can assume it is important.

The AMBASSADOR moves to exit the area. The COMPANION quickly begins reading so that the AMBASSADOR will hear something before he leaves. One YOUNG MAN on the staff notices ELIZABETH and can't help stare. She doesn't notice.

COMPANION

(quickly)

Never lend a borrowed book. Be particular to return one that has been loaned to you, and accompany it with a note of thanks.

The AMBASSADOR leaves the room and everyone sits again.

COMPANION

Rise to one's feet as respect for an older person or dignitary.

ELIZABETH

Of course, we just did that.

COMPANION

What can I say? A true gentleman tips their hat to greet a lady, opens doors, and always walks on the outside.

ELIZABETH may or may not be listening.

COMPANION

Break bread or roll into morsels rather than eating the bread whole.

ELIZABETH seems to be looking around the room. She looks at a painting on the wall and the design of the furniture.

COMPANION

Conversation is not to talk continually, but to listen and speak in our turn.

ELIZABETH is bored and walks to a window and looks out.

COMPANION

While courting, a gentleman caller might bring only certain gifts such as flowers, candy or a book. A woman must

not offer a gentleman any present at all until he has extended one to her, and then something artistic, handmade and inexpensive is permissible.

**EXT. LONDON STREET - DAY**

The COMPANION is still reading from her book, perhaps it is a new book on the same topic. As they walk along a row of shops, ELIZABETH is peering in and trying to see inside the shops.

COMPANION

Do not monopolize conversation or interrupt another ...

ELIZABETH

(interrupting)

Give me an example.

COMPANION

... speaker to finish his story for him.

COMPANION

And as for the Gentlemen, they should be seen and not smelled. They should use but very little perfume, as too much of it is in bad taste.

ELIZABETH is peering inside each and every shop. There is a dress shop. A woman is inside being fitted for a dress. It is a little black dress. It is very progressive. ELIZABETH watches through the window like a child.

There should be some debate if the dress is actually a dress in this scene, or it could be just the lining of a dress in progress.

ELIZABETH

Father gave us money. Let's spend some.

The COMPANION stops but continues reading. She doesn't want to spend money because the AMBASSADOR might not approve.

**INT. AMBASSADOR'S OFFICE - FLASH BACK**

The COMPANION is standing in front of the AMBASSADOR he has a stern look on his face and he seems to be going over some account.

**EXT. LONDON STREET - DAY**

COMPANION

A lady, when crossing the street, must raise her dress a bit above the ankle while holding the folds of her gown together in her right hand and drawing them toward the right. It is considered vulgar to raise the dress with both hands as it would show too much ankle, but can be tolerated for a moment when the mud is very deep.

The COMPANION looks around. There isn't any mud. She seems to smile when comparing the streets of Petrograd and London.

ELIZABETH is taking in the dress. It could be an evening dress but not in the style of the time.

The woman is beautiful and has a terrific smile on her face. She isn't the traditional Gibson Girl, she might be London's first Flapper.

COMPANION

A young lady should be expected to shine in the art of conversation, but not too brightly. A young lady should concentrate on her voice, rather than the content of speech; she should cultivate a distinct but subdued tone.

The eyes of a YOUNG BOY on the street become huge looking up at the sky. He points. He tries to speak; he can't. Finally the words come out.

BOY

Zeppelin!

The BRITS on the street looks up. The COMPANION continues reading. The Zeppelin is moving directly toward them.

COMPANION

When introduced to a man, a lady should  
never offer her hand, merely bow  
politely and say, "I am happy to make  
your acquaintance."

ELIZABETH is late looking up. When she finally does look up, ELIZABETH is frozen. Many of the BRITS run for cover as the airship approaches. The BOY remains watching and ELIZABETH and remains in the street.

The COMPANION finally looks up and panics...

**INT. DRESS SHOP - DAY**

The COMPANION runs inside the dress shop. She crouches in a corner, under a table. ELIZABETH is out on the street still but she begins to read again. It comforts her, but she is still shaking uncontrollably.

COMPANION

A gentleman may delicately kiss a  
lady's hand, the forehead, or at most,  
the cheek.

**EXT. LONDON STREET - DAY**

The FLAPPER in the little black dress runs into the street. She is looking up at the airship.

FLAPPER

Fantastic!

ELIZABETH and the FLAPPER make eye contact. It seems they have kindred hearts. Most people are ducking for cover; the women are young and taking in the experience.

A PHOTOGRAPHER runs from the photo shop with his camera on a tripod. He points it toward the Zeppelin. At the bottom of the frame are ELIZABETH and the FLAPPER girl.

He snaps a picture. It is the perfect photograph. The airship is framed perfectly by the buildings on each side. In the foreground there is a contrast - a Gibson Girl and a Flapper.

Never in the history of fashion has there existed such a dichotomy between two styles that are entirely different.

PHOTOGRAPHER

I have it. I have it. God, I hope it turns out.

In the photo, ELIZABETH is something of a "fragile lady" but also a "voluptuous woman". We can see her basic slender lines, and a sense of respectability. ELIZABETH's dress makes her bust and hips look large.

The FLAPPER's little black dress can be seen more clearly now in the natural light. It is very simple yet elegant and sheath, in black crêpe de Chine, with long, narrow sleeves. It is essentially, Coco Chanel's little black dress a decade early.

Remember, the LADIES in the shop are working on fitting the dress. We don't know how compete the dress is when the FLAPPER runs into the street. We don't know what the completed version will look like.

The Zeppelin passes overhead. No bombs fall. Either they have already dropped them at the other end of the city, or they are in route to their target. But they are low and it is intimidating.

After a long pause, the COMPANION emerges from the dress shop. She is frazzled and discombobulated. ELIZABETH is however invigorated by the incident.

The FLAPPER returns to the dress shop with a big smile on her face. The LADIES in the shop peak out; their hearts begin to beat again.

COMPANION

Someone must have died.

ELIZABETH

I'm not so sure.

COMPANION

(reading)

A lady must never join in any rude plays that will subject her to be kissed or handled in any way by gentlemen. If a hand reaches out to admire a breast pin, draw back and take it off for inspection.

The PHOTOGRAPHER moves back into his shop.

ELIZABETH

I want a copy of that photo.

PHOTOGRAPHER

Certainly. I hope it turns out. Sometimes they don't. Come back tomorrow.

**INT. SHIP RETURNING TO RUSSIA - DAY - 1916**

ELIZABETH has the photograph in her hands. She is emotionally attached to it. She has never seen anything like this. Her heart had never beaten so fast. Protected by her father and family in the past now she can look forward to a life of drama and romance and new things. She might even become an adrenalin junkie.

She contemplates this. ELIZABETH dreams of herself and a handsome pilot flying a bi-plane. Evidently she has seen some aerial combat over London.

COMPANION

Arrange flowers to express a positive meaning. Add a ribbon and tie it to the left, and the meaning referred to the giver; the right referred to the recipient. Flowers are also used to answer questions. If they were handed over with the right hand, the answer was "yes"; with the left hand, the answer was "no".

**EXT. CARRIAGE RETURNING TO ESTATE - BRIGHT SUNNY DAY**

ELIZABETH and the COMPANION are in a horse drawn carriage. They have a great many bags.

They are driving on a road along the side of a fast-rushing river. The COMPANION appears to again be reading an etiquette book.

ELIZABETH is sleeping. She has a dream of a Russian officer in the war. He is on a fantastic white horse. He leads the charge on the enemy lines. He dismounts and is about to engage a German soldier with his saber. The Russian officer is shot in the knee. ELIZABETH wakes up abruptly.

ELIZABETH spots a MAN (similar to the officer in the dream) on a white horse on the other side of the river. The horse is a same nice specimen.

The COMPANION looks up and notices that ELIZABETH's attention is riveted to the man.

COMPANION

He looks aristocratic. Look at that horse.

ELIZABETH

Yes.

The driver hits a bump on the road and a wagon wheel breaks. And, a string snaps and many of the bags smash to the road. Wouldn't you know it, the suitcase that breaks open contains all of ELIZABETH's undergarments?

ELIZABETH and the COMPANION look at each other. They look to see if the MAN has noticed. He has. The man is a nobleman and his name is BORIS. He has stopped his horse and is curiously looking over the river.

We see that there are some young BOYS on the opposite bank fishing. One is fifteen. One is thirteen and one is ten.

When ELIZABETH exits the carriage they stand up and become interested in the carriage.

They appear to be about to wade across to assist. The WAGGONER is working on the wheel. The COMPANION hands the etiquette book to ELIZABETH and begins to gather up all the underwear.

BORIS is riveted looking across the river, his eyes are fixed on ELIZABETH.

He signals to the boys not to cross the river. However he doesn't yell at them. Hoping the boys see his gesture, BORIS speaks in a normal voice.

BORIS  
Boys, I wouldn't not do that.

ELIZABETH notices that BORIS has signaled, and now she is worried.

ELIZABETH  
Oh, my!

They are a good distance away and do not hear him. The BOYS begin to wade across the river... the older BOYS are up to their waist quickly. The YOUNGEST BOY is quickly up to his neck in the fast river. The YOUNGEST BOY slips and is carried down the river. He will probably drown.

BORIS leaps off his horse and jumps into the river. BORIS and the BOY are taken down the river out of sight.

The OTHER BOYS turn and return to the other side. Their idea is to get out and run along the bank to find their brother.

ELIZABETH runs a few steps down the river and then walks.

Time passes.

**EXT. ROAD RETURNING TO ESTATE - DAY**

The wagon wheel seems repaired. The driver is about to turn the wagon to search for ELIZABETH. However, BORIS, ELIZABETH and the YOUNG BOY are seen walking up the road. The boy is walking between them. BORIS has a serious limp from an injury sustained in the war. He needs a cane to move about but perseveres, as he doesn't want ELIZABETH to view him as an invalid. He is walking in great pain.

COMPANION  
(under her breath)  
Oh, my God. He is a cripple.

When they reach the wagon, the BOY turns to BORIS.

BOY  
Thank you sir.

BORIS  
Happy to help.

The BOY begins to walk to the next bridge. His brothers are on the other side of the river. They have walked parallel to BORIS and ELIZABETH.

BORIS  
And you will be careful?

BOY  
Yes, Sir.

COMPANION  
(to Elizabeth)  
Why did you run off like that?

ELIZABETH  
The boy fell in the river.

COMPANION  
You almost gave me a heart attack.

ELIZABETH  
I needed to learn he was safe.  
(pause)  
I was on the road.

The COMPANION nods to BORIS.

BORIS  
Allow me to introduce myself.

ELIZABETH  
He is "Count" Uvarov. Boris.

The COMPANION doesn't appear well. She suddenly looks like she has developed the flu.

COMPANION  
(to Elizabeth)

What? You are not supposed to...

(to BORIS)

Sir. I understand the circumstances but you should not be so familiar.

BORIS

Why? Elizabeth and I are engaged.

The COMPANION faints outright. BORIS must catch her. ELIZABETH is aware of the joke. It seems she had confided to BORIS on the walk that her COMPANION was uptight and overbearing.

ELIZABETH

I didn't think she would faint.

BORIS

Actually, you said she would die!

The COMPANION comes around and opens her eyes. BORIS is still holding her.

COMPANION

Is this true?

BORIS laughs, glances to ELIZABETH and winks.

BORIS

No, but give me a week or two and it will be so. Where is the girl's father?

COMPANION

In London, thank God.

BORIS

Well that isn't impossible. I will send a telegram.

COMPANION

You, a gentleman, should not jest.

BORIS

Who is joking?

The COMPANION grabs her temples as if she is going to have a stroke.

COMPANION

Oh, my. This is terrible.

BORIS

Bank accounts will have to be studied, ancestral lineages inspected and that is nothing compared to the political connections that must be considered?

COMPANION

Yes, exactly.

**INT. THE AMBASSADOR'S ESTATE - DAY**

Home and safe from her adventure, ELIZABETH is soon bored again. She has the photo from London.

She sits by the window dreaming. If BORIS isn't in her dream, then she is thinking of her time in London - the Zeppelin and the little black dress.

**INT. THE AMBASSADOR'S ESTATE WOMAN'S PARLOUR - DAY**

ELIZABETH visits her GRANDMOTHER to receive permission to use the seamstress to make a dress.

ELIZABETH

Mom let me show you this photo again.

GRANDMOTHER

It is very nice dear. I wish I could have been there with you.

ELIZABETH

Well it was spectacular.

(pause)

Grandmother? Can I borrow Agafia to make a dress... like the one in the photo?

GRANDMOTHER

Honey you are ready have a dress like in the photograph. You are wearing it in the photo.

ELIZABETH

No, not that one. This one.

ELIZABETH points to the FLAPPER and the little black dress.  
The GRANDMOTHER looks again.

GRANDMOTHER

Oh, dear. Someone died?

ELIZABETH

No, it is the fashion. Apparently.

GRANDMOTHER

Not here dear.

ELIZABETH

But I will be the first to own one.

GRANDMOTHER

That would be shameful.

ELIZABETH

The woman was in the dress shop being  
fitted when the airship appeared.

GRANDMOTHER

A girl ran into the street in that  
thing?

ELIZABETH

It's a war, grandmother.

GRANDMOTHER

It must be.

ELIZABETH waits for an answer.

GRANDMOTHER

What goes on top of it?

ELIZABETH

Nothing.

GRANDMOTHER

Oh?

ELIZABETH pauses looking for a persuasive argument.

ELIZABETH

It is for night.

GRANDMOTHER

Oh, dear won't you be cold sleeping in that thing.

ELIZABETH

No, mom. It will be okay. I will wear it in the summer.

Her mother looks worried and apprehensive.

ELIZABETH

At night.

GRANDMOTHER

Well, okay dear. I don't know. Is that really what the girls in London are wearing to bed? There can't be much expense there isn't any cloth there at all.

**INT. ESTATE SEWING ROOM - DAY**

AGAFIA is a very old seamstress; she is practically retired and spends most of her day in a chair looking out the window. There are only two women in the house to sew for and much of ELIZABETH's clothing is bought in Petrograd.

AGAFIA was born in 1833 and is now 83 years old. For several years she was a companion for ELIZABETH's mother.

ELIZABETH

Can you make a dress for me?

(pause)

Grandmother said it was okay.

AGAFIA

What kind of dress?

ELIZABETH

Something I saw in London

AGAFIA

Well if I can; You know I'm very old.

ELIZABETH

You aren't that old.

Elizabeth reveals the photo from London and points to the little black dress.

ELIZABETH

There was an airship and the woman ran out into the street.

AGAFIA

Well darling. It isn't finished.

ELIZABETH

Oh.

AGAFIA

I need a photo of the finished dress.

ELIZABETH

No. I think it is mostly finished.

AGAFIA

It is supposed to look like that?

(pause)

Oh, child. This isn't for a lady.

ELIZABETH is about to argue with the woman. But she holds her tongue.

AGAFIA

You do understand that most of the Westerners will roast in Hell?

ELIZABETH

Oh, Agafia. It isn't all that bad. It's art. Think of it as a unique creation.

AGAFIA

Dear, how old are you again?

ELIZABETH

20.

AGAFIA

You are going to be married before the  
New Year?

ELIZABETH

We are having a dinner, something of an  
engagement party.

AGAFIA

And you want to wear this?

ELIZABETH

Why not?

There is a long pause.

AGAFIA

You are doing this for love?

ELIZABETH

He is absolutely marvellous.

AGAFIA

And you are going to wear this dress?

ELIZABETH

Yes, of course. Why make it to place it  
in a chest?

AGAFIA

Great love is seldom flaunted in  
public, though it very often shows  
itself in pride—that is a little  
obvious, perhaps.

ELIZABETH

It's going to be a grand party.

AGAFIA

Can I attend?

ELIZABETH

Oh, Yes! Of course!

AGAFIA

There is a quality of protectiveness in  
a man's expression as it falls on his

betrothed, as though she were so lovely a breath might break her; and in the eyes of a girl whose love is really deep, there is always evidence of that most beautiful look of championship, as though she thought: "No one else can possibly know how wonderful he is!"

ELIZABETH smiles enthusiastically. She is obviously in love.

AGAFIA

I need some newspapers.

ELIZABETH runs downstairs to the AMBASSADOR's library. The newspaper headlines illustrate the seriousness of the war.

ELIZABETH returns with the papers. AGAFIA has a pair of scissor out and is ready to fashion a pattern.

Both GRANDMOTHER and AGAFIA are in their old age just a little eccentric.

MONTAGE

- AGAFIA and ELIZABETH take measurements.
- They create and then cut a pattern.
- AGAFIA reaches into a drawer marked "Morning Cloth" and pulls out some nice black cloth.
- First AGAFIA makes a pattern for the lining by pinning inexpensive paper upon her ELIZABETH's figure.
- Next, AGAFIA takes the pieces and pastes them together.
- ELIZABETH tries on this rough paper garment.
- AGAFIA fits and refits the paper dress on ELIZABETH. This happens over and over again, until they are satisfied.
- Only then does AGAFIA risk putting shears to the expensive cloth.
- AGAFIA reaches into a drawer marked "Morning Cloth" and pulls out some nice black satin.
- AGAFIA and ELIZABETH cut the cloth.
- AGAFIA teaches ELIZABETH to sew. The machine isn't simple to operate.

BACK TO SCENE

Once the dress is sewn, ELIZABETH tries on the dress.  
AGAFIA works on the last few details.

ELIZABETH

I love dresses.

AGAFIA

Naturally.

ELIZABETH

This dress will be comfortable.

AGAFIA

It isn't going to cost much.

ELIZABETH notices only a few slivers of cloth are  
on the ground. Nothing is wasted.

ELIZABETH

You use every inch of the cloth.

AGAFIA chuckles.

ELIZABETH

What is funny?

AGAFIA

I have often wondered what your  
grandmother would think if I told her  
that I learned as a serf.

ELIZABETH

Things were rough?

AGAFIA remembers back to when she was a young woman  
sewing for a huge community of serfs.

AGAFIA

The technique of sewing clothing for my  
fellow serfs was not for the sake of  
fashion; of course, but economical as  
not to waste any of the rough Osnaburg  
cloth the your great grandmother  
provided.

ELIZABETH

You have always been here.

AGAFIA

Yes. I could have left. My skills had the attention of a lady in Petersburg but I stayed here.

ELIZABETH

In 1861?

AGAFIA

Yes.

ELIZABETH

What was she like?

AGAFIA

Your great-grandmother?

(pause)

I had spent 32 years as a serf, and I had, just for my own survival, learned how to deal with difficult women, to put it bluntly.

(pause)

A lady and her dressmaker spend a lot of time together. It was not like you and I here. She never picked up a pair of scissors. And of course we didn't have a machine. You are really helping me and it is our creation.

ELIZABETH

I'm happy to learn. You are a great teacher and have become such a wonderful confidant.

AGAFIA

I'm glad you had this idea, child.

(pause)

When is the dinner party?

**INT. THE AMBASSADOR'S ESTATE - NIGHT**

GREAT-GRANDMOTHER is hosting ELIZABETH's engagement party. ELIZABETH is dresses in one of the more traditional gowns. Once only a servant, AGAFIA is now sitting in a place of prominence. She might be mistaken for a member of the family.

The AMBASSADOR is absent and has remained in London.

Later, BORIS and ELIZABETH are dancing.

BORIS

I've told the employees at my estate to build and burn great fires. You will be able to see them burn half the night.

ELIZABETH

Oh really. How sweet.

BORIS

I understand it will be quite spectacular.

ELIZABETH

You are marvellous.

BORIS

We are marvellous.

ELIZABETH

I have something to show you also.

BORIS

What?

ELIZABETH

You will see.

Elizabeth chuckles.

ELIZABETH

Give me ten minutes warning before you leave.

BORIS

Sure. Yes. Of course.

**EXT. VESTIBULE OF THE AMBASSADOR'S ESTATE - NIGHT**

As BORIS begins to leave the party to return home. ELIZABETH leaves the party and changes into her little black dress.

She emerges and places herself in a strategic location. She isn't likely to be seen by the guests who remain in the hall dancing, but she is very likely to be seen by BORIS.

When BORIS walks past ELIZABETH he is struck by the image. It is dark, only the hall where the party is well lit. However there is just enough light to see ELIZABETH in the dress.

BORIS is about to approach ELIZABETH, but a large party of people emerge from the party and several of BORIS' friends come inside from the front. Suddenly the vestibule is crowded. ELIZABETH disappears into a dark area of the house.

**EXT. BALCONY OF THE AMBASSADOR'S ESTATE - NIGHT**

Later, ELIZABETH is on the second floor balcony. Before getting on his horse, he looks up to the balcony and he points in the direction of his estate. The sky is bright in that direction.

ELIZABETH gets into her little back dress. She walks out on the balcony and looks into the night. In the far distance, there is a huge plum of smoke rising. It is a dark moonless night, but the fire lights up the smoke in the sky. ELIZABETH stands for a very long time longing in that direction.

**EXT. CHURCH - WINTER DAY**

NEWSPAPER HEADLINE "Tsar orders army to quell civil unrest - army mutinies"

It is in the dead of winter and the groom's party goes to the wedding in sledges. Two groomsmen drive the groom's sledge, and six sledges followed with all his relatives and friends.

**INT. CHURCH - DAY**

While the PRIEST is in the Sanctuary, the BRIDE and GROOM enter and stand before the Doors of the Narthex (vestibule). The GROOM on the right and the BRIDE on the left. In the center of the Nave, before the Royal Doors, have been placed on a table, the Holy Gospel, the Holy Cross, the rings, candles, the crowns and the Common Cup containing wine. The PRIEST together with the DEACON go to the entrance of the Narthex. He blesses the BRIDE and GROOM and leads them into the Narthex.

PRIEST

...stretch out now also Thy hand from Thy holy dwelling-place, and unite this Thy servant, N. and this Thy handmaiden, N.; for by Thee is the husband joined unto the wife. Unite them in one mind; wed them into one flesh, granting to them the fruit of the body and the procreation of fair children.

And then the priest crowns the couple (three times).

PRIEST

Crown them with glory and honor!  
(pause)  
Crown them with glory and honor!  
(pause)  
Crown them with glory and honor!

**EXT. ROAD TO THE ESTATE - SNOWY AFTERNOON**

After the ceremony at the church, the party goes to a dinner given by the GRANDMOTHER of the BRIDE. The dinner lasts all afternoon; then it became a supper and continued far into the night. There is much dancing and drinking.

There is a massive cake, which half isn't eaten.

At midnight, the GRANDMOTHER of the BRIDE says good-bye to her and blesses her. The SERVANTS box up the cake. And the box is placed in the groom's sledge.

The BORIS takes ELIZABETH up in his arms and carries her out to his sledge and tucks her under the blankets. BORIS

springs in beside her, and the groomsmen and family follow in the six sledges. BORIS leads the procession back to his estate.

The party sets out with singing and the jingle of sleigh-bells. All the drivers were more or less the worse for merry-making, and the GROOM is absorbed in his BRIDE.

The wolves are bad in the winter of 1916, with most of the men away at the war, and everyone knew it, yet when they heard the first wolf-cry, the drivers are not much alarmed. They have too much good food and drink inside them.

But the first howls are taken up and echoed and with quickening repetitions. The wolves are coming together.

All the horses pick up the pace without prodding.

There is no moon, but the starlight is clear on the snow.

A black pack comes up behind the wedding party. The wolves run like black streaks along side the party. They look no larger than dogs, but there were twenty of them.

There is some commotion at the back of the procession. There is yelling and gun shots. The DRUNKEST GROOMSMEN is firing his gun at the wolves who are running beside the party.

The only SOBER GROOMSMAN yells forward to BORIS.

GROOMSMAN

Wolves!

BORIS whips the already fast moving horse and speed is increased.

Then something happens to the hindmost sledge: the driver loses control-- he is clearly very drunk -- the horses have left the road, the sledge is caught in a clump of trees, and overturned.

The occupants rolled out over the snow, and the fleetest of the wolves springs past them. There are no shrieks but everyone in the last sledge is now 110% sober. Miraculously, the other wolves run right past the

overturned sledge. Either they are playing a game or they are after a different prey.

The other drivers stand up and lash their horses but the wolves pass them. Five sledges have been passed by the wolves. And now the wolves are behind BORIS AND ELIZABETH. The groom has the best team and his sledge was lightest-- all the others carried from six to a dozen people.

Nothing seems to tire the wolves. It was hard to tell what was happening in the rear.

The ELIZABETH hides her face on the BORIS's shoulder. BORIS is still and watches his horses. The road is clear and white, and the groom's three black horses run like the wind.

BORIS notices that ELIZABETH is VERY afraid.

BORIS

The horses are okay. It is only necessary to be calm and to guide them carefully.

ELIZABETH

And the wolves?

The wolves are not slowing... the rest of the pack has arrived on the heels of the sledge.

BORIS

They seem to have a taste for bride...

ELIZABETH's eyes become large. It is a very odd thing for BORIS to say. And she recalls the legend of the bride who was thrown to the wolves.

BORIS

Or cake?

With that BORIS reaches into the back of the sledge and with one hand picks up the huge box containing the wedding cake.

He pitches it out to the side of the road.

The wolves rip into the box like it was a deer carcass.

They reach the Uvarov estate safely.

**EXT. UVAROV ESTATE - DAY - 1917**

NEWSPAPER HEADLINE "Bombardment of the Winter Palace in Petrograd"

Only half of the pumpkin harvest has been completed. With all the political turmoil and unrest. There are many pumpkins in the field. The plants are dead from the frost.

**INT. UVAROV ESTATE - DAY**

BORIS and ELIZABETH are in the house on the second floor. They share a space in the library. Much like Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, they have writing desks facing each other.

ELIZABETH has a sewing machine, manikins and a project table. At the window, he has a set of military style field glasses. His peasants are gathering the crop. BORIS's attention is fixed on the workers in the distant field.

BORIS

Amazing.

(pause)

A month with no work and now they grow energetic.

ELIZABETH

What are they working again?

BORIS

I think.

(pause)

Or stealing?

ELIZABETH

Oh, good Lord. This country is out of control. Stealing!

BORIS

Well, in a moment we will know for certain.

ELIZABETH rises and walks to the window.

BORIS  
We bought the seeds.

ELIZABETH  
They have our wagon and our tools.

BORIS  
That wagon had better head in this direction!

ELIZABETH  
What if they don't return with the pumpkins?

BORIS  
Well, I will have to ride out there and straighten it out.

At an extreme distance it is hard to tell what is happening. The wagon however appears to be leaving in the direction of the city.

BORIS  
They are stealing!

BORIS hobbles out of the room. He rushes awkwardly down the stairs out the front door to a horse. His FOREMAN is only feet behind him.

**EXT. ROAD LEAVING UVAROV ESTATE - DAY**

When BORIS and his FOREMAN arrive to block the progress of the wagon, they find several DESERTERS from the Army have joined the PEASANTS. The PEASANTS look afraid; the FOREMAN has a shotgun. The DESERTERS begin to circle the two men. Several of the most dangerous looking DESERTERS in the group move behind BORIS and the FOREMAN.

BORIS  
Now look...

A shot rings out; a DESERTER shoots the FOREMAN with a pistol. The shotgun discharges into the air.

The DESERTER could easily shot BORIS with the pistol but he wants the peasants to participate for the good of the revolution. He actually puts the pistol back in his pocket.

The PEASANTS don't know what to do and look at the DESERTERS, who mockingly gesture for them to attack.

The MOB rushes BORIS on his HORSE. They slash at the HORSE and BORIS with the knives used to cut the pumpkins.

The HORSE bolts athletically out of the MOB in the direction of the house.

A DESERTER takes a rifle hidden in the wagon and carefully aims. He fires and BORIS falls off his horse. BORIS struggles to rise; he is only wounded.

Again the DESERTER gestures at the PEASANTS. The peasants run to Boris and from a distance we see them stabbing him repeatedly.

ELIZABETH is watching all of this from the window. She runs downstairs and outside to BORIS.

**EXT. THE UVAROV ESTATE - 2 MONTHS LATER - DAY**

NEWSPAPER HEADLINE "Russia declared a Republic of Soviets"

ELIZABETH is leaving. The estate has been seized by the Bolsheviks. She has been exiled to Siberia and is making her way to the train station in what will soon be the new "City of Lenin".

ELIZABETH

I beg you to let me take the sewing machine. I will need it to make a living.

COMMUNIST

There will be no shortage of work.

ELIZABETH

I can be more productive for the new state, if you would allow me to take it.

COMMUNIST

There will be no shortage of work.

ELIZABETH

Please?

COMMUNIST

If you know what is good for you, you will put your two suitcases in the wagon and go.

ELIZABETH leaves. She has no help and is carrying the suitcases herself. As she exits, the people entering the house with their meager belongings are the PEASANTS who stabbed her husband. Their eyes are still full of hate. ELIZABETH hangs her head and doesn't wish more conflict.

The COMMUNIST has climbed the stairs. He calls from above down to Elizabeth.

COMMUNIST

Comrade!

ELIZABETH looks up as the COMMUNIST pitches the sewing machine out the window. It crashes into a mangled wreck on the ground.

The COMMUNIST laughs cruelly.

**EXT. ROAD LEAVING UVAROV ESTATE - 2 MONTHS LATER - NIGHT**

As ELIZABETH is being relocated, she is offered money for the dress. She politely refuses. Either she doesn't know what is in store for her in the East or it is an act of defiance.

**EXT. LENINGRAD TRAIN STATION - NIGHT**

ELIZABETH is one of hundreds of "former people" who are at the station. All are waiting to be moved East.

The BOLSHEVIKS in the station are numerous and in control of the situation, always. They motion for ELIZABETH to open her suitcases for inspection.

Borya ZHILOV is responsible for deporting the people to Siberia. He is overseeing the process from the background.

BOLSHEVIK  
Contraband?

ELIZABETH complies and opens both cases.

They are about to confiscate the little black dress.

BOLSHEVIK #1  
Bolshevik ideology opposes fashion consumption as an intrinsically capitalist practice. This dress emphasizes both economic status and gender differences. You live in an improved world now.

BOLSHEVIK #2  
This is Contraband.

BOLSHEVIK #1  
Speculation? She was going to sell it.

ZHILOV notices... and comes to examine the dress. He looks at the body of ELIZABETH and mentally compares it to his mistress.

ZHILOV  
Where did you get this dress?

ELIZABETH  
I made it.

ZHILOV  
Liar.

ELIZABETH  
No really.

ZHILOV  
You made this? I think not. You are an aristocrat.

ELIZABETH  
Well I had help. My grandmother's seamstress, we made it together.

ZHILOV

It is marauding. I will take the item  
into evidence.

ZHILOV places the dress inside his coat.

**INT. SIBERA SHACK - NIGHT**

ELIZABETH finds herself living with many others in a small shack in a peasant village in the far northeast of Russia. She is shivering and is miserable. Her most prized memory is of BORIS and her little black dress.

**ACT TWO**

**INT. MOSCOW THEATRE - NIGHT - 1918**

NEWSPAPER HEADLINE "Treaty of Brest-Litovsk signed"

ZHILOV has been promoted in rank. The BOLSHEVIK who confiscated the dress is attending a musical concert in Moscow. ZHILOV has his eye on one of the female members of a choir.

ZHILOV sends aides to make inquiries about her.

NKVD

Who is the woman third on the left?

CHOIR MANAGER

Nina Rebrov.

A COLLEAGUE of her husband, overhears this. He then warns the couple. NINA is able to escape from the theater without confronting ZHILOV.

NINA is the third most beautiful woman in this film.

**EXT. MOSCOW STREET - NEXT DAY**

A large black car pulls up beside NINA.

CHAUFFEUR

A certain person likes you.

NINA has the presence of mind not to get in the car.

NINA  
I am waiting for my husband, army  
Colonel Ivan Rebrov.

The CHAUFFEUR excuses himself and the car glides off.

NINA  
(to herself)  
God saved me.

**EXT. ARMY CAMP - NEXT DAY**

Col. REBROV is arrested.

**EXT. KORENEVGRAD TRAIN STATION - NIGHT**

NINA has fled to Korenevgrad, on the Baltic coast, where she believes Zhilov can not reach her. NINA exits the railcar and is greeted by friends. She appears to be relieved to be safe.

**EXT. MOSCOW TRAIN STATION - DAY**

NEWSPAPER HEADLINE "Tsar Nicholas II and Family Executed"

After six months, NINA thinks it will be safe to return to Petrograd. She exits the railcar and is again met by friends.

**EXT. MOSCOW THEATRE - NIGHT**

NINA rejoins the choir. There is even a new love interest, a naval officer. It appears that he might be her next husband.

But ZHILOV has not forgotten her. He sends BODYGUARDS to bring her to him - and this time NINA cannot refuse.

**EXT. FRONT OF ZHILOV RESIDENCE - NIGHT**

NINA is driven to ZHILOV by his people.

As NINA is escorted into the house, One VICTIM, evidently has refused his advances. The VICTIM is accidentally given flowers. It appears there is a standing order on leaving for the woman to be given flowers. If the VICTIM accepts the gift it adds a certain sick legitimacy to the rape.

The VICTIM takes the flowers, looks at them strangely, looks at the bodyguard like he is insane and then throws the flowers into the yard.

Running out of the house, ZHILOV is engaged.

ZHILOV

(shouting)

It's not a bouquet for your health,  
it's for your funeral. May they rot on  
your grave.

She will probably be arrested later.

When ZHILOV notices NINA and her escort, he is all smiles. ZHILOV turns off the rage and turns on the charm.

ZHILOV

Hello, I wanted to have you over for  
dinner and tell you how much I admire  
your singing.

NINA seems in shock. She looks to the left and there is a bodyguard. She looks to the right and there is the same. ZHILOV displays a sinister smile.

ZHILOV

Come on in and have a bite to eat.

Like all the women who got to ZHILOV's house, she will be raped. ZHILOV has invited NINA to the table.

#### **INT. ZHILOV'S DINING ROOM - NIGHT**

NINA is shown into an elegant dining room where a table is laid with hors d'oeuvres of all kinds and delicious wines marked "from the cellars of Tsar Nicholas II". It is the kind of food ordinary people never sees.

ZHILOV proposes drink after drink...

ZHILOV  
... to the new state.

When NINA refuses...

ZHILOV  
Oh! You refuse to drink a toast to the  
state. You are a subversive?

**INT. ZHILOV'S BEDROOM - NIGHT**

After dinner, ZHILOV takes her to the bedroom. She is intoxicated from the wine, but is trembling all over.

NINA  
I do not want this to happen.

ZHILOV throws the little black dress to her and motions for her to change into it. There is a bathroom attached to the bedroom.

**INT. ZHILOV'S BATHROOM - NIGHT**

NINA splashes water on her face and tries to sober up. She looks at the dress. While she is in an impossible situation, she can appreciate the dress.

NINA puts the dress on and it fits perfectly. She looks at herself in the mirror. She takes an inordinate amount of time (postponing the inevitable) and ZHILOV begins to call for her.

**EXT. MOSCOW STREET - DAY**

ZHILOV has delivered her home. NINA has kept the black dress. The CHAUFFEUR opens the door for her and gives NINA a bouquet of red roses.

When the CHAUFFEUR turns the corner, NINA throws the roses in the trash bin.

**MONTAGE**

- Every two or three days for the next 18 months, the car is sent for NINA.
- She spends the night with ZHILOV.
- Her new naval officer sits chafed at home.
- The NINA is confined to the bedroom, the dining room and the bathroom. All the other door are always locked.
- NINA never sees any other women.
- The next morning the CHAUFFEUR brings her home.
- NINA, of course, looks depressed.
- Despite the rape, NINA keeps the dress. She doesn't wear it for ZHILOV.

**INT. ZHILOV'S BEDROOM - NIGHT**

NINA is only slightly more comfortable with ZHILOV now. Time has passed. She doesn't feel at home but she can at least bring herself to speak to him, where in their first encounter ZINA was almost totally silent.

ZINA seems to be concentrating on devising ways of getting out of his clutches.

ZHILOV

I can help your singing career and want to set you up with a larger apartment. You want a grand piano?

NINA

I can't take any privileges or gifts. It goes against the way I was raised.

ZHILOV

Oh, come on. It is a simple thing.

NINA

I am not that sort of girl. I am from a good family. I am a homely sort of woman, why do you trouble yourself with me?

ZHILOV

Oh, it isn't any trouble. No trouble at all.

NINA

Well there are prettier women you can have. You are a handsome man, successful. Women like that.

ZHILOV

Why do you spend all your time with your music? You should be an actress!

**INT. NINA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT**

NINA looks depressed. She sits in her apartment stewing. She is nervous and afraid. When a car drives past, she shakes in fear. She runs to the window. She is relieved when it is not ZHILOV'S car.

**EXT. MOSCOW TRAIN STATION - NIGHT**

NEWSPAPER HEADLINE "Tsar Nicholas II and Family Executed"

NINA is waiting by the track for the train to stop. She is in a stylish fur coat. Concealed by the coat... must be the little black dress ... but we can only speculate. We can see her legs under the coat.

NINA is meeting the train of her NAVY OFFICER.

The OFFICER exits the train as it stops. Their eyes meet. NINA isn't depressed. He stops 20 meters away from her; he is looking at her for some clue to the situation with ZHILOV.

No one really notices... they are busy with bags and rushing somewhere.

NINA opens the coat, revealing the sexy black dress. She poses. Evidently the navy OFFICER is not aware of the "who" and "how" she received the dress. He just thinks it is a sexy dress.

The OFFICER takes this sexy display as a sign that ZHILOV has not been calling on her. The OFFICER is overly optimistic.

The OFFICER is energized and runs to NINA.

They don't say a word they just walk off quickly in love.

**INT. ZHILOV'S BEDROOM - NIGHT - 1919**

ZHILOV

Where is the black dress I gave you?

NINA

Why?

ZHILOV

We are going to a party. Tomorrow, at a dacha. Lenin will be there.

NINA

Oh?

ZHILOV

It is very important.

NINA

Why don't you take your wife?

ZHILOV

No wives will be there.

**INT. COUNTRY DACHA FRONT ROOM - NIGHT**

It is a very Bolshevik party. The part-goers are all stern daytime revolutionaries. But at night they need to blow off some steam. It is also a Russian party; the alcohol is flowing.

We see a YOUNG BOLSHEVIK he is rough and as unkempt hair. He looks out of place. He doesn't drink or smoke.

**INT. DACHA KITCHEN - NIGHT**

There is almost a fistfight between ZHILOV and a YOUNG BOLSHEVIK. Evidently there is some political struggle going on and the men almost come to blows. The men threaten each

other and it is a serious feud. ZHILOV is furious. The guests pull them apart.

When it is over NINA moves to console ZHILOV. The YOUNG BOLSHEVIK'S fiancée runs to him. The women try to distract the men from the conflict.

We see ZHILOV staring hatefully at the YOUNG BOLSHEVIK and his woman. Both men are clearly plotting. They both are plotting how to use the machinery of the new government to destroy the other. They are thinking of poisonings, assassination, gulags and firing squads.

The YOUNG BOLSHEVIK'S fiancée ushers him to another room.

NINA is asked to sing. She refuses and wants to guard ZHILOV from another fight. But ZHILOV is anxious to be the hit of the party he nods his head in a command that she is to sing. She agrees. NINA is noticed, the dress attracts a lot of attention.

#### **INT. DACHA MUSIC ROOM - NIGHT**

The dress is too tight for her to climb on top of the piano. She is picked up and placed on the piano by two men. When she sings, she the entire room is attracted to her.

When she is finished with the song there is great applause. And the party increases in intensity.

#### **EXT. DACHA DRIVE WAY - NIGHT**

An Austin-Putilov armoured car arrives. Lenin immerges with many security guards.

#### **INT. DACHA FRONT ROOM - NIGHT**

When LENIN walks into the party, the revelry declines a bit. Everyone is nervous. Some aren't affected by the leader, depending on their sobriety.

Lenin walks through the front room, shaking hands and receiving people's regards and well wishes.

Lenin is sick and worn looking.

ZHILOV introduces NINA to LENIN. Lenin appears to disapprove of the little black dress.

ZHILOV'S face drops. He is destroyed and was hoping NINA would help him win favor of the powerful man.

Lenin moves to the library.

**INT. DACHA LIBRARY - NIGHT**

LENIN is preaching Marxist ideology when ZHILOV arrives in the room. LENIN is clearly sick but is still a robot and seems to never stop. LENIN has power and it is a party. Only hard-line ideologues are there, no one there needs convincing, but still LENIN preaches.

The MEN disappear from the party and crowd into the library.

Evidently the topic is "fashion" in the new paradigm.

LENIN

Riding out here to our gathering, I considered that. I thought for a moment then, optimistic. However walking in and looking at the clothes of my top advisers and trusted revolutionaries, I have pause to think.

BOLSHEVIK #1

The fashions tonight are out of place?

LENIN

Fashion is no longer fashion; it is clothing. I don't like the word - fashion. Fashion implies industry fat cats, a capitalist hierarchy, and a means of establishing status that is tied to the past—specifically tsarist Russia's past.

The YOUNG BOLSHEVIK has not followed LENIN into the library. ZHILOV has noticed. He looks out into the main room. The YOUNG BOLSHEVIK and his woman are sitting and she is still consoling him,

playing with his hair, but at the same time they might be having a very deep intellectual discussion.

BOLSHEVIK #2

(to Lenin)

What must we do?

ZHILOV turns back to LENIN. ZHILOV seems to be thinking and hatching a plot.

LENIN

In order to sever these associations, designs will no longer be dictated by decorative, seasonal trends, and neither will they be viewed as a carrier of status or change.

BOLSHEVIK #3

What is permitted and what is not?

LENIN

Any aspect of clothing that distinguished one comrade too much from the next is not permitted, and for a short time even gendered garments are discouraged.

BOLSHEVIK #4

What must we do?

LENIN

The Bolshevik clothing will serve as a very clear example of the tremendous changes that will be made in society. We will create a new Soviet man... but from the looks of things the most urgent need is to create a new woman.

The BOLSHEVIK'S laugh.

LENIN

In all seriousness, the Bolsheviks' vision of a society includes a new dress for women based on optimum functionality, and discussion of our

treatment of fashion as a science is a highlight of future research.

BOLSHEVIK #5

Must every aspect of clothing design be calculated and researched?

LENIN

Perceptual psychologists who specialize in color theory and the psychological benefits of chromotherapy, for example, have extensively researched the application of red to fabric. Most of the clothes will be red and for good reason.

BOLSHEVIK #6

What is the proper punishment for women wearing Western fashions?

LENIN

They will soon be required to wear a dress based on the specific physical and ideological needs of the socialist worker.

BOLSHEVIK #6

There will be an official uniform?

LENIN

Official state-directed socialist clothes will be the norm. Western-influenced fashion is to be denounced. Clothes are a symbol, and consequently, ideas.

A DRUNKEN WOMAN stumbles into the room and interrupts for a moment. She quickly leaves.

LENIN

As just demonstrated, there are a number of Western decadent dresses here. It threatens the society we are building since the October Revolution.

The men listen and shake their head in agreement.

LENIN

I hope you don't allow your wives to wear this anti-revolutionary garb. We need the highest of standards. If not carnally pure, even whores in the USSR will be ideologically pure in their clothes.

The room erupts in laughter and LENIN moves to another room.

**INT. DACHA FRONT ROOM - NIGHT**

NINA seems to have patched things over with the YOUNG BOLSHEVIK and his FIANCÉE. The three are sitting on the sofa. Drinking and relaxing.

ZHILOV

(whispers to Nina)

Get your coat and come outside.

ZHILOV makes her go to the car.

**EXT. FRONT YARD OF THE DACHA - NIGHT**

ZHILOV

Lenin disapproves of the dress.  
(pause)

NINA

What?

ZHILOV

It isn't ideological.  
(pause)  
Undress and hand me the dress.

NINA

No.

ZHILOV

Take off the dress.

NINA

Why? I like it.

ZHILOV smacks her in the face.

There is a long pause.

Reluctantly, NINA takes her coat off. She hesitates with the dress. ZHILOV takes the coat and holds it up, shielding her if someone were to be watching. They are not.

ZHILOV  
Come on. Hurry. No one is watching.

NINA takes off the dress. ZHILOV places the coat on her.

ZHILOV  
Now take it and give it to that woman.

ZHILOV nods at the YOUNG BOLSHEVIK'S fiancée.

NINA  
What?

ZHILOV is about to hit NINA again.

NINA  
What do I say?

ZHILOV  
You are an actress with me; you will think of something.

NINA doesn't move.

ZHILOV  
Tell her we are sorry and that Lenin loves the dress.

**INT. DACHA FRONT ROOM - NIGHT**

We see NINA smile and hand the neatly folded dress to the YOUNG BOLSHEVIK'S FIANCÉE. We can't hear what is said, but it seems to be an apology and the gift is accepted. The YOUNG BOLSHEVIK looks suspiciously at ZHILOV, who is outside.

ZHILOV has forced NINA to give the dress to the FIANCÉE of his political enemy and tell her that Lenin loves the dress. That it is sure to impress him if he sees her in it.

ZHILOV instructs NINA to get in the car. He does not open the door for her.

**INT. AUTOMOBILE - NIGHT**

NINA goes home in nothing but her coat. NINA rides home silent in utter despair. ZHILOV has taken every ounce of dignity and now she doesn't even have the dress.

Amazingly, ZHILOV is about to let her go.

ZHILOV

I know you will always be cold to me so  
I must accept my fate soberly. You can  
go. I will not bother you again.

NINA thanks him profusely.

**EXT. MOSCOW STREET - LATE NIGHT**

ZHILOV has driven NINA to her apartment. Suddenly he is chivalrous. He gets out of the car, walks around and opens the door for her. He walks her to the door.

ZHILOV returns to the car and is shot in the back of the head.

**ACT THREE**

**INT. PROPAGANDA OFFICE - DAY - 1918**

NEWSPAPER HEADLINE "Fanya Kaplan shoots at Lenin"

The YOUNG BOLSHEVIK is SAVVEL KORENEV and his FIANCÉE is PEARL NIKOLAEVNA.

They are pretending to work. They are in the agitprop business. KORENEV looks rough, hair a mess; he is unsophisticated. PEARL looks very military for the propaganda business. She is not the charismatic type.

PEARL is the fourth most beautiful woman in this film.

It is still early in that great upheaval which continues to shake the country. However, many are working for the inevitable, fateful conclusion of the civil war.

PEARL

My party name is Pearl Nikolaevna. What else do you need to know? I support another, more moderate current in the party!

KORENEV

I attribute this to the mildness of your character and the general political muddle.

PEARL

I'm actually your superior. I am 27, and listed among the "old" party workers. I have six years of service behind me, the only interruption being a year in hard labour prison for women.

KORENEV

You had a sense of the approaching storm earlier than most, and I greeted it more calmly than they when it came.

PEARL

I was forced to work much more than previously, but I did not abandon either my scientific pursuits or my literary endeavors.

KORENEV

You made a living by writing...

PEARL

... for two children's magazines.

KORENEV

And now look at you!

PEARL

From Russian fairy tales to scientific materialism in the turn of a page.

KORENEV

I heard you talking the other day about free love.

PEARL

The satisfaction of one's sexual desires should be as simple as getting a glass of water. How complicated can it be?

KORENEV

You don't flinch at all.

PEARL

Sexuality is a human instinct as natural as hunger or thirst.

KORENEV

Bold.

PEARL

However, this does not mean that I advocate casual sexual encounters.

KORENEV

There will be inequality between men and women under socialism for a long time and...

PEARL

... such "free love" encounters can lead to women being exploited, and being left to raise children alone.

KORENEV

You don't think that true socialism can be achieved without a radical change in attitudes to sexuality?

PEARL

So that it might be freed from the oppressive norms that are only a continuation of bourgeois ideas about property.

KORENEV

Like the state...

PEARL

... the family unit will wither away once the second stage of communism became a reality.

KORENEV

Marriage and traditional families are legacies of the oppressive, property-rights-based, egoist past.

PEARL

Under Communism, both men and women would work for, and be supported by, society, not their families.

KORENEV

Similarly, their children would be wards of, and reared basically by society.

PEARL

The worker-mother must learn not to differentiate between yours and mine; she must remember that there are only our children, the children of Russia's communist workers.

KORENEV

Communist society will take upon itself all the duties involved in the education of the child, but the joys of parenthood will not be taken away from those who are capable of appreciating them.

PEARL

There is a gathering at a dacha tomorrow. You want to go with me?

KORENEV

I'm thinking you will make a suitable communist wife, and you might work well, not out of love, but out of duty.

**INT. PEARL AND KORENEV'S SHARED APARTMENT - NIGHT - 1919**

NEWSPAPER HEADLINE "Reds Capture Riga"

The attraction between the two is clear, and after a brief courtship they have been living together.

It is late after the party at the dacha. PEARL and KORENEV enter the apartment. Pearl holds up the dress. She looks at it strangely. After all, it is a very sexy dress and she is a committed dyed in the wool Marxist. Something in her brain snaps.

PEARL goes into the bathroom and changes into the dress. She emerges and the moonlight is beaming through the window. She is transformed from hard-line Bolshevik into a "womanly" woman.

PEARL  
It's not ideological.

PEARL puts on the dress.

KORENEV  
No it isn't. It definitely isn't.

**EXT. KOLOMENSKOYE - DAY**

NEWSPAPER HEADLINE "Red Army Captures Omsk"

Today, Moscow is defying its stereotype as a forbidding gray metropolis. We see the estates of former tsars have been turned into a public park that paint the city with autumn hues.

A girl plays with autumn leaves in Kolomenskoye park.

We see at Kolomenskoye the whitewashed Church of the Ascension and the wooden palace that punctuate a forest and rows of apple orchards.

KORENEV and PEARL are walking in the park.

PEARL  
Politically we are compatible.

KORENEV

But?

PEARL

Our views on our own relationship differed even sharply.

KORENEV

How?

PEARL

You have stated that love implies certain obligations—concessions, sacrifices, and, above all, fidelity for the duration of the union.

KORENEV

Yes. It is important.

PEARL

In actual fact is that I have no intention whatever of entering into other liaisons, but I am unable to recognize fidelity as an obligation.

KORENEV

Well, if you think you will never want another man, why are we discussing this? Why don't we just get on with our wedding? Why the delay?

PEARL

Just hang on and listen to me. I even believed that polygamy is in principle superior to monogamy, since it provided for both a richer private life and a greater variety of genetic combinations.

KORENEV

You want me to have two wives? Or you two husbands? Because I can tell you right now...

PEARL

It is just an intellectual argument.

KORENEV

How can I ever take you seriously when almost everything with you is an intellectual argument?

PEARL

In my opinion, it is only the contradictions of the bourgeois order which for the time being is making polygamy either simply unfeasible or merely the privilege of the exploiters and parasites.

KORENEV

You think in the future there will be some radical transformation?

PEARL

Of course.

KORENEV

So we get married and then later, after the transformation we bring in another wife?

PEARL

None of these disagreements have given me any reason to think of ending our relationship.

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

Between his rising career in politics and her sinking career, they don't spend as much time together as she's dreamed, and they begin to drift apart.

**INT. PEARL'S APARTMENT - DAY - 1920**

NEWSPAPER HEADLINE "The Red Army puts Warsaw Under Siege"

KORENEV enters and announces another promotion.

KORENEV

The Central Committee! I have it!

Before PEARL can speak he pushes her to the kitchen counter and begins kissing her all over. It appears that "power" is intoxicating. PEARL is not overly thrilled but she submits. This is all fine and nice, but she remembers there was a time when she outranked him and she was the rising star in the party.

KORENEV

The supreme authority of the party.

PEARL

Great.

KORENEV

The key decision-making body in both practice and theory

PEARL

Super.

KORENEV

And decisions were made through majority votes.

PEARL

Oh... yes of course. I understand.

KORENEV is taking off his pants and pulling up her skirt.

PAN TO CEILING. We hear the two as they make love as they talk politics VOICES OFF SCREEN.

KORENEV

For example, the Central Committee voted for or against signing a peace treaty with the Germans between 1917 and 1918 during World War I

PEARL

The majority voted in favour of peace when Trotsky backed down in 1918.

KORENEV

The result of the vote was the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk.

PEARL

During the heated debates in the Central Committee about a possible peace with the Germans, Lenin did not have a majority; both Trotsky and Nikolai Bukharin had more support for their own position than Lenin.

KORENEV

Only when Lenin sought a coalition with Trotsky and others, were negotiations with the Germans voted through with a simple m-a-j-o-r-i-t-y.

KORENEV finishes.

PEARL

Criticism of other officials is allowed during those meetings, you understand that don't you? Be careful.

A short time passes. CAMERA PANS DOWN. PEARL is arranging her skirt.

**INT. CAFÉ - NIGHT - OCTOBER 1920**

NEWSPAPER HEADLINE "Armistice between Russia and Poland"

Evidently outside in the street, PEARL has announced that she's pregnant. They enter the door and wait for a hostess.

KORENEV has changed. He is taller and better dressed than before. He was a rough looking guy a year ago, now he looks sharp in his dress and his hair is styled.

KORENEV

It was that promotion sex.

PEARL

In the kitchen?

KORENEV

God, I knew this would happen.

PEARL

(sarcastically)

Really?

KORENEV  
Table for two.

HOSTESS  
Right way sir.

KORENEV displays no particular enthusiasm for the idea of raising a child.

KORENEV  
Are you sure?

PEARL  
I'm sure.

KORENEV  
Quite sure.

PEARL  
Are you dumb?  
(pause)  
I'm having the baby of an imbecile.

KORENEV  
You want to have it?

PEARL  
Well...

WAITRESS  
What can I get you?

PEARL does not hesitate.

PEARL  
Medovukha, coulbiac.

KORENEV  
Sbiten, dressed herring.

WAITRESS writes down the order.

KORENEV  
What do you want?

PEARL

I don't...

KORENEV

I don't... what? You don't want to get married? You don't want the baby.

PEARL

It would be silly.

PEARL is a woman tied up in ideology. She has carried the logic to its destructive end.

**INT. COMMUNIST PARTY HEADQUARTERS - DAY**

KORENEV is worried. Thinking. He can't work. He paces back and forth. One would think his political work is bothering him. However it is not.

He rushes out of the office and yells for his car.

He gets in and speeds off.

**INT. HOSPITAL - DAY**

KORENEV rushed in and wants to see her before the procedure. He pleads with the nurse. Finally he barges into the room. The doctor is placing the instruments on the table. Clearly sick, PEARL gets dressed. KORENEV is too late.

PEARL has had an abortion.

KORENEV rushes to her and hugs her.

KORENEV

Are you okay?

PEARL is almost catatonic. They walk out of the hospital slowly.

KORENEV

I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

KORENEV  
It was my fault.

PEARL  
No.

**INT. APARTMENT - DAY**

PEARL is in bed. KORENEV paces in the apartment. Worried again. Not about work however.

KORENEV  
You think this was my fault?

PEARL  
No.

Time passes. KORENEV might have been awake days.

Finally, looking haggard, KORENEV lays down. Exhausted, he sleeps in the day.

PEARL quietly sneaks out of the apartment.

**INT. PROPAGANDA OFFICE - DAY**

NEWSPAPER HEADLINE "The White Army Evacuates Crimea"

PEARL has empirically renounced love and also the idea of family. But when she has an abortion, the emotions kick in; she can't bear to remain with KORENEV.

PEARL arrives and asks to see her boss.

PEARL  
I need to leave. I mean I need to be out there in the field. Give me a propaganda train.

The boss looks at her face. He thinks.

BOSS  
There is one leaving now. Today.

PEARL  
(without emotion)  
Great.

BOSS  
Are you sure this is what you want to  
do? Your... ah... finance. Korenev won't  
like this.

PEARL blankly looks at him. Despair.

The BOSS reluctant to get involved in the dispute, but  
loyal to PEARL, picks up the telephone.

**EXT. TRAIN STATION - DAY**

PEARL boards the train. She isn't excited; she isn't  
anything.

**EXT. KORENEV'S OFFICE - DAY**

KORENEV repeatedly tries to contact PEARL by telegraph.

**EXT. PEARL'S TRAIN - DAY**

PEARL gets the messages and throws them out of the train  
window.

**EXT. PARTY - NIGHT - 1921**

NEWSPAPER HEADLINE "Sailors Revolt in Kronstadt"

KORENEV is sitting on a couch; he looks horrible. He has  
begun to drink and smoke heavily. A beautiful woman  
approaches and sits on the table in front of him.

KORENEV  
Drink?

GIRL  
I'm fine.

KORENEV  
You aren't married?

GIRL  
(giggling)  
Would I be here talking to you if I  
were?

KORENEV  
Might.

GIRL  
Well, I'm not.

The GIRL leans forward and kisses him.

KORENEV  
You want to get married?

GIRL  
What?

KORENEV  
Sure, why not?

GIRL  
Why?

KORENEV  
The way I calculate it. I might ask you  
out to dinner. We might sleep together.  
And then you would leave me. That seems  
to be that way things go around here.

GIRL  
So?

KORENEV  
If we get married it might change the  
dynamic. Might even stay together.

The GIRL contemplate the drunken proposal.

GIRL  
It could work.

KORENEV

So you want to get married?

GIRL

Great. I will.

KORENEV

I mean tomorrow.

GIRL

Why not?

**EXT. PEARL'S TRAIN - NIGHT**

PEARL writes a telegraph message and has it sent to KORENEV.

**EXT. PALATIAL RESIDENCE - NIGHT**

KORENEV drops the GIRL off. The house is huge.

KORENEV

Who lives here?

GIRL

My father.

KORENEV

Who is your father?

**INT. OFFICE IN THE KREMLIN - DAY**

KORENEV is standing in front of a very powerful unnamed man. The MAN has a very stern look on his face. Finally he smiles.

MAN

Yes! You will make a welcome addition to the family and you will be a powerful ally.

KORENEV is relieved. He knows it is probably a mistake but given the man's power he couldn't back out of the proposal to his daughter.

**INT. SOVIET WEDDING - DAY**

The wedding clerk comes to the Kremlin. The couple is to be married in a Kremlin office.

There is a big rush. No reason for the rush but the spontaneousness of the proposal. Staff is running here and there.

The wedding takes place. Without a doubt, it is VERY official.

Children bring flowers.

There is a great feast.

There is a car waiting for the couple.

The families applaud and send them off.

**INT. KORENEV'S OFFICE - DAY**

The telegram arrives at KORENEV's office, but he is on his honeymoon. His aide throws the telegram in the trash.

**INT. KERMLIN CELBRATION - DAY - 1922**

NEWSPAPER HEADLINE "Vladivostok Falls to the Red Army"

The civil war is over. The Provisional Priamur Government is extinguished.

It is very crowded and the atmosphere is electric.

LENIN is there to promote KORENEV to the Politburo. LENIN has had a serious stroke in May. However by October he is able to speak but the motion in his right side is hampered. At this time he has resumed limited duties and actually is delivering long speeches.

LENIN is yet to have his second stroke.

LENIN is on the right of the room moving the rostrum.  
KORENEV and his new wife are in the middle of the room.

PEARL is in her little black dress and enters the room to the left. She is moving about the room, looking for KORENEV. It is very crowded.

LENIN reaches the rostrum. He will speak about the war but LENIN mentions KORENEV and his wife, just at the moment PEARL reaches KORENEV.

LENIN

I would like to mention several distinguished guests. Savvel Korenev and his wife... and..

PEARL stops dead in her tracks. KORENEV notices her; his face looks devastated.

KORENEV

How are you?

KORENEV's new WIFE looks worried.

KORENEV

I tried to contact you.

PEARL is in shock. She isn't making a scene. She is embarrassed for the WIFE and thinks about running away.

PEARL

I send a telegram.

KORENEV

I didn't get it.

PEARL looks over KORENEV's shoulder at the WIFE. She is very pregnant.

KORENEV

I'm married.

PEARL

Congratulations. I think.

PEARL walks away.

KORENEV moves to follow. His FATHER-IN-LAW looks to KORENEV and is concerned. Several powerful men look at KORENEV.

KORENEV feels the pressure not to leave. He does not follow PEARL. He can not.

**INT. PEARL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT**

PEARL takes the black dress off and carefully folds it. She places it in a storage chest.

Note the timing of the scene where the dress is locked away in a chest... it happens just as the "little black dress" is becoming fashionable in the West.

**INT. RESTAURANT GLAVPIVTORG - NIGHT - 2015**

ZINA enters the restaurant in the little black dress. She has a radiance and confidence. Several men turn and make eye contact. This makes them men's female companions feel uncomfortable.

ZINA scans the room and doesn't see her date. Clearly she is meeting a man. It must be a special man. Someone enters. She looks behind her nervously; maybe he is coming in late. It isn't him and she looks worried. She scans the room again.

ZINA, as every woman would, is worried she will be stood up. She is thinking, "I've gone to all this trouble; put on the dress. I don't want to stand here much longer. I won't stand here much longer."

But she does stand there. Several people exiting the restaurant smile as they walk past her. She smiles in return and continues to look for her date.

The restaurant is designed to feel like a Soviet bureaucrat's office from the late 1960s. Even the menu is designed according to the state cookery manual for restaurants. Complete with Soviet times live music, you can nearly feel the secret service KGB watching over your shoulder. There are mysterious customers of the restaurant

who work in the area and they happen to be people watching. They appear to be making mental notes as they wait for their food, but even also while eating.

Waitresses are dressed in old-fashioned clothes which gives us the impression that we are in the 1960's. The band in the main room is playing nostalgic 1970 music.

ZINA looks at the well dressed successful Russians sitting down for a meal, the men's watches, the ladies jewelry, fine leather shoes, a few close up shots of nearly gourmet quality plates presented expertly, the amounts and types of liquor on shelves behind the bar. Nothing is gray in contemporary Russia. Also people are talking, the level of noise in the restaurant tells us we are in a different era. Clearly this isn't the USSR anymore!

A well dressed YOUNG MAN is standing at the top of the stairs. He is engrossed in a conversation with an OLDER MAN, who might be the younger man's mentor. It looks like a social conversation but clearly important. When the YOUNG MAN sees Zina, he notices how nervous she is. He waves to the OLDER MAN and gestures toward ZINA; the OLDER MAN understands and gestures for the YOUNG MAN to go.

ZINA finally spots the YOUNG MAN she is meeting. He has been upstairs. He appears socially in demand. Perhaps he is a politician or an important businessman. He shakes several people hands on the stairs on the way down. They appear to want to talk to him but he quickly moves past

The YOUNG MAN looks at ZINA as he walks toward her. He kisses her on the cheek.

YOUNG MAN  
You look marvellous.

SPLIT SCREEN

ON THE RIGHT, begin the film CREDITS

ON THE LEFT, the YOUNG MAN escorts ZINA to their table. Several of the guests (male and female) follow them across the room. Naturally, they approve of such a beautiful couple.

The YOUNG MAN pulls out ZINA's chair and she confidently sits. The YOUNG MAN sits. They look very happy.

The waiter comes and we can't hear but the waiter laughs and he seems to compliment the lady and then he turns to the YOUNG MAN and seems to compliment the man on finding such a beautiful lady. The YOUNG MAN seems to reply that he feels lucky.

The waiter leaves and the two young people talk enthusiastically until the CREDITS are complete.

THE END

**NOTES :**