

"NIKOLAI AND GEORGE"

A Screenplay by

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MUSIC UP FULL.

FADE IN.

EXT. RUSSIAN PLAIN - EARLY MORNING

Scene opens on an extremely wide, panoramic view of the Russian Steppe--miles and miles of open, flat land, dotted occasionally with small, planned wooded areas. Snow covers everything, but at the moment the skies are clear, the sun is bright as it begins to rise from behind a distant mountain range. TITLES begin.

As the camera moves in, we're able to see a fairly small peasant village with possibly no more than twenty or thirty brightly-colored cottages. Just outside the village, we see a one-horse sledge travelling away from the village, heading out into the vast plain.

There are two people in the sleigh. One is BABUSHKA, an old woman of seventy with a tanned, leathery face. She wears a scarf over her head, another around her neck and a heavy, cloth coat that reaches to her ankles, which are wrapped in old rags sticking out of worn boots.

Sitting next to her, holding her arm, is NIKOLAI, a boy about ten years old. His complexion is fair, his cheeks and nose are red from the bitter cold. He is wearing a new fur cap, but his sheepskin jacket, wool trousers and ankle-high boots are old and worn.

The sledge is old and worn, too. So is the horse. The old woman slaps the reins on the horse's rump, but he doesn't change his gait. He snorts. We see his breath. We see Nikolai's breath as he blows into his mittens. Babushka breathes softly through her nose, keeping her mouth tightly closed. Her eyes are set in a permanent squint and are dry. The horse's eyes fight the icy wind, fluttering and causing tears to form. Nikolai's tears are not caused by the cold air...he is crying. His soft, black eyes are remembering:

INT. RUSSIAN PEASANT COTTAGE - NIGHT

The large room is lit only with candles and the huge stone fireplace and oven. A kitchen worktable stands next to the oven, pots and pans hanging above it, food stores are stuffed below it. A large number of pots and dishes are piled on the table, remnants of tonight's dinner.

Next to the table is a door leading to the only bedroom and beyond that is a low shelf covered with matting and a blanket. Another wall includes the heavy door that leads outside, with coats and hats hanging next to it.

But the most important feature of this simple, peasant home is the extraordinarily large, rectangular table that takes up about a fourth of the entire room. It is hand-made of heavy woods as are the dozen or so chairs placed around it. And, in these chairs are:

PAPA, sitting at the head of the table with the family's two treasured icons hanging on the wall just behind him. He's fifty, stout and swarthy. He sports a moustache of the old-style. Seated along the two sides of the table are TWO UNCLES, TWO AUNTS, all in their forties, TWIN BOYS, who are about fifteen, LITTLE BROTHER, who is about eight, And BABUSHKA. At the other end of the table, for tonight only, is NIKOLAI. It's his birthday! His smile reaches from ear to ear as the family claps and sings to him. MAMA, about 35, overworked but happy, takes a large pan from the oven and brings it to the table. She serves Nikolai first, then they all help themselves to the small pancakes stuffed with jam.

The MUSIC remains full with the Russian dialogue barely distinguishable in the background.

Mama goes into the bedroom and returns with a small gift and gives it to Nikolai. The group begins shouting and pounding on the table as Nikolai struggles with the wrapping, finally ripping it off to reveal a new fur cap. He quickly puts it on and displays it for the others. They applaud him and the cap and the adults down another glass of vodka. Babushka pours a little vodka in Nikolai's glass and motions for him to drink it. He moves the glass slowly to his lips, takes just a sip, makes a horrible face, downs the rest of it, then smiles. The others all laugh.

Papa bangs on his glass, then on the table, to get their attention. Everyone looks to him, glasses raised, expecting a toast. Instead, Papa pulls a piece of paper from his pocket and makes an announcement. The glasses are all lowered slowly to the table. The MUSIC softens. There's not a sound in the room. Smiles becomes frowns or blank expressions. Everyone looks toward Nikolai, tears already forming in his eyes. Mama walks to him, puts her arm around his shoulders.

Both Aunts get up from the table and start cleaning up the dishes. One Uncle downs his glass of vodka. The other Uncle refills that glass and his own. Nikolai looks up into his mother's face.

## EXT. RUSSIAN COUNTRYSIDE - MORNING

The horse's hooves crunch loudly as they sink into the hard-packed snow. The runners of the sledge whoosh along the icy surface. The horse blows the mucous from his nose. NIKOLAI coughs. The horse snorts again and tries to turn his head, but BABUSHKA jerks the reins and slaps across the horse's rump. Nikolai wipes the last of his tears from his cheeks. Babushka stares ahead, remembering:

## INT. RUSSIAN PEASANT COTTAGE - NIGHT

MAMA hoists LITTLE BROTHER up onto the warm shelf on top of the oven and NIKOLAI climbs up beside him. She covers them with a blanket. BABUSHKA sits watching.

The AUNTS are putting away the clean dishes and pots as the UNCLES and PAPA continue a fierce argument.

Mama returns from the bedroom carrying a small cloth travel-bag. She begins to take clothes from a small chest on the floor and puts them into the bag. The TWINS rush over to her, one of them grabbing a scarf from her and clutching it to his chest. The other twin grabs it from him. Mama takes the scarf from them and puts in into the bag. The twins continue their fight on the floor.

Papa bangs on the table and both Uncles do the same. All three have another glass of vodka.

On the shelf over the oven, Nikolai lies on his side with his face to the wall, crying softly. His little brother scoots over to him, leans over him and kisses him on the cheek. Nikolai returns the kiss and the two snuggle into each other's arms.

## EXT. RUSSIAN COUNTRY\_SIDE - MIDDAY

The noon sun is warm. The land is not so flat here-- there are a few hills and more trees. A large forest can be seen in the distance. The sledge runners slide through the snow. BABUSHKA appears to be asleep, but the reins are firmly gripped in her hands. NIKOLAI studies the countryside, spotting a wolf on a nearby hill at the edge of a small woods. He calls out to the wolf. A jack-rabbit perks up his ears and darts back into his hole. The wolf looks at Nikolai, then back to the rabbit hole.

## EXT. RUSSIAN PEASANT COTTAGE - DAYBREAK

PAPA stands in the doorway watching as BABUSHKA and NIKOLAI get into the sledge, which is pulled up in front of the cottage. MAMA hands the travel-bag to Babushka, who tucks it under her legs. The TWINS finish harnessing the horse and hand the reins to the old woman. LITTLE BROTHER is clinging to Mama's skirt.

The AUNTS and UNCLES run over from their nearby cottages and bid farewell to Nikolai. One of the Aunts shows him an open cloth with cheese and bread, then folds up the cloth, ties it and hands it to Nikolai. Mama kisses him. Babushka slaps the reins to wake up the horse and they take off. Nikolai doesn't look back.

## EXT. RUSSIAN COUNTRYSIDE - AFTERNOON

TITLES conclude as the sledge nears the outskirts of a fairly-large, old Russian city.

MUSIC gives way to natural sounds at cut to:

## INT. VOLSK RAILWAY STATION - DAY

The station is a magnificent building, with great arches, hand-wrought iron, gold leaf--the works! We hear the SOUNDS of many trains, but see only one: an old steam locomotive pulling into the station, with perhaps only a half-dozen cars attached.

We HEAR the sounds of many people, but see only two: BABUSHKA and NIKOLAI as they walk along the platform to the arriving train. They walk up to one of the cars and stop, but as yet no doors have been opened. Nikolai carries the travel-bag. Babushka carries the small cloth bundle containing the cheese and bread. She turns to him:

BABUSHKA

Nikolai.

He turns to her and she hands him the cloth bundle.

BABUSHKA

Nikolai.

He turns to her and she hands him the cloth bundle.

BABUSHKA

Nikolai.

He turns to her and she hands him the cloth bundle.

INT. GEORGE & HELEN ROMAN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

GEORGE and HELEN are asleep in their king-size bed. They are both in their late-forties. They are wearing matching flannel pajamas.

George tosses for a moment in his sleep, then slowly gets out of bed, taking one of the pillows. Helen feels the movement and wakes up, turns on LIGHT. He just stands at the edge of the bed, holding the pillow.

HELEN

George, where are you going?

He doesn't answer. She rolls over to look at him.

HELEN

George? George!

He opens his eyes.

GEORGE

Huh?

HELEN

Where are you going?

GEORGE

Nowhere.

HELEN

Then go back to bed.

GEORGE

I am in bed.

HELEN

No you are not.

George looks around the room then at his feet, then at the pillow in his hands.

GEORGE

Oh.

He gets into bed. She takes the pillow from his hands and puts it under his head.

HELEN

Put the pillow under your head. That's where pillows go...under heads. Now go back to sleep.

Helen moves back to her side of the bed and rolls over to face away from him. George checks to make sure she isn't watching him and then takes the pillow from under his head, holding it as before, and tries to get back into his dream.

INT. ROMANS' KITCHEN - MORNING

It's a fairly modern kitchen, somewhere between average and gourmet. A glass-topped ice cream parlor table-set-for-two sits beneath a multi-paneled window. A door leads to the side yard. On the counter, we see a blender,, a food processor, a microwave oven, the usual cannisters, etc., and a juicer which has just been used. There are spent orange halves next to it. There are two glasses of orange juice and a stack of toast on the table.

HELEN doesn't look like early morning. Her hair is perfect, makeup is adequate and her expensive-but-casual outfit suits her to a tee. She warms two coffee mugs with boiling water, tosses the water, pours two cups of coffee from the new automatic-drip-coffee-maker with the built-in clock and automatic timing mechanism.

GEORGE enters from the living room. He's groomed and shaved, dressed in slacks, colored shirt and tie and a conservative sportcoat. He adjusts his tie as he enters, seems to be in a hurry. Helen routinely offers her cheek to him and he routinely kisses it, not pausing on his way over to the table for juice, toast and coffee.

HELEN

It isn't like you to oversleep.

GEORGE

Must've been that dream.

HELEN

You don't have much time.

GEORGE

I can only remember the very end of it. I'm a little boy in, uh, like nineteenth century Russia, standing in a train station with my grandmother and she calls my name and hands me a bundle of something.

HELEN

Russia? How strange.

GEORGE

She called me Nicholas....no it was Nikolai. Yeah, Nikolai.

HELEN

Well, little Nikolai, grandmother or no grandmother, you'd better get a move on or you're going to be late for your meeting.

George looks at his watch, takes another sip of coffee, then heads for the living room.

GEORGE

You're right. I'm off.

He exits. Helen sits at the table, downs her juice in one gulp and takes an enormous bite out of a piece of toast. Her eating habits are not as mannerly as her genteel appearance would suggest.

GEORGE

(O.S. Screaming.)

Helen! Where's the morning paper?!

Helen crams the rest of that piece of toast into her mouth, crosses to the door and exits to living room.

INT. ROMANS' LIVING ROOM - DAY

The living room is also fairly modern, but comfortable. You get the feeling that the Romans have lived in this house for quite some time. But the most noticeable feature everywhere in this house is that Helen is a most immaculate housekeeper.

GEORGE is searching the room as HELEN enters, swallowing.

HELEN

I put it in the stack for the paper drive.

He glares at her, thinks better of it, then smiles.

GEORGE

Just once, couldn't I read it before we give it to charity?

HELEN

You work for the newspaper. Won't they give you one?

GEORGE

Why do we subscribe if...oh never mind...can I at least have my column?

HELEN

You get your things. I'll get the column.



Helen exits to kitchen; George to the den. We follow him.

INT. GEORGE'S DEN - DAY

The den is probably the most personalized room in the house, but it too is orderly and clean. GEORGE enters and walks to the desk, takes a stack of papers from it and puts them into his briefcase, which he closes and picks up as he exits back to the living room.

INT. ROMANS' LIVING ROOM - DAY

Just as GEORGE enters, we HEAR a newspaper being ripped in the kitchen. HELEN enters carrying a roughly-torn piece of newspaper. She holds it out to him.

HELEN

Here you are: one George Roman column.

GEORGE

Thanks.

He takes it, folds it, puts it into his pocket, then gets a coat and scarf from the entry closet and puts them on. They both walk to door, he opens it.

GEORGE

Bye. Anne's here.

They both exit out front door, leaving it open.

EXT. ROMANS' FRONT YARD & DRIVEWAY - DAY

As GEORGE and HELEN walk out from the house, a late-model station wagon, stacked to the roof with newspapers, is slowly backing up the driveway toward Helen's wagon. ANNE HARRIS is hanging out the door of the car, trying to see where she's going. She is 33, jeans and sweatshirt, hair hastily pulled into a pony tail. The car inches on to the lawn.

GEORGE

Whoa!

ANNE

Sorry.

Anne gets out of the car, leaving the door open, walks toward George and Helen.

ANNE

Good morning! Have I got your car blocked in the garage?

GEORGE

Are you kidding?

George walks to the garage door, opens it to reveal stacks of boxes, newspapers, clothes, rollaway bed, old lawn furniture...you name it, it's in this garage!

ANNE

Guess not. Is there going to be room for these?

Anne walks to rear door of her car and opens the tailgate, allowing a stack of papers to fall out.

HELEN

We'll make room. Go to work George.

GEORGE

Yes dear.

George heads down the driveway.

ANNE

Kiss my husband for me!

GEORGE

No thanks. Bye.

George gets into his car on the street and drives off as the women carry the papers from Anne's car into the garage. Anne tries to take too many at once and loose papers go flying all over the driveway.

HELEN

In the future dear, you should bundle these with string beforehand.

They begin to pick up the papers.

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING, LOS ANGELES - DAY

GEORGE rounds the corner from the parking lot and walks along the sidewalk toward entrance to building. He stops in front of a BEGGAR and drops coins into a cigar box. He starts to walk away, hesitates, takes off his scarf and wraps it around the beggar's neck, then continues into the building, pleased with his generosity.

## INT. NEWSPAPER EDITORIAL OFFICES - DAY

Partitions, which don't reach the ceiling and whose upper half is glass, create two rows of small cubicles on either side of this large, rectangular room. A glass-enclosed conference room is at one end, an executive office at the other. The center area includes one or two desks, a work table, a water cooler and a table with coffee making equipment. A SECRETARY sits at the desk just outside the executive office. She answers phones and types throughout the scene.

MIKE HARRIS and three COLLEAGUES stand near the coffee area eating donuts and drinking coffee. Mike is 33 with short hair and a three-piece suit.

MIKE

I don't think that's true. We used to do it all the time at Stanford and nobody died.

GEORGE enters on the run, looks into the conference room, then sees group standing near coffee...looks at his watch.

GEORGE

Meeting hasn't started? Anne says hello.

MIKE

Harry's not here. Where'd you see Anne.

George gets coffee and donut.

GEORGE

Newspapers.

MIKE

Oh yeah. Did she bundle them with string like I told her to do?

COLLEAGUE

Hey Mike, ask George.

GEORGE

Ask George what?

MIKE

Can one martini kill a dog?

GEORGE

That depends entirely on how big the dog is and how dry the martini is. Anybody know anything about dreams?

MIKE  
Well, Freud said...

GEORGE  
Not interpreting them, just how to remember them.

MIKE  
Did you try the library?

GEORGE  
I really don't want to spend a lot of time on it, just thought it was interesting.

HARRY enters. He's 60, an old-time newspaper man.

HARRY  
Meeting's cancelled.

The colleagues go to their respective cubicles.

GEORGE  
Terrific Harry. Why'd I drive all the way down here?

HARRY  
Gee I don't know George. Maybe you wanted to give me your column for tomorrow.

GEORGE  
Might as well as long as I'm here.

HARRY  
Look, I don't mind your working at home, but do you suppose you could do these things more than one day in advance? I worry sometimes.

GEORGE  
I gave you a whole stack of standbys.

HARRY  
Yes you did...all on birds. I can't wait to find out what this one's about.

George takes folder from briefcase, hands it to Harry.

GEORGE  
Fleas.

HARRY  
Fleas?

GEORGE  
Fleas.

MIKE  
Fleas?

GEORGE  
Fleas.

MIKE  
Fascinating.

HARRY  
Oh yeah. I got a stack of birds in there...  
and yesterday it was anteaters...god knows  
that's a major problem in this city...

MIKE  
I saw that. Interesting the things they  
can do with their snout.

GEORGE  
I left out the best one.

MIKE  
Really?

HARRY  
...and now fleas!

GEORGE  
Did you know that they've been in existence  
for at least 40 million years?

HARRY  
Nooooohhhh?

GEORGE  
And that there are nearly 2,000 different  
species of fleas?

MIKE  
Two thousand?

HARRY  
Well I'll be damned!

The secretary scratches.

GEORGE  
Here's the topper: one couple, one little  
boy-flea and one little girl-flea, can have  
as many as 6,000 offspring...in one month!  
See you guys later.

George exits.

Mike scratches. Harry scratches. The secretary scratches. Harry begins to read George's column between the scratches. Mike scratches. Harry scratches. The secretary scratches.

HARRY

Hey wait a minute! This thing's not about fleas! It's about ragweed!

They all stop scratching, feel foolish, and go to work. When Mike gets to the door of his cubicle, he SNEEZES, with immediate cut to:

INT. VOLSK RAILWAY STATION - DAY

The doors are now open and the steps are down on the old passenger train. We HEAR all the usual station noises, but see only BABUSHKA and NIKOLAI. He takes the cloth bundle from her and gets on the train with great reluctance. He struggles with the bundle and his bag as he passes through the door, then looks back at his grandmother sadly.

INT. ROMANS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

GEORGE and HELEN are asleep. George's eyes pop wide open and he reaches over in the dark for a pad and pencil on the nightstand, knocking several items to the floor before he finds and turns on the LIGHT. He begins to write as fast as he can. Helen stirs.

GEORGE

Good, you're awake. I had that dream again.

HELEN

Uhhhhh.

GEORGE

Did you hear me? I had that dream again.

HELEN

Hnnnnnnuhgdd.

Helen opens one eye, then closes it again.

GEORGE

It was a lot clearer this time.

HELEN

That's nice dear. Go to sleep.

GEORGE

But I still just got the end part where  
the old woman hands me the bundle.

Helen rolls over to face him.

HELEN

What are you talking about?

GEORGE

Only this time I did get on the train.

HELEN

What train? It's four in the morning.

GEORGE

I don't think I wanted to go.

HELEN

Go where?

GEORGE

I don't know, but I didn't want to go.

HELEN

Good, then don't go. Go to sleep.

She rolls away from him. He scoots over to her and  
cuddles.

GEORGE

Kind of exciting, isn't it?

HELEN

Darling, I spent the entire day washing and  
ironing old clothes and it's going to take  
all day tomorrow to sort them out by sizes  
and then divide them among all the families  
on the list the social service people sent  
me so that Anne and I....

George moves back to his own side of the bed.

HELEN

....so that Anne and I can deliver them on  
Friday. Good night sweetheart.

GEORGE

Night.

He turns off the light.

EXT. LIBRARY - DAY

GEORGE walks up steps of a large library and enters.

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

GEORGE walks up to information counter with three or four people working behind it. MARLENE sees him and walks up to him. She is young, attractive, affected and attracted to George.

MARLENE

Hello. May I help you? Aren't you George Roman? I just love your column. It's the first thing I read every morning. The one you did recently on aardvarks was extremely humorous, I thought, and most informative. Why, sometimes I think half the people who come in here do so as a direct result of something you've written about in one of your columns. The Librarian's Friend, that's what they should call you. Just the other day...

GEORGE

Uh, Miss, I...

MARLENE

de Selincourt. Marlene de Selincourt.

GEORGE

Miss, uh, Ms. de Selincourt, I...

MARLENE

Marlene, please.

GEORGE

Marlene, could I get some information?

MARLENE

That's what the library is for...knowledge... and truth. It says right over our door: "Magna est veritas et praevallebit," truth is mighty and will prevail. Did you see it?

GEORGE

Uh, no. Could I, uh, I'd like everything you have on dreams and on Russia.

MARLENE

Don't be silly.

GEORGE

I beg your pardon?



She comes out from behind the counter and motions for him to follow.

MARLENE

Come along.

She leads him into another large room.

MARLENE

See these four cases of books? All on dreams.  
And down there? Those three walls of books?  
All on the Soviet Union.

GEORGE

I see what you mean.

MARLENE

You just pick out the ones you want and  
I'll check them out for you, personally.

GEORGE

Thank you.

She gives him a big smile and walks away. He begins to select books.

EXT. LIBRARY - DAY

GEORGE walks out of the library carrying a huge stack of books...as many as he can possibly carry.

INT. GEORGE'S DEN - NIGHT

GEORGE plops the stack of books down next to his favorite chair, sits down, takes the top book from the pile and begins to speed-read it.

INT. GEORGE'S DEN - DAY

GEORGE is seated at his desk, hunched over several open books and making notes on a writing pad.

INT. GEORGE'S DEN - NIGHT

GEORGE is back in the reading chair, speed-reading a particularly large volume of Russian History.

INT. RECORD SHOP - DAY

GEORGE walks slowly up the aisle of classical cassettes, selecting two dozen recordings, all by Russian composers. He walks toward the cashier, is distracted by a display of foreign language courses. He finds the Russian one, adds it to his stack and plops them all down on the cashier's counter.

INT. GEORGE'S DEN - NIGHT

GEORGE puts a Tchaikovsky cassette into the machine and hits the play button.

MUSIC segues to a recognizable Tchaikovsky piece.

INT. GEORGE'S DEN - NIGHT

Seated in his reading chair, GEORGE completes one book and chooses another one from the stack.

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

GEORGE checks out another stack of books from MARLENE, who mouths something about bringing books back, scolding him with a wagging finger, but still smiling.

INT. GEORGE'S DEN - DAY

GEORGE adds this new stack of books to the old ones, which are now all over the room. He takes a book and begins to read.

INT. GEORGE'S DEN - NIGHT

GEORGE puts a Prokofiev cassette into the machine and hits the play button.

MUSIC segues to a recognizable Prokofiev piece.

INT. GEORGE'S DEN - NIGHT

GEORGE is at the desk again with three books open as he takes notes. HELEN brings in a small tray with coffee and sandwich, places it on the desk near him and exits without a word between them.

## INT. LIBRARY - DAY

GEORGE walks away from the check-out desk with another stack of books. He was helped by another clerk this time--Marlene is not in the scene. George looks over both shoulders (for her) and heads for the door.

## EXT. LIBRARY - DAY

GEORGE has reached the bottom of the steps as MARLENE runs out of the library mouthing a shout at him. He pretends not to hear her. She stomps her foot.

## EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

GEORGE drives down a busy street with the new stack of books on the seat next to him when he sees, out of the corner of his eye, a Russian Deli! He jerks his head around to verify what he saw, slams on the brakes and backs up to a parking place in front of the deli, almost causing an accident between two other cars. He jumps out of his car and runs into the store.

## INT. DELI - DAY

GEORGE looks around the little store with delight, then searches for someone to wait on him. He hears something from behind the large deli refrigeration case, sees no one, then leans far over the case to find a very short, elderly Russian woman. They smile at each other. He points to five or six things in the case and then grabs one of the little hand-carry shopping baskets and begins to load it with cans, bags and boxes from the shelves. The woman shrugs (crazy Americans!) and fills the rest of his order.

## INT. GEORGE'S DEN - DAY

GEORGE carts the groceries and new books to the desk, picks out a box of crackers and a book.

## INT. GEORGE'S DEN - NIGHT

GEORGE puts a Rimsky-Korsakov cassette into the machine and pushes the play button.  
MUSIC segues to a recognizable Rimsky-Korsakov piece.

## INT. GEORGE'S DEN - NIGHT

GEORGE is studying a large volume on Dreams--his head keeps time to the MUSIC. He looks very tired. A brick of cheese and some bread sit half-eaten next to him.

HELEN enters and stands for a moment, just looking: books everywhere, food everywhere (several trays she'd left for him plus all the stuff he bought at the deli), clothing strewn about the place, music too loud. Her eyes come to rest on George just as he's nodding off. Helen turns off the music and his reading light. She takes the book out of his hand, pulls him out of the chair and leads him out of the room, turning off the final light as they exit.

## INT. ROMANS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

HELEN is in bed already. GEORGE enters, now in pajamas, carrying a portable cassette machine, the book on Dreams, a set of new lightweight earphones, a loaf of bread and a glob of something that looks like bacon fat.

HELEN

You promised you'd go to sleep now.

GEORGE

I am.

HELEN

Then what's all that?

GEORGE

My going-to-sleep-stuff. The dream book tells you how to get into the proper attitude for good dream reception and retention. The cassette is for background music--I found this terrific Tchaikovsky symphony called "Winter Dreams"--it's perfect!

HELEN

And the glob on the plate?

GEORGE

Bacon fat.

HELEN

Yech.

GEORGE

Russian peasants have snacked on pig fat for hundreds of years.

HELEN

You eat that now and you'll have more dreams than you could ever want.

GEORGE

I know. I can't wait.

HELEN

Have you tasted that stuff?

GEORGE

Not yet.

HELEN

Can I watch?

GEORGE

(A little hurt.)

What do I care? Do what you want.

George tears off a hunk of bread from the loaf and slowly brings the piece of bacon fat to his mouth. He can't help but glance over to see if Helen is watching. She is... and is grinning with anticipation. He bites into the fat and gets a "I'm gonna gag" look on his face, then he shudders. Helen laughs and rolls over.

HELEN

Sweet dreams.

GEORGE

(Chewing.)

Not bad when you get used to it.

He chokes it down...wants to throw up and doesn't mind showing it now that she's not looking. He quickly bites off some bread to clean out his mouth.

GEORGE

Really good with the black bread.

He chokes on the coarse, dry black bread...tries to muffle his sounds with the blanket. Helen is shaking with laughter under the covers.

GEORGE

You oughta try some.

Helen buries her head under the pillow, still shaking.

GEORGE

Good night.

Helen grunts, then howls from under the pillow.

George settles back in bed, starts the MUSIC, adjusts the earphones, adjusts the volume, adjusts his pillow, closes his eyes and awaits his dreams. He smiles as:

SNOW begins to fall from the ceiling onto the bed. He shivers in his sleep and pulls the covers up under his chin. The snow builds up on the bed, covering the entire bed and room with a thick layer of snow. A tiny, dark figure of a MAN appears near the foot of the bed, trudging through the snow. We ZOOM into him.

EXT. RUSSIAN VILLAGE - DAY

The MAN is dressed in a heavy long coat and a fur cap. We cannot see his face. He walks through the snow down a side street of the small Russian village and enters a building.

INT. RUNDOWN RUSSIAN BUILDING - DAY

In the dark hallway, the MAN shakes the snow from his boots and brushes it from his coat. He removes his cap and we now see that it is OMAR SHARIF. The building is the one where Dr. Zhivago's mistress lived in the movie.

Sharif walks slowly up the stairs, removing his gloves, then his coat. He is dressed as Nicky Arnstien in Funny Girl. He enters the room at the top of the stairs.

INT. ZHIVAGO'S MISTRESS'S ROOM - DAY

GEORGE is building a fire in the stove. When he sees SHARIF, he picks up a piece of paper and gives it to him.

GEORGE

Yuri, she left this note and some food for you.

SHARIF

Thanks, Yuri.

Sharif reads the note as George picks up his hat and coat and leaves the room.

EXT. RUSSIAN VILLAGE - DAY

GEORGE walks out of the building just as a platoon of SOLDIERS marches by on the street. He waves his cap wildly in the air and runs to lead the platoon.

GEORGE

Down with the Tsar! Up with the revolution!!

The soldiers yell and throw their hats into the air. George runs up the street and the entire platoon follows him through the village and around a corner at the end of the street.

EXT. PALACE OF TSAR NICHOLAS II - DAY

GEORGE runs up the palace steps and bangs on the large door. The soldiers are gone from sight. The huge door swings open slowly and George enters the palace.

INT. PALACE - DAY

GEORGE hurries through the foyer and into the throne room. The room is empty. He HEARS a noise off to one side and turns to face it.

YUL BRYNNER enters, leading a small GIRL by the hand. Brynner is dressed as the King of Siam.

BRYNNER

Yuri, you must find a place to hide  
Anastasia. I'll pick her up later.

GEORGE

I promise you they won't get her.

EXT. PALACE STEPS - DAY

GEORGE adjusts his coat to brace against the freezing snow, then reaches down to take Anastasia's hand again. She's gone! He looks around quickly, then turns back toward the door...and is face to face with LENIN!

LENIN

What should I do, Yuri?

GEORGE

If I were you Lenin, I'd seize control of  
the party immediately! Trotsky is crazy!

LENIN

Thank you comrad, I needed your reassurance.  
Come now, we have many battles ahead of us.

They walk boldly down the steps and into the crowds now running wildly in the streets. He loses Lenin in the crowd and turns down a side street.

EXT. RED CROSS STATION: FRONT LINES WWI - DAY

GEORGE carries one end of a stretcher with a wounded soldier on it. As he comes around the corner of an old wooden building, we see DIANE KEATON talking excitedly with WARREN BEATTY. She is dressed as Annie Hall. He is in a L.A. Rams' football uniform. He hands her an envelope.

KEATON

I can't go with you to Russia! I have my work here.

BEATTY

Take the ticket anyway. You may change your mind.

KEATON

I can't go and I don't want the ticket.

She hands him the envelope and he turns away from her, sees George and walks over to him.

BEATTY

Here, take this ticket. You really should be in Russia!

Beatty exits. A Red Cross OFFICER approaches Keaton.

OFFICER

Louise, get on the truck! We have to go!

Keaton gets on the truck and it pulls away. George waves the envelope in the air.

GEORGE

Isn't Jack coming?! Where's Jack?!!

The MUSIC changes abruptly to a Cossack Dance. George whirls around to see JACK NICHOLSON leading a troupe of soldiers in a Cossack Dance. Nicholson appears as he did in The Shining, wielding an axe, smiling maniacally!

NICHOLSON

Heeeeeyaaaahhhh!!!!

GEORGE

Jack! Don't!!!

Nicholson dances wildly toward George with the axe. George begins to dance, throwing his legs high in the air. The axe suddenly becomes a long scarf. Nicholson throws it around George's neck and chokes him!



INT. ROMANS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

GEORGE and HELEN are both asleep. George is kicking his legs in the air and struggling with something around his neck.

GEORGE

Jack don't! You're choking me!

Helen jumps up and turns on the LIGHT. We now see that the stereo headset wire is wrapped tightly around George's neck and that he has kicked all the covers off the bed. Helen shakes him.

HELEN

George. George! Honey wake up!

George wakes up with a start, sits straight up in bed.

GEORGE

Jesus Christ!

Helen helps him get untangled from the wire.

HELEN

I told you not to eat that bacon fat.

GEORGE

Yeah, I guess I overdid it.

HELEN

I'll say you overdid it. Look at this mess!

GEORGE

What a bizarre dream.

HELEN

It must've been.

GEORGE

I think I'd better lay off the movies for a while too.

Helen shivers.

HELEN

It's freezing in here. Did you leave the window open again?

George looks quickly to the closed window.

GEORGE

No, but it is cold in here, isn't it?

INT. NEWSPAPER EDITORIAL OFFICES - DAY

GEORGE and MIKE stand near the coffee machine talking as HARRY enters. When Harry sees George, he stops and then tries to sneak into his office unseen.

MIKE  
Morning Harry.

Harry glares at Mike, then walks to them, smiling.

HARRY  
Good morning, Mike...George.

Harry looks apprehensively at George, expecting an attack.

GEORGE  
You got a copy of this morning's  
edition? Is that it?

Harry tightens his grip on the paper he's holding.

HARRY  
Yeah, uh, there's just, uh, I, uh..it's  
just that, uh, "upstairs" took out the  
quote from Karl Marx.

Harry braces himself.

GEORGE  
They what?! Oh, I guess I expected they  
would. I might've come on too strong.

Harry's relief is evident.

MIKE  
What was it?

GEORGE  
Nothing really. Just a thing about the  
collapse of capitalism in America.

MIKE  
You call that nothing?

GEORGE  
The important part was about land ownership.  
Did they leave that in?

HARRY  
Yeah. Guess they thought that was harmless.

GEORGE  
They probably didn't understand it.

MIKE

What about land ownership?

Harry opens the paper and reads:

HARRY

"Long before communism, the Russian peasants believed that land shouldn't become private property...that it should remain in the possession of those who cultivate it only so long as they continue to use it..."

Mike frowns. George beams.

GEORGE

Fascinating.

MIKE

I...

HARRY

"...If a farmer should discontinue the cultivation of his holding, then he has no more right to that land than the fisherman has to the sea where he once fished."

MIKE

That's unAmerican!

GEORGE

Not really. Our homestead laws had just such a provision: in order to keep your homesteaded land, you had to live on it... and cultivate it.

MIKE

But you can't...

GEORGE

Hey, that gives me an idea for tomorrow...

George walks toward his cubicle. Mike follows.

MIKE

George, you can't go around...

GEORGE

"Is our Homestead Act a Legacy from Russia?"

George enters his cubicle, unintentionally closing the door in Mike's face. Mike just stands there.

INT. GEORGE'S DEN - NIGHT

GEORGE is seated in his reading chair, thumbing through a Russian phrase book and listening to the Russian language cassette playing in the background. We HEAR a doorbell faintly from the living room and then faint voices.

CASSETTE

Come in! Vigh DYEetyuh. (Pause.)  
Who is it? Kto tahn?

MIKE enters and is taken aback by the mess in the room. The last time he saw it, it was immaculate. Now there are books, records, cassettes, clothes, trash and rotting food all over the place.

CASSETTE

Good evening....

[Note: for the remainder of this scene, the Russian translation follows under the subsequent line of dialogue.]

MIKE

George, about that land business...I...

CASSETTE

There's been an accident...

MIKE

What happened to this room?!

CASSETTE

Ask the maid to come up...

GEORGE

Hi Mike. What're you doing here?

CASSETTE

I feel ill...

MIKE

We're going to dinner.

CASSETTE

What does that mean?....

GEORGE

Is that tonight?

CASSETTE

I am constipated...

GEORGE

Good! Wait'll you see the place I found.

CASSETTE

I think it's your plumbing...

MIKE

We've got to talk about this land thing...I..

CASSETTE

What is that? Shto Ehtuh?

Mike's attention abruptly shifts to a moldy hunk of something on the table...he stares. George joins him in watching it.

CASSETTE

It is moving.

INT. ROMANS' LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

HELEN and ANNE are seated on the couch, both dressed to go out to dinner. Anne is smoking. Helen slides the ashtray closer to the cigarette.

HELEN

...but he won't let me in the den. I know he's hiding old clothes in there that I'd love to give away.

GEORGE and MIKE enter from the den. Mike carries a bag of trash at arm's length away from his body and exits to the kitchen.

HELEN

Like that jacket he's wearing now.

George inspects his comfortable old sports jacket, eyes her suspiciously as he buttons one button in defiance.

GEORGE

I gave at the office. Are we ready to go?

HELEN

We are. Are you going like that?

GEORGE

It's not that dressy a place.

ANNE

Where was Mike going?

GEORGE

He insisted on taking my trash out...  
something about it attacking me.

Helen jumps to her feet.

HELEN

Oh my god! What've you done to the den?!

George pats her to comfort her.

GEORGE

Nothing dear. You know how sensitive  
some people are about cleanliness.

She glares at him. MIKE enters, trying to shake off  
his feelings of disgust.

ANNE

Sometimes it can be frightening though.  
I saw something move in the back of our  
refrigerator the other day and I've been  
afraid to open it ever since.

George laughs.

MIKE

What?

ANNE

Just kidding. Shall we go to dinner?

EXT. MISCHA'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

A late-model sedan pulls up to the valet parking sign  
in front of the restaurant. MIKE is driving. GEORGE  
sits in front passenger seat. HELEN and ANNE sit in  
the back. TWO ATTENDANTS open doors for them and they  
walk to the front door. George admires the huge Russian  
mural on the front wall of the building. Mike stiffens  
as the attendant takes off like a bat out of hell in  
his car.

The other attendant opens the front door for them and  
they go in. We HEAR a screech of tires down the street  
and MIKE pops his head back out the door to look...  
his expression is slight terror.

## INT. MISCHA'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Cossack murals dominate this intimate, warm, lively, Russian cabaret-restaurant. MISCHA, himself, greets GEORGE, HELEN, ANNE and MIKE as they enter. He leads them to a table across from the bar and away from the dance floor and bandstand. He goes to find them a waiter.

They sit on either side of a booth that is open at both sides. George and Anne face each other as do Helen and Mike. A WAITER brings menus. He's not even remotely Russian.

WAITER

Would you care for cocktails?

GEORGE

Four vodka-on-the-rocks, please.

HELEN

I don't like vodka, George. You know that.

GEORGE

I know. I just thought...when in Rome...

HELEN

I'll have a daiquiri.

MIKE

And I'll have a bourbon and, uh, seven-up.

ANNE

You don't drink bourbon.

He glares at her to shut up.

GEORGE

(Disappointed.)

Two vodka-on-the-rocks...

He looks to Anne, she nods, he smiles.

GEORGE

...a daiquiri and a bourbon seven.

WAITER

Very good sir.

The waiter goes to the bar.

MIKE

Did you have to say that so loud?

ANNE

But you don't drink bourbon.

MIKE

At least it's an American drink.

GEORGE

So's the vodka, Mike, if you don't ask for the imported stuff.

HELEN

This is ridiculous. Can't we drink what we want?

GEORGE

Of course you can. We needn't even concern ourselves with the nationality of the drinks. Your daiquiri, for instance, comes from Cuba and we don't want to get started on Fidel Castro and the Monroe Doctrine, do we?

Anne smiles. Helen refuses to react. They all pick up their menus, begin to read them.

ANNE

Everything sounds delicious.

HELEN

Most of it's awfully heavy, don't you think?

GEORGE

(Taking charge.)

Here's something--sort of a plate for beginners. They give you a little bit of each of their Russian specialties, so you get to try everything. That's what we should all get.

His look to them says, "You got me on the drinks, I'm gonna win this one."

ANNE

I'd love it.

MIKE

Fine.

All look to Helen.

HELEN

Well, if that's what...

George takes all the menus.

GEORGE

Great.



The WAITER delivers their drinks, takes the menus.

GEORGE

We'll all have Mischa's Special Dinner.

The waiter leaves. All but Helen sip from their drinks.  
The BAND begins dance MUSIC. George looks to Helen.

GEORGE

Shall we dance?

HELEN

No thank you.

GEORGE

Anne?

ANNE

Why not?

George and Anne walk to the dance floor, watch the other couples for a minute, try out the step cautiously, then begin to dance, very quickly catching on and getting into the full gusto of the music. We stay with them for a few moments, then back to the table:

HELEN

I don't know what's come over him.

MIKE

I know. It's like he's not the same person.

HELEN

He leaves things lying around all over the house. He doesn't eat right anymore. And Harry called twice last week to complain about his columns and George wouldn't even speak to him!

MIKE

All this stuff about Russian...and communism! It just isn't healthy.

HELEN

I don't know what to do--he's obsessed!

Mike takes a drink, makes a face. Helen almost picks up her glass, then changes her mind. George and Anne return to the table just as the WAITER brings dinner. George indicates to him to bring two more vodkas. All begin to eat: George and Anne dig in; Helen and Mike pick at their food.

ANNE  
This one's delicious.

GEORGE  
(Swallowing, pointing.)  
Mmmm, try this one over here....s'great.

Helen and Mike continue to nibble tiny bites as George and Anne work their way around their plates "Mmmming" and "Yummying" everything. WAITER brings two vodkas.

IGOR, a tall, dark man with a stubbly beard and very tattered clothes walks toward them just as the couple seated at the nearest table get up and leave. Igor walks by our group's booth and sits down at the just-vacated table...and begins to eat the leftovers!

Helen is the first to see him. At first, she can't believe her eyes. Mike sees him, stops chewing. Both Helen and Mike drop their forks and stare at Igor.

HELEN  
That's disgusting.

Anne and George look up from their plates to Helen, as if to ask what is disgusting, then follow her stare over to Igor. They both smile. Anne looks to George, obviously with a plan in mind. He approves. She picks up the bowl of gravy, rises and walks to Igor.

ANNE  
You've got to try this gravy on the pork thing...makes it twice as good.

IGOR  
SpaSEEbuh.

Anne returns to the booth and sits. George is laughing. Helen and Mike are embarrassed beyond words.

HELEN  
I'm getting a headache.

GEORGE  
That's because you haven't eaten anything.

HELEN  
Can we please go home.

MIKE  
I'm ready.

ANNE  
I'm not.

GEORGE

We haven't had dessert...and you two haven't danced yet.

ANNE

It's really an easy dance step. I'd love to try it again.

HELEN

George, I want to go home.

MIKE

It is getting late.

GEORGE

Look, why don't you two run along in Mike's car and Anne and I'll grab a cab later.

HELEN

I...

ANNE

Terrific, we can dance the night away.

MIKE

I don't think...

ANNE

Go on, Michael, we'll be fine.

MIKE

I guess so. Helen?

Helen is up and moving for the door.

HELEN

Come on, I need some aspirin.

Mike runs after her and they exit. George looks after them, beginning to regret his decision. Anne takes his hand and pulls him up and toward the dance floor. This time, there's no hesitation--they just dance right into the crowd.

EXT. ROMANS' DRIVEWAY/FRONT DOOR - NIGHT

MIKE drives his car up the driveway, stopping short of the garage. He gets out, walks around the car and opens the door for HELEN. She gets out and they walk toward the front door. Her eyes are puffy and red from crying.

She fumbles in her purse for the keys. Mike puts out his hand, offering to take the keys if she ever finds them. She pulls out a dainty handkerchief instead. He retracts his hand. She blows her nose. Like her eating habits, Helen's nose-blowing is most unladylike, a real juicy honk! Mike grimaces. She folds up the handkerchief neatly and puts it back in her purse.

Mike puts out his hand again. Helen looks at him questioningly. He mimes turning a key. She nods and starts rifling through the purse again, but can't find the keys. The frustration sets off her crying again.

He moves closer to her, puts his hands on her arms and pulls her to him. She lays her head on his shoulder and begins to sob. He pats her gently on the back. Helen snuffles generously. Mike gags.

She moves back a little, but stays in his arms, and looks into his eyes. Her expression is helplessness. He kisses her on the cheek...then fully on the mouth. The kiss lasts much too long and both become painfully embarrassed...as well as a little confused.

He starts to speak, but she quickly puts her hand over his mouth. Unfortunately, she isn't looking when she does this and her little finger slips into his mouth. He's wondering if there's any snot on that finger.

She removes her hand and turns away from him. He walks to his car, gets in, starts it up and backs down the driveway.

Helen steps up to the front door of the house and tries to turn the doorknob. It is locked, of course. She curses under her breath and digs into the purse, but can't find the keys. She dumps the entire purse out onto the front step.

## INT. ROMANS' KITCHEN - MORNING

HELEN is just completing her morning ritual of juice, toast and coffee. She's on edge this morning: impatient with the toast (breaks a piece) and the warming of the mugs (burns her hand with hot water).

GEORGE sneaks into the room, wearing only a Russian-style tunic that just barely keeps him within the bounds of decency. He tiptoes up behind Helen, throws his arms around her and presses himself tightly against her. She jumps, struggles, but he holds on, kissing the back of her neck.

HELEN

Oh George, wasn't last night enough?

GEORGE

Just makes the morning that much better.

HELEN

But in the kitchen?

George nibbles on, and blows gently into, her ear.

GEORGE

My little Helenushka.

Helen almost giggles and almost warms up...

HELEN

Don't do that.

...until she turns slightly and sees what he's wearing.

HELEN

For god's sake, go put some clothes on.

GEORGE

This is "clothes."

HELEN

What if someone should see you like that?

GEORGE

Who's going to see me? You didn't seem to mind it last night.

HELEN

That was last night...and in the privacy of our bedroom.

Helen takes scissors from counter and exits to the side yard. George follows.

EXT. ROMANS' SIDE YARD - DAY

HELEN comes out of the kitchen door, scissors in hand, and goes to a large flowering bush. GEORGE is right behind her, but she doesn't see him. She cuts two or three flowers...jumps when George speaks.

GEORGE  
I thought it was fun...for a change.

HELEN  
What are you doing out here?!

She chases him back into the kitchen...leading with the scissors.

INT. ROMANS' KITCHEN - DAY

GEORGE runs into the kitchen with HELEN hot on his heels.

HELEN  
Really George!

GEORGE  
No one saw me.

HELEN  
What is the matter with you?

GEORGE  
Nothing. I just love you...that's all.

He tries to get close to her, but she pushes him away.

HELEN  
Stop that! Just because I let you call me Helenushka last night and let you talk me into that silly...Cossack..."game" as you called it...

GEORGE  
But lyuBOVnitsuh...

HELEN  
...DOES NOT mean that I want to discuss it with you this morning!

GEORGE  
But...

HELEN  
What happened with you and Anne last night anyway to make you so, uh, amorous when you got home?

GEORGE

Horny is the word you're looking for! God forbid we should make love once in a while! And nothing happened with Anne last night! Excuse me, I have to get dressed!

George storms out of the room. Helen takes a vase from a cupboard and begins to arrange flowers in it. She suddenly grabs the flowers and stuffs them down the garbage disposal, turns on the water and then starts the disposal.

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

GEORGE stands at the check-out counter with a stack of books. One is titled "Reincarnation." Another is "E.S.P." He is being helped by the same person who checked him out last time. He looks around nervously for MARLENE, who suddenly appears behind him.

MARLENE

AHA!

George jumps, almost dropping the stack of books.

GEORGE

Oh, Miss de...uh...

MARLENE

Don't you Miss "D" me, you book thief!

Everyone in the general vicinity turns to look. Marlene grabs for the books in George's arms. They struggle.

MARLENE

Give me those books!

GEORGE

Miss...you've got to control yourself. This is a library, after all.

The books crash to the floor. The other clerk runs out.

MARLENE

You can't have any more! No more books!

GEORGE

Sh. I'll bring the others back when...

MARLENE

Even if you bring those back, you can't have any more! You can't be trusted!

ALEXEI, sixty-plus, short and round, walks in from an adjoining room and stands listening.

GEORGE

Shh. I...

MARLENE

You have 6 volumes on Reincarnation and 7 on Extra-Sensory Perception, not to mention 23 on Dreams! Oh! And let's not forget the all-time record 31 volumes you have on Russia! And they're all overdue! That's uh...oh my god! 67 overdue books!

The clerk returns, leading the chief LIBRARIAN.

LIBRARIAN

What is going on here?

The on-lookers turn away guiltily, except Alexei.

MARLENE

(Starting to cry.)

He...he...

GEORGE

I have some overdue books and...

MARLENE

Sixty seven!

GEORGE

...and your, uh, colleague here, uh, won't...

Marlene is hysterical, sobbing with a gasping hiccough.

MARLENE

Have you seen...his column..lately? He's become...a...communist!

LIBRARIAN

Marlene, please try to...

MARLENE

He even...dresses...like a...communist!

GEORGE

Have you been talking to my wife?

MARLENE

Just go away! I hate you! GET OUT!!





GEORGE  
(Disappointed.)  
You can tell?

ALEXEI  
Behrlitz hehss remarkable teh lent for  
givink sehm soundt to all lehnguages...  
even most beautiful oness, ahz iss Russian.

GEORGE  
I'm sure you're right. How can I help you?

ALEXEI  
Your readink list iss very fehscinehtink.  
May I ehsk vy you vere readink such books?

George indicates they should walk outside. They do.

GEORGE  
I had this dream...

INT. GEORGE'S DEN - DAY

HELEN peeks through the slightly open door and has a moment of nausea before opening the door fully. She walks slowly the rest of the way into the room, shaking her head in disbelief at the disarray. She rolls up her sleeves, takes a deep breath and then dives into the seemingly impossible chore of cleaning this mess.

EXT. LIBRARY - DAY

GEORGE and ALEXEI walk away from the Library toward a group of high-rise buildings down the street.

ALEXEI  
...ehndt in my, uh, how do you say? ah!  
hobby! I ehm genealogy. You know? Mamas  
ehndt papas! Da?

GEORGE  
Family tree sort of thing.

ALEXEI  
Da! Fahmily treess! So! You must giff  
me everytink on your mamas ehndt papas...  
ehndt I mehk research for you. Ha?

Alexei takes a small notebook and pen from his pocket and readies himself to take notes.

GEORGE  
Well, my father was...

## INT. GEORGE'S DEN - DAY

HELEN puts the finishing touches on her cleaning job. The books are neatly stacked, the clutter has all been removed. She runs a dust rag across the top of George's typewriter, looks thoughtfully at it for a moment, dusts the telephone, looks back at the typewriter, dusts the clock, looks at the typewriter, picks up a piece of typing paper, starts to put it in, but changes her mind.

She just stands there for a moment, arguing with herself silently. Her facial expression changes from Should I? to No to Yes to No to Maybe and finally What the Hell!

She picks up the piece of paper again, puts it into the typewriter, sits in the desk chair and begins to type:

George Roman

CHARITY BEGINS AT HOME--IN YOUR CLOSET

My wife Helen is the most generous person I know...

Helen looks up, smiles, then types:

...especially when it comes to giving away my comfortable old clothes.

## EXT. PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE - DAY

GEORGE and ALEXEI stand in the middle of a pedestrian bridge that spans between two high rise buildings at about the fourth floor. Alexei puts the notebook and pen back in his pocket.

ALEXEI

You couldnt mehbe be, uh, reincarnehtion of important person in Russian history. Ha?

GEORGE

Maybe even a Romanoff?

ALEXEI

You don't vahnt to be a Romanoff, beliff me. Not today. Ah! You know Mischa's?

GEORGE

Yes. Da.

ALEXEI

Goodt. I giff you lunch eht Mischa's Sahturday. Iss goodt?

GEORGE

Goodt, er, good. But isn't Mischa's a little too pre-revolutionary for a Soviet diplomat?

ALEXEI

Ah mehbe. But music iss goodt. Ehndt people are goodt...many old Russians. Sometimes I get lonely to see Russian people. Da?

GEORGE

Besides, what Moscow doesn't know won't hurt 'em. Da?

ALEXEI

Sh! (Whisper.) Da. Vell, duh-sfeeDAHNyuh!

GEORGE

Dah sveeDAHNeeyah!

ALEXEI

Behrlitz! Ha, ha, ha, ha!!

George smiles and watches Alexei walk away.

INT. GEORGE'S DEN - DAY

GEORGE is seated in his reading chair, studying a book on "Self-Hypnosis." He's in his tunic and a pair of cotton pants. His hair is not combed and he has about a two or three-day beard.

The MUSIC is loud and Russian.

His lips move as he reads to himself. His head nods rhythmically...slowing as he sinks into a trance.

EXT. ROMANS' DRIVEWAY - DAY

A van pulls into the driveway. TWO MEN get out and walk to the front door, ring the DOORBELL.

INT. ROMANS' LIVING ROOM/ENTRY - DAY

HELEN goes to the front door and opens it to reveal the TWO MEN. One of them hands her a piece of paper. She reads it and cheerfully welcomes them inside and to the den door.

## INT. GEORGE'S DEN - DAY

GEORGE is still in a trance as HELEN escorts the TWO MEN into the room. Helen helps them gather up the books, including the one in George's hands. One of the men takes a load out to the van as Helen and the other man continue to stack books in the doorway. The man comes back and three of them take the rest of the books out.

George, still in the trance, reaches for a pad and pen from his sidetable and slowly spells out VOLSK on the paper...then snaps out of the trance. He immediately begins to look for something. He can't find it...looks puzzled, then runs out of the room, taking the paper and pen with him.

## INT. ROMANS' LIVING ROOM - DAY

GEORGE runs out from the den, looks around frantically, runs over to the kitchen door and opens it just enough to peek through it. He turns around and runs out the front door.

## EXT. ROMANS' DRIVEWAY - DAY

GEORGE runs out of the house as the TWO MEN finish putting the books in the back of the van. HELEN is writing a check. George runs to the van and begins to throw the books around until he finds the Russian Dictionary. He looks up the Russian letters and writes the Roman equivalent of each below the word on the paper: V O L S K.

MUSIC out or under.

GEORGE

Volks! The train station is in Volks!

The two men look at him like he's crazy. Helen doesn't react at all.

## INT. MISCHA'S RESTAURANT - DAY

GEORGE and IGOR, the man who ate the leftovers earlier, are seated at a table. George's beard is filling in well, but he looks pale and thinner. Igor is reading George's palm, using a cocktail stirrer to trace the lines. Igor has only a very slight Russian accent. They each have a glass of vodka.

IGOR

Prince Igor sees much turmoil in your future.

George uses his free hand to take a sip of vodka.

GEORGE

Future hell. You should see what's going on right now.

IGOR

I do, I do. Prince Igor sees everthink.

## INT. ROMANS' KITCHEN - DAY

HELEN and ANNE are sorting various canned and packaged foods into orderly groups all over the room. Items include stuffing mixes, canned pumpkin, instant mashed potatoes, pickles, olives, etc.

HELEN

What did the butcher say about the turkeys?

ANNE

That he'd be able to go to Hawaii after all.

HELEN

But will they be ready on time?

ANNE

Fully-cooked and ready to reheat.

HELEN

Good. Did he offer to help us out?

ANNE

Ten percent off on the gravy.

HELEN

How generous.

Helen steps outside the back door and brings in a dozen cardboard boxes, which they begin to load.

HELEN

Did, uh, you and George, uh, have  
a good time the other night?

ANNE

You mean at Mischa's?

HELEN

Uh huh.

ANNE

Just terrific! George is quite the  
dancer when he gets wound up.

Anne lights a cigarette. Helen goes to a cupboard and  
pulls out a large ashtray with a dome over it and puts  
it on the counter near Anne.

HELEN

I know. I could never keep up with him.

ANNE

That's new.

HELEN

I couldn't resist it. Look what it does.

Helen turns on a switch at the back of the ashtray and  
it begins to whrrrrr. She gently takes Anne's hand  
with the cigarette and moves it near the ashtray and  
the smoke is sucked up into it.

ANNE

Fascinating.

Anne cautiously places the cigarette in the ashtray  
and they continue to put packages into the boxes.

HELEN

Did you, uh, do anything afterwards?

Anne reaches for her cigarette, but it is gone!

ANNE

You mean..oh my.

HELEN

What's wrong?

ANNE

I think it ate my cigarette.

HELEN

Really Anne.

ANNE  
I don't see it anywhere.

HELEN  
Well it couldn't have eaten it.

Helen reaches to put her hand inside the ashtray.

ANNE  
Don't!!!

INT. MISCHA'S - DAY

GEORGE and IGOR are at the table. Now there are Tarot cards laid out all over it. Both men have a full glass of vodka. Igor turns over one of the cards.

IGOR  
Ah, this is goodt. Prince Igor  
sees many dreams and...

GEORGE  
I just told you about the dreams  
five minutes ago.

IGOR  
That is right. Prince Igor sees a  
little girl...

GEORGE  
Boy!

IGOR  
Boy, right. With long hair these days,  
who can tell? Getting on airplane...

GEORGE  
Train!

Igor tosses the remainder of the Tarot deck to George's side of the table.

IGOR  
You do it. I'm tired.

Igor downs his glass of vodka.

INT. ROMANS' KITCHEN - DAY

HELEN and ANNE continue to box the groceries as the PHONE RINGS. Helen walks to wall phone, picks up the receiver and we see that one of her fingers is bandaged.



HELEN

Hello.

A very loud squawking comes from the phone. Helen holds it away from her ear. The screaming is distorted except for an occasional obscenity.

HELEN

Harry, I...Harry! He's not here! But he did do two columns last night. I'll ask Mike to bring them to you in the morning. Okay?....Yes....Nice talking to you. Bye.

Helen hangs up the phone.

ANNE

Harry a little upset?

HELEN

(Massaging ear canal.)  
Third time this week.

ANNE

Well at least George finally got back to writing.

HELEN

You mean I finally got back to George's writing.

ANNE

You wrote them for him?

HELEN

Someone had to.

ANNE

That's great! Let me see them.

HELEN

(Excessive false modesty.)  
Oh you don't want to read them.

ANNE

(Knows Helen like a book.)  
Helen.

Helen pulls open a large drawer which is crammed with hundreds of old greeting cards. She rummages through them until she finds a large envelope.

ANNE

You ought to recycle those.

INT. MISCHA'S - DAY

ALEXEI enters and walks toward table where GEORGE and IGOR are sitting. Igor is studying a piece of paper.

IGOR  
Your hehndwritink is, uh, is, uh...  
I can't read your hehnwritink!

George sees Alexei.

GEORGE  
Alexei! Goo...uh...DOHbreeyuh dyehn!

Alexei gets a big grin on his face.

ALEXEI  
Very goodt! DOHbreeyuh dyehn to you too,  
Yuri Antonovich RomaNEVSKY!!

George looks puzzled for a moment, then realizes what Alexei meant...gets very excited.

GEORGE  
You mean..?

ALEXEI  
Da!

GEORGE  
I'm a Roosky?!

ALEXEI  
Only little bit, but goodt Russian bloodt.

GEORGE  
I'm a Roosky!!

ALEXEI  
Your grahnpapa fife times ago...bik  
Russian general.

GEORGE  
A Roosky!

George gets up to shake Alexei's hand, but Alexie grabs him, gives him a big hug and kisses him on both cheeks. George returns the favor. Igor gets up, showing the effects of the vodka, and gives George a big hug and two kisses. George returns the favor. Alexei and Igor hug and kiss as George waves for the waiter:

GEORGE  
Vodka!

IGOR

Vodka.

ALEXEI

Vodka!

GEORGE

Vodka for the great, great, great, great  
grandson of....of....?

ALEXEI

Oh. Boris Andreevich Romanevsky!

GEORGE

For the great, great, great, great, great  
grandson of Boris Andreevich Romanevsky!!

George sees a lone man sitting at the end of the bar  
and runs over to him. He kisses the man on both  
cheeks then offers in explanation:

GEORGE

I'm a Roosky!

INT. ROMANS' KITCHEN - NIGHT

The boxes of groceries are stacked neatly to the side.  
HELEN and ANNE are seated at the table, each with a  
martini glass in hand. Anne pours another round, which  
empties the martini pitcher. They are both a little  
relaxed, but not drunk. MIKE enters through the back  
door, balancing a very large box on his knee.

MIKE

Cranberry man!

He kicks the door closed, puts the box on the floor.

ANNE

Where have you been?

MIKE

You try finding a case of "whole  
canned cranberries with no sugar  
syrup" and see how late you are.

HELEN

I'm afraid "sugarless" was my idea.

MIKE

Six stores. Six. Five with sugar.

HELEN  
I hope you had better luck  
with the dinner rolls.

ANNE  
Oooops. I forgot to tell him.

HELEN  
Anne.

ANNE  
We need a dozen boxes of brown 'n  
serve rolls. I forgot to tell you.  
Would you mind? I am sorry.

MIKE  
I guess not, but aren't we playing  
bridge tonight?

HELEN  
George isn't home yet anyway.

MIKE  
Where is he?

HELEN  
Oh, he met some Russian at that  
restaurant.

MIKE  
That restaurant?

ANNE  
Mischa's.

Helen's look to Anne says, "You had to say it, didn't you?"  
Anne's smile says, "Yes."

MIKE  
Okay, I'll go get the rolls and then  
swing by Mi...that restaurant and see  
what's keeping George.

Mike exits. Anne stands, picks up the martini pitcher.

ANNE  
Shall we have another?

HELEN  
Not so much vermouth this time.

## INT. MISCHA'S - NIGHT

The regular crowd is seated around dance floor near the bandstand at the far end of the room. MISCHA is playing the balalaika and singing a ballad.

Up near the bar, GEORGE, ALEXEI and IGOR are at their table. There are empty glasses all over the table. Igor is just finishing his dinner. George and Alexei haven't touched their food at all. Igor reaches over and takes George's plate and begins to eat from it. All three are sloshed. George and Alexei are crying.

ALEXEI  
Beautiful songks!

George pats Alexei on the shoulder.

GEORGE  
Just beautiful.

ALEXEI  
Many beautiful songks in Russia.

George raises his glass in toast.

GEORGE  
To Russia!

Alexei and Igor raise their glasses.

ALEXEI  
Russia!

IGOR  
(With a mouthful.)  
Russia!

All three down their drinks. Igor goes back to eating. Alexei slams his glass to the table.

ALEXEI  
You must go to Russia!

Igor raises his glass.

IGOR  
(Chewing.)  
Russia!

He sees his glass is empty and returns to the food. George signals the waiter to bring more vodka.

GEORGE  
I'll do it!

ALEXEI  
Goodt!

GEORGE  
But I don't have a visa.

ALEXEI  
I get you visa.

GEORGE  
My wife too?

ALEXEI  
Da, her too. Everybody goes to Russia!

WAITER brings three glasses of vodka to the table.

GEORGE  
Another toast! Yuri Antonovich  
Romanevsky goes to Russia!

Igor lifts his glass, but Alexei doesn't.

GEORGE  
Alexei Fedorovich, what's wrong?

ALEXEI  
Everybody goes to Russia but Alexei.

GEORGE  
Poor Alexei. We drink to your  
sorrow. To Alexei!

IGOR  
Alexei!

All drink. MIKE enters. He looks around and then walks to their table. George sees him and runs to him, throwing his arms around him and kissing him on both cheeks. Mike is very embarrassed.

GEORGE  
Mischa! Mischa! I'm a Roosky!!

MIKE  
A what?

## EXT. ROMANS' DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

Mike's car inches slowly up the driveway and stops. GEORGE and MIKE practically fall out of the car... quite plotzed. They try to help each other walk to the front door.

GEORGE  
They're gonna kill us.

MIKE  
Shpeshully yours, uh, whatshername.

GEORGE  
Helenushka.

MIKE  
Huh?

GEORGE  
That reminds me. I meanta ask you if you and Helenushka did, uh, "you know" when you brought her home from Mischa's.

Mike is so shocked, he sits down...right in the driveway. George sits next to him.

MIKE  
I can't believe you saidat.

GEORGE  
Shocking, huh?

MIKE  
Very.

GEORGE  
Well, you oughtuve. Be good for you both. Didja?

MIKE  
No!

GEORGE  
(Disappointed.)  
Oh.

MIKE  
It wash a very innocent kish.

GEORGE  
Aha!

MIKE

Thiziz terrible. You souldn't be offering me your wife.

GEORGE

I'm not.

MIKE

You jusht shaid I sould have an affair with Helen...ushka.

Both giggle.

GEORGE

I didn't say that you sou..should.  
I said "you should have." See?  
It has to be spontinuous...uh...  
spen..spoon-ton...

MIKE

Hey!

GEORGE

What?

MIKE

(Panic-stricken.)  
Duzzat mean that you...and Anne...  
did "you know?"

GEORGE

Naw. Anne and I don't need to do it.  
See, I waz just thinking it'd be good  
for you people who were virgins when  
they got married, you know, find out  
what it's like to do it with someone  
besides your spouse.

George sits back, pleased he was able to say all that.  
Mike thinks about this for a moment, suspecting that  
there was something he ought to know. He gets pale,  
then jumps up and runs for the front door:

MIKE

ANNE!!!!



## INT. ROMANS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

GEORGE enters, followed closely by HELEN. He begins to undress as they talk. She picks up after him.

HELEN

You don't have to pout just because I didn't get excited about you (sic) having one-thirty-second Russian blood. I'm the one who should be angry. We were supposed to play bridge tonight. And where were you? Out getting drunk with some Russian!

GEORGE

He is not "some Russian." He is Alexei Fedorovich Poaliakov. And he's a diplomat.

HELEN

Whatever. You were still supposed to be here playing cards. And to top it off, you got Mike drunk too. You know he doesn't drink.

GEORGE

It's time he learned.

HELEN

What was he so upset about anyway?

George grabs his pajamas and heads toward the bathroom.

GEORGE

I guess he thought Anne was a virgin when they got married.

George exits to bathroom, closing the door behind him. Helen stands silently for a moment, then:

HELEN

George? George!

## INT. HARRISES' BATHROOM - NIGHT

MIKE is showering. ANNE checks for wrinkles in the mirror.

MIKE

(With head thru curtain.)  
The whole football team?!!

ANNE

(Pushing him back in.)  
Just kidding!

MIKE

Thank god. Is there any more coffee?

ANNE

You drank the whole pot. Actually,  
it was the basketball team!

MIKE

That's even worse...

ANNE

You should make the water ice cold now!

MIKE

...they all have such big, uh...

ANNE

Not true. They don't all have big  
ones. Here, I'll do it.

MIKE

Oh....Huh?!

Anne reaches in, turns water to COLD! Mike SCREAMS!!

INT. ROMANS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

GEORGE, in pajamas, throws open the bathroom door and  
holds a razor up to HELEN.

GEORGE

Is there some reason why this  
razor was out on the basin?

HELEN

Just in case "someone" decided  
he wanted to shave.

GEORGE

I like my beard.

HELEN

Well, I hate it.

GEORGE

You do not.

HELEN

Don't tell me what I hate and  
what I don't.

GEORGE

What you hate is change...not beards.

HELEN

What I...

GEORGE

Well I have changed and I'm probably going to change even more, so you'd better get used to the idea.

HELEN

Or what?

GEORGE

No "or" about it...just loosen up a little.

HELEN

Loosen up? Loosen up?!

GEORGE

Yeah, loosen up. We're talking commitment here. And priorities.

HELEN

I have more commitments than you could ever dream of, mister.

George throws open a closet door and takes out a dozen brooms, tosses them on the floor.

GEORGE

Buying brooms from the blind is not a commitment. It's a purchase! Where is the personal involvement? Where are the people?

Helen wasn't ready for this attack. She grabs her pajamas and heads for the bathroom.

HELEN

They're in the broom factory!

She exits to bathroom, slamming the door behind her.

GEORGE

Then you ought to go to them!  
At the factory!

George pulls a large box out of the same closet.

INTERCUT EXTREME CLOSE UPS: MIKE AND ANNE

MIKE, sweating profusely, leans into the picture-- then back out--on each line of his dialogue. ANNE bounces up into the picture, then down and out on hers.

MIKE

What really irks me is that George knew.

ANNE

He was guessing.

MIKE

He did not say, "Gee, I guess Anne wasn't a virgin when you married her." He said that Helen and I were...and that you and he were NOT.

ANNE

So he's perceptive.

MIKE

And I'm not, I suppose.

ANNE

He's older.

MIKE

Maybe you should've married an older, more experienced man... is that it?

INT. HARRISES' SPARE ROOM - NIGHT

We now see that MIKE is on an exercycle and that ANNE is bouncing on a small trampoline.

A moment of silence. He stops and looks at her.

MIKE

Anne?

ANNE

I'm thinking, I'm thinking.

He makes a face.

## INT. ROMANS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

GEORGE has opened every closet, cupboard and bureau drawer in the room and pulled boxes of potholders, Girl Scout Cookies, empty coffee cans and egg cartons, bags of plastic flowers, pencils, etc. and stands surveying it all as HELEN enters in pajamas from the bathroom.

She stops short when she sees the room and takes a moment to recover, then walks calmly around the room, putting things back and closing the closets, drawers and cupboards.

HELEN

You have some stupid dream about a boy going on a train ride off in Russia and then you go running around to record stores and ethnic delis and the library, which by the way has revoked our card...you sit around for days on end reading about Russia, ESP, dreams and god knows what else...while you don't eat anything except bacon fat, bread and cheese...and don't shave and don't change clothes...oh yes, and wear your funny little tunic around with your bare ass hanging out for the world to see...and, and, play your music loud enough for, for everyone in, in a block to hear...and, and...you call that commitment? Do you?! Is that what you mean by commitment?

GEORGE

What I...

HELEN

Becoming a Russian? Is that commitment? What are you doing for them? They're oppressed over there. Do you know that?

GEORGE

Yes I know that. But we're not talking about politics here. Right now, I can't worry about politics. This is personal! It's emotional!

They fold back the bedspread together and get into bed. George turns out the LIGHTS.

INT. HARRISES' SPARE ROOM - NIGHT

MIKE is in the process of mounting his Back Swing while ANNE does calisthenics.

MIKE  
I think it would help clear the air.

ANNE  
You're not going to like it.

MIKE  
I can handle it.

He motions for her to help him with the back swing.

ANNE  
Okay. He and I were...

MIKE  
Does "he" have a name?

He's in the thing now and she tilts him upside down.

ANNE  
I've forgotten it.

MIKE  
No you haven't.

ANNE  
All right, I haven't. But I'm  
not going to tell you his name.

She begins pushups, so that they are face to face, with him upside down and her going up and down only inches away.

MIKE  
Just call him Joe then.

ANNE  
What?

MIKE  
It's easier to follow the story  
if everyone has a name.

ANNE  
You're weird.

MIKE  
So, Joe and you were..?

ANNE

Well, actually we hadn't even...

MIKE

Where did you meet him?

ANNE

College...and I was in this...

MIKE

What was he studying?

ANNE

Will you stop that!

Mike tilts himself so that he's horizontal and she changes to a new exercise.

MIKE

Why don't we skip to the...uh...

ANNE

The good part?

MIKE

The, uh, encounter, shall we say.

ANNE

The "encounter," as you call it was in my art class. He was posing for us and...

MIKE

In the nude?!

Mike swings quickly upright.

ANNE

Yes in the nude! Will you just shut up and let me tell this. Anyway, uh, he caught me looking at "it" and smiled at me, so when...

Mike makes a face at "it."

## INT. ROMANS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

GEORGE sits up in bed with a jerk and reaches to the nightstand to turn the LIGHT ON. HELEN jumps when he speaks:

GEORGE

All right! I don't know what it's all about. I'll admit that I'm a little confused. I don't know why this is happening to me. But it is! I don't know if Nikolai is me way back when or if he's just a kid in trouble. Why am I getting these signals? You tell me. No, it is not politics and it doesn't make any sense and I'm sorry that I picked on your commitments because everybody's got to do it his, or her own way. Well, this is my way! These are my emotions! And emotions have to supercede everything! Or at least they ought to, goddammit! Good night.

George turns the LIGHT OFF.

## EXT. RUSSIAN MOUNTAINS - DAY

Black. A small light appears in the distance and grows larger as we (from the train's POV) emerge from a long tunnel into a fierce blizzard. Ahead of the train, we see a large mound of snow shift downward abruptly then let loose altogether...an Avalanche! Nikolai is curled up in his seat asleep.

## INT. ROMANS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

In the moonlit room, GEORGE struggles in his sleep, whimpering. HELEN wakes and then shakes him gently, but he doesn't wake up. She shifts over to his side of the bed and lifts him up on her shoulder. His arm slides around her waist as he nestles into her shoulder. She puts her arm around him, pats him and, with her free arm, strokes his beard. He settles into a peaceful sleep with the caressing. She kisses the top of his head.



INT. HARRISES' SPARE ROOM - NIGHT

MIKE is upright in the back swing, listening intently as ANNE continues her story. She is smoking a cigarette, acting out and really enjoying herself. She starts out chuckling and ends up howling with laughter:

ANNE

...and I guess his foot or mine caught on the leg of the easel because the whole thing came crashing down on top of us-- easel, canvas, paint and all! We were laughing so hard, we didn't hear the next class come into the room! So there we were: the two of us stark naked, paint all over us, with a dozen students standing there with their mouths hanging open! And we couldn't stop laughing. Then, instead of jumping up and running out, which any normal people in this situation would have done, we....we started smearing paint all over each other's bodies!!

MIKE

I think that's disgusting.

ANNE

What?

MIKE

I said it's disgusting.

ANNE

Well, you wanted the details.

MIKE

I know but, I...oooooh. How could you do something like that?

She's not laughing anymore. She moves over to the back swing, gets a firm grip on it, and flips him quickly upside down. She stomps out.

MIKE

Anne?!

INT. ROMANS' LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

DOORBELL

HELEN, dressed in slacks and a warm sweater, walks to and opens the front door. MIKE and ANNE enter, both dressed in summer clothing. There is obvious tension between them.

ANNE

Can you believe this weather?  
Nothing like a heat wave just  
before Christmas.

MIKE

You can have it. I want snow  
for Christmas.

Helen reaches into the entry closet for two sweaters.

ANNE

Then go to the mountains.

Helen hands them the sweaters.

MIKE

What's this for?

ANNE

Why's it so cold in here?

HELEN

George. Says he can't think "Russian  
winter" when it's 80 degrees.

MIKE

But it must be 60 in here.

Anne checks the wall thermostat.

ANNE

Nope...55.

Helen leads them into the living room where a card table and four chairs have been set up for bridge. A large silver tree stands in the corner decorated entirely in blue. There's a fire going in the fireplace--a gas log. Anne and Mike try to ignore the tree. Helen maneuvers in front of it to get them to look at it.

ANNE

Thank god, a fire.

She walks to the fireplace, warms her hands.

MIKE  
Where's George?

HELEN  
Running around somewhere E.S.Peeing.

ANNE  
Doing what?

HELEN  
Practicing his powers.

MIKE  
Powers?

HELEN  
Oh yes. He has "powers" now. He's been driving me crazy all week trying to read my mind.

ANNE  
How's he doing.

HELEN  
Terrible, but he says the practice sharpens his new senses.

MIKE  
Well, at least Harry says George's columns have gotten a lot better.

ANNE  
That's because Hel...

HELEN  
Because he's gotten off that communist kick.

MIKE  
Harry did mention his surprise that George knew so much about charity drives.

GEORGE enters from the den. His beard is full and he looks gaunt. Both Mike and Anne are a little taken aback by his appearance. George runs to Anne, open-armed.

GEORGE  
Anastasia!

ANNE  
Yuri!

They embrace, kiss on both cheeks as Helen and Mike look on...a little perturbed. George turns to Mike, arms open.

GEORGE  
Mischa!

Mike backs away. Helen heads for the kitchen.

HELEN  
Why don't you guys set up the game  
and I'll get the drinks. I found  
this terrific recipe for Yankee  
Punch. It sounds delicious.

Helen exits. George, Mike and Anne set up the table.

GEORGE  
Hey Mike, pick a color.

MIKE  
What?

GEORGE  
Just think of a color.

MIKE  
What color?

ANNE  
Any color dummy. He's gonna read  
your mind.

MIKE  
I know that.

Mike thinks. George concentrates.

GEORGE  
Blue.

MIKE  
No...taupe.

GEORGE  
What?

ANNE  
Taupe?! Don't be a schmuck!  
Nobody thinks of taupe when  
someone says think of a color!

MIKE  
I did.

GEORGE  
I don't even know what color taupe is.

MIKE  
It's sort of a light grey-brown.

HELEN enters with a tray of drinks.

ANNE  
Who cares? Try me, George.

GEORGE  
Okay.

George meditates.

GEORGE  
I'm still getting blue.

ANNE  
Blue it is. It was probably me  
you were getting instead of ol'  
taupe over there.

HELEN  
Don't be silly. Everyone thinks  
of blue. Here, try this punch...  
it's yummy.

Helen passes drinks to all and waits for compliments,  
which don't come. George sits at the table.

ANNE  
Who's partners tonight? Romans  
versus Harrises? Boys against  
girls? Or mate swapping?

Helen quickly sits opposite George.

HELEN  
Oh let's just do old married couples  
tonight. It's easier.

Mike and Anne sit in the two remaining chairs.

HELEN  
Shall we cut for deal?

Each turns up a card except George. Helen cuts for him.  
Mike shuffles the other deck quickly. Helen offers cut  
to Anne and then deals. All, except George, arrange  
their cards.

GEORGE  
But you see the problem is that  
if Nikolai is one of my previous  
incarnations...and this is some  
kind of plea for help...then...

They all look at him: "Where did that come from?"

MIKE

Obviously it all turned out  
all right. You're here, aren't you?

HELEN

If there really is such a thing  
as reincarnation.

ANNE

Either way, he is here.

Helen glares at her.

ANNE

I mean history worked out in  
George's favor, whether or not  
it was through reincarnation...  
if there is such a thing.

HELEN

I know what you meant.

GEORGE

You're missing the point. What if..  
what if the only reason it worked  
out is that I had this dream--this  
signal from the past--and did  
something about it? See? Not that  
I'd know what to do about it anyway,  
but what if I don't follow through?  
I might just disappear--Poof! Mike?

Everyone looks at Mike.

MIKE

Well, if, it wouldn't have to...Anne?

Everyone looks at Anne.

ANNE

I pass. Helen?

Everyone looks at Helen. A moment of silence.

HELEN

Are we playing bridge or not?  
I open one spade.

MIKE

I pass.

ANNE

You pass?

MIKE

Yes I pass.

ANNE

Don't you ever have opening points?

MIKE

If I'd had the points, I'd've opened.

HELEN

George, it's to you.

GEORGE

Huh?

HELEN

It's your bid. I opened one spade.

ANNE

And Mike passed.

Mike and Anne make faces at each other. George quickly arranges his cards.

HELEN

One spade, pass...

GEORGE

Wait! I want to see if I can read your cards.

ANNE

Hey, that's not fair!

HELEN

It's not as though he can do it.

GEORGE

Study your cards. Just look at each suit carefully...and...

George puts his hands to his head, deep in concentration.

MIKE

Oh come on.

ANNE

Sh!

GEORGE

I'm starting to see something...

Everyone sits up a little straighter, looks at George.

GEORGE

Uh, three black cards...no, four!  
Spades! A jack and three little ones.

MIKE

You opened with just a jack?

Helen glares at him: "Don't be an ass."

GEORGE

And uh one, two, three, four, five,  
six! uh hearts...Jesus it's clear!  
Three clubs to the King...and...  
no diamonds!

George opens his eyes. They all look at Helen.

HELEN

Not a one. Are you satisfied?  
Can we play bridge now?

Anne fans out her cards. Her mouth drops open.

ANNE

I don't believe it. That's my hand!

Anne spreads her cards out on the table. George beams.  
Helen leans forward, spreading the cards out more.

HELEN

That's not possible.

She studies the cards, then sits back dejectedly.

HELEN

Oh.

MIKE

That's really impressive.

ANNE

Remarkable.

HELEN

He must've gotten lucky for a change.

Anne and Mike look at her: Huh? George stares blankly  
toward Helen. He's in another world entirely.

HELEN

You don't have to look at me that  
way. Maybe you do have some kind  
of powers. Shall we redeal or what?



Anne looks closer at George's eyes.

ANNE

I don't think George is with us.

GEORGE

It's so clear.

INT. VOLSK RAILWAY STATION - DAY

The station appears the same. BABUSHKA and NIKOLAI are still dressed in their peasant winter clothing. The old steam locomotive awaits them on the first track...BUT:

Now there are many other trains in the background...all modern electric or deisels. And now there are hundreds of other people in the station, wearing modern clothing. Babushka stands immediately in front, facing the camera, Nikolai's to one side, a CONDUCTOR stands opposite. The large sign over the platform reads: BOJICK.

BABUSHKA

(With Helen's voice.)  
What's so clear?

GEORGE

(O.S.)  
Boy, is it clear!

CONDUCTOR

(With Mike's voice.)  
George, what are you seeing?

NIKOLAI

(With Anne's voice.)  
Are you having some kind of vision?

A girl walks by, wearing an Elton John T-shirt.

GEORGE

(O.S.)  
It's so different. There weren't all those other trains and people before.

BABUSHKA

(With Helen's voice.)  
He must be seeing that train station from his dreams.

INT. ROMANS' LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

GEORGE stares toward HELEN. MIKE and ANNE watch.

GEORGE  
I have to go.

George wakes up and gets out of his chair.

HELEN  
Go where?

GEORGE  
To Russia.

George walks toward bedroom. The others jump up and follow.

INT. ROMANS' BEDROOM & THROUGHOUT HOUSE - NIGHT

GEORGE rushes in with HELEN, MIKE and ANNE hot on his heels. He rummages through closet until he finds a suitcase, puts it on the bed and opens it during the following:

HELEN  
(Calmly.)  
You can't go to Russia.

GEORGE  
I'm going just the same.

MIKE  
George, you're not making any sense.

ANNE  
Why do you have to go to Russia?

George runs out to the HALL, through the LIVING ROOM and into the DEN. All follow.

GEORGE  
Because Nikolai wasn't a hundred years ago! Nikolai is now! I can stop it. I can save him!

MIKE  
Save him? From what?

GEORGE  
The avalanche!!

George's shout startles Mike.

MIKE

What avalanche? Last I heard  
it was just a train ride.

HELEN

That was last week's episode.

ANNE

Now the train is in the mountains  
with a giant blizzard and a huge  
avalanche coming down on it.

MIKE

Really?

Helen glares at Mike. George grabs his notes, pens,  
paper, passport, visas from his desk and heads out  
the door, passing through the LIVING ROOM and into  
the KITCHEN. All follow.

ANNE

Are you really going?

GEORGE

I thought at least you understood.

Helen's face says: "Why did he think that?" George  
looks around the kitchen, but can't remember why he  
came in there, so exits back to the LIVING ROOM, down  
the HALL and back into the BEDROOM. All follow.

HELEN

Day after tomorrow is Christmas!

George throws the stuff into the suitcase, then runs  
into the BATHROOM, returns with toiletries.

GEORGE

Does that mean you're not  
coming with me?

HELEN

The man is mad!

George takes her visa from suitcase, hands it to her.

GEORGE

I got a visa for you. See?

She opens it. Anne looks over her shoulder.

HELEN

Where did you get this picture?

George picks up phone by the bed and dials.

GEORGE  
I had it copied from your passport.

HELEN  
I hate that awful picture.

ANNE  
It's not that bad.

GEORGE  
Hi Pat. How's the travel business?

HELEN  
It's terrible. I look like this:  
Helen makes a face.

GEORGE  
Good.

ANNE  
Oh, it doesn't look like that at all.

GEORGE  
I need to make a reservation.

HELEN  
Thanks Anne.

GEORGE  
I know it's Saturday night.

ANNE  
It's more like this:

Anne makes a worse face. Helen laughs weakly.

GEORGE  
I can't wait til Monday.

HELEN  
George?

GEORGE  
I have to get to Russia!

HELEN  
George!

George lowers the receiver for a moment.

GEORGE  
Are you going?

HELEN  
No!

GEORGE  
(Back to phone.)  
Just one.

MIKE  
You made the right decision.

GEORGE  
Already got the visa.

ANNE  
Oh shut up, Mike.

GEORGE  
Okay! Thanks Pat. Goodnight.

George hangs up the phone, makes a note, picks up his portable cassette machine from the nightstand and puts them into the suitcase.

HELEN  
Aren't you going to pack any clothes?

GEORGE  
Any what?

HELEN  
Clothes! You know: shirts, pants, that sort of thing. All you have in here is junk.

GEORGE  
Oh I guess so. Do you want to open our presents now?

HELEN  
No.

Helen pushes him out of the way, goes to the closet and takes out shirts, pants, etc. and begins to pack them.

HELEN  
I don't see how you can do this two days before Christmas.

GEORGE  
I asked you to go with me.

HELEN  
I can't! I have commitments!

GEORGE  
So have I...and we did this already.

HELEN  
Where's your good wool scarf?

GEORGE  
I gave it away.

HELEN  
Gave it away?

GEORGE  
Yes.

HELEN  
I knew you hated that scarf.

GEORGE  
As a matter of fact, I loved it.

His look says: "End of conversation."

HELEN  
I...you're just going to run off  
and leave me alone on Christmas?

GEORGE  
Hell, it's not as though we had  
kids who were waiting for Santa  
Claus or anything.

Everyone tenses.

GEORGE  
I didn't mean that.

George exits to HALL, through LIVING ROOM to the DEN.  
Mike follows.

MIKE  
That was pretty rotten George.

GEORGE  
Don't you start on me.

MIKE  
Well it was.

GEORGE

A lot of couples can't have kids.  
Why do "we" always have to make  
such a goddamn big deal out of it?

MIKE

Can't you wait just two days?

George takes two gift-wrapped boxes from closet.

GEORGE

No I can't.

George rushes through LIVING ROOM and HALL to BEDROOM.  
Mike follows.

MIKE

You don't know any of this for sure.

GEORGE

I do know it. I feel it.

In the BEDROOM:

MIKE

What if it turns out that you're  
just crazy...then you'll have  
made the trip for nothing.

HELEN

No "what if" about it. He is crazy.

Helen tries to close the jammed suitcase and can't.  
George hands the two presents to Mike and closes it.

GEORGE

I'm sorry.

HELEN

Then don't go.

He takes the presents back from Mike and gives them  
to Helen.

HELEN

What's this?

GEORGE

Your Christmas presents. You  
want to open them?

She throws them down.

HELEN

No I don't!

ANNE

Come on, Helen, open them.

HELEN

No, I said.

ANNE

You'll love them.

HELEN

And just how do you know that I'll love them? Or what they are, for that matter?

ANNE

I helped...

GEORGE

Don't take it out on Anne just because you're mad at me.

HELEN

Why don't you just go if you're going!

George slowly picks up the two presents from the floor and puts them on the dresser. He takes his suitcase from the bed and places it on the floor near the door to the hallway. He walks back over to the bed and sits down.

HELEN

What are you doing? Aren't you going?!

GEORGE

The plane doesn't leave until tomorrow morning.

Helen's SCREAM, which is long and loud, becomes the scream of a jet engine:



EXT. MOSCOW AIRPORT - EVENING

A large jet lands on runway. MUSIC replaces jet noise.

INT. MOSCOW AIRPORT - EVENING

GEORGE walks to customs area and gets in line.

EXT. ROMANS' DRIVEWAY - MORNING

HELEN, MIKE and ANNE back their respective cars out of the driveway into the street and drive off. Each car is loaded with four of the boxes seen previously. A small, foil-wrapped turkey has been added to each box. It's cloudy.

EXT. HOME #1 - MORNING

HELEN drives up to curb in front of a small, rundown house. She gets out of the car, walks to the back, opens the tail gate and takes out one of the boxes. It starts to rain! She puts the box down and looks for an umbrella. There isn't one. She tries putting a newspaper over her head, but it falls off when she picks up the box again. She walks to the front door and kicks it. She is sopping wet.

An elderly MAN comes to the door. He doesn't want to let her in. She's getting wetter. Finally, he opens the door and lets her into the house.

EXT. HOME #2 - MORNING

ANNE drives up to the curb in front of a small, rundown house. Before she can get out of the car, three elderly WOMEN run out of the house with umbrellas. They protect her from the rain as she takes a box from rear of car. They all go into the house.

EXT. HOME #3 - MORNING

MIKE drives up to the curb in front of still another small, rundown house. He reaches into the glove compartment and takes out an expensive collapsible umbrella, opens the door, sticks the umbrella out, opens it and then gets out of the car, not allowing one drop of water to violate his three-piece suit. He goes around to the other side of the car and takes out one of the boxes, expertly hooking the umbrella under his arm so that it protects him as he walks to the front door. An elderly WOMAN meets him at the door.

## INT. MOSCOW AIRPORT - NIGHT

GEORGE is next up for customs inspection. The TRAVELLER in front of him is arguing with the customs INSPECTOR. Two armed SOLDIERS come up behind the Traveller and escort him/her away. George moves up in line, apprehensively. The Inspector mouths something and George takes his passport out of his jacket pocket and hands it over. The Inspector mouths again and George gives him his visa and the third time, his travel permit.

George opens his suitcase and the Inspector rummages through it. He pulls out a lacey, black negligee and looks up at George suspiciously. George shrugs. The Inspector calls out to his colleagues and shows it to them, holding it in front of him, making an effeminate gesture. They all laugh. George grabs the nightgown from the Inspector and shoves it back into the suitcase. An armed SOLDIER starts to move toward them, but the Inspector signals him to stop and then gives George a most stern look.

## INT. HOME #1 - DAY

The elderly MAN sits at the kitchen table scowling at HELEN, who is cooking his meal for him (this was not part of the bargain). She looks horrible. Her hair is a mess. She has splatters of food and grease all over her new pants outfit--no apron! There are numerous battered pots and pans on and around the stove. Helen is just finishing doing his dirty dishes as scene opens. She gives the turkey a quick check, stirs the boiling potatoes, opens another pot and gets a face full of steam. She opens a can of cranberries with an old-fashioned can opener and spills the contents out on the counter, splattering juice on her clothes. The Man laughs. She glares at him, threatening him with the lethal can opener.

## EXT. MOSCOW AIRPORT - NIGHT

GEORGE walks out of the terminal building and up the boarding steps of a small jet plane, which takes off immediately.

## INT. HOME #2 - DAY

ANNE sips a small glass of punch as the three old WOMEN put the dinner together. The house is decorated merrily and everyone is having a wonderful time, giggling and drinking punch. One woman takes a sip of the punch, makes a face and then goes to a cupboard, removes a bottle of sherry and pours a cup or two in the punch bowl. All laugh.

EXT. VOLSK AIRPORT - NIGHT

GEORGE and other PASSENGERS deplane and enter a building.

EXT. HOME #4 - DAY

It has stopped raining. MIKE carries a box of food up to a door and knocks on it. The door swings open and he peeks in, then enters.

INT. HOME #4 - DAY

MIKE looks around the empty room, turns around just as: a WOMAN IN WHEELCHAIR comes speeding out of a bedroom, armed with a broom locked under one arm. Her other hand pushes frantically on the controls of her motorized chair.

Mike jumps aside and the Woman crashes into a floor lamp, shattering a window with her lance. She backs up quickly and turns around, ready to attack again. Mike drops the box and runs toward the front door, but she cuts him off. He maneuvers left--she re-aims. He shifts right--she swings back. He jumps left--she attacks! He reverses and makes a wide run to the right, over an endtable and out the front door. She laughs, shakes her broom at him.

INT. VOLSK AIRPORT - NIGHT

GEORGE and a local OFFICIAL repeat the passport/visa/permit routine as before and he is allowed to pass. He is then greeted by a young man, RANDY, in a business suit. They shake hands and Randy gives George his business card.

EXT. HOME #5 - DAY

HELEN carries a box of food around the corner of a house and comes upon a Coroner's hearse just as it begins to pull out of the driveway. Her whole body droops at once and she just stands there for a moment, trying to decide what to do. She moves indecisively first in one direction, then the other. She bangs against a trash can next to the back porch, knocking a couple of dog food cans to the ground. She sits down on the step...and cries.

EXT. VOLSK RAILWAY STATION - NIGHT

GEORGE gets out of a taxi with his suitcase, pays the DRIVER and walks up the steps and into the building.

## INT. VOLSK RAILWAY STATION - NIGHT

GEORGE walks up to an OFFICIAL, who refers him to a sign, which says in Russian, French and English: "Pass Required Beyond This Point." George mouths "Where? How?" and the Official points to a nearby desk, attended by a WOMAN-IN-UNIFORM. He queues up behind two other people, who are given their passes very quickly, but when George steps up to get his pass, the Woman hands him a very long form to fill out and sends him away.

## EXT. ROMANS' DRIVEWAY - DAY

HELEN, MIKE and ANNE drive up in the respective cars, get out and walk to the house. Helen carries a box of food.

## EXT. VOLSK RAILWAY STATION - NIGHT

GEORGE gets in a taxi and gestures to the DRIVER that he wants to drive around. George hands him a piece of paper with an address on it and they take off like a bat out of hell, throwing George back in the seat.

## INT. ROMANS' KITCHEN - DAY

HELEN sits the box down on the table and tries to do something with her hair, now stringy and frizzy. MIKE plops in a chair and rubs his sore shin. ANNE makes a pot of coffee. She is annoyingly perky.

## EXT. CITY OF VOLSK - NIGHT

GEORGE shouts at the DRIVER as they speed through the near-empty streets of the city. The driver points out things of interest as they rush by, ignoring George's pleas to slow down. The city becomes increasingly modern as they near the central section.

## INT. ROMANS' KITCHEN - DAY

MIKE and HELEN slouch in their chairs and sip coffee as ANNE lifts the foil on the turkey and tries to sneak a piece, but Helen slaps her hand and gives her a look: "How can you even think of eating when I've had such a terrible day?" Anne's look: "But I'm starving!"

## EXT. CITY OF VOLSK - NIGHT

The taxi screeches around a corner with GEORGE holding on for dear life in the back seat. The DRIVER points to a statue as they round a traffic circle at 50 mph. A police car rounds a corner and takes off after them.

## INT. ROMANS' KITCHEN - DAY

HELEN pours a cup of coffee as MIKE sneaks a piece of the turkey. She catches him and scolds him, arms akimbo. ANNE and Mike argue until she shrugs and the three of them dive into the box and begin to prepare the food: dragging pots out of cupboards, turkey to oven, etc.

## EXT. VOLSK HOTEL - NIGHT

The taxi screeches to a halt, throwing GEORGE up against the back of the front seat. The DRIVER turns to him with a big smile and puts his hand out for money as three or four police cars descend on them from all directions! A dozen SOLDIERS surround the car, drag the driver out of the taxi and a screaming argument begins. George gets out of the taxi, bag in hand, and walks into the hotel.

## INT. ROMANS' DINING ROOM - DAY

An empty wine bottle rests in the icebucket. The candles on the table are burned halfway down. The good china, with the remnants of a feast, adorn the table. Beautiful serving bowls and platters hold scraps of potatoes, yams, stuffing, etc., and the bare skeleton of a turkey.

HELEN, MIKE and ANNE sit back in their chairs, stuffed.

## INT. VOLSK HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

GEORGE is in his pajamas, yawning. His suitcase sits open on a bench near the bed. He takes the black negligee out of the suitcase, crawls into bed, turns out the light, snuggles up with the negligee against his cheek and goes to sleep.

MUSIC eases into a lullaby, then becomes frantic as:

## LIMBO

GEORGE is running atop a ground-level mist, jumping over something at regular intervals. His expression is one of pain and desperation.

## EXT. RUSSIAN MOUNTAINS - DAY

GEORGE runs along the top of the old train as it travels through the long mountain pass nearing the snow-covered peak where he had envisioned the avalanche. As he leaps from one car to another, he trips and falls flat.

## INT. TRAIN COACH - DAY

The roof of the coach has become invisible and we see down into it from GEORGE'S POV. NIKOLAI opens his cloth bundle and begins to eat the bread and cheese.

## EXT. RUSSIAN MOUNTAINS - DAY

GEORGE is lying flat on his stomach on top of the coach, pounding on the roof and screaming. The train rounds a bend and George slips off the side of the train.

## INT. TRAIN COACH - DAY

NIKOLAI looks out the window to see GEORGE suspended in mid-air, waving his arms wildly and screaming. Nikolai smiles and waves at him.

## EXT. RUSSIAN MOUNTAINS - DAY

GEORGE is suspended in mid-air outside the window of the coach. The AVALANCHE tears down the side of the mountain toward the train. The ROAR of the Avalanche, the screaming of the train WHISTLE and the now thundering MUSIC build to a deafening pitch...as the Avalanche buries the train.

MUSIC OUT!

## INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAWN

GEORGE wakes with a jolt, sweating, and runs into the bathroom. Through the open door, we see him splash cold water on his face. He staggers back to the bed and picks up the telephone. The water drips from his face and down onto his already soaked pajamas.

## INT. ROMANS' LIVING ROOM - DUSK

The dining table has not been cleared and now has empty coffee cups as well. The Christmas tree is lit and there are assorted boxes and wrapping strewn about the room.

ANNE and MIKE sit on the couch sipping brandy. She wears a new bathrobe over her dress and a long ribbon around her neck. He has a loud tie draped around his shoulders and has his feet propped up on the coffee table, sporting new velvet slippers which are also loud--in color and design. Anne and Mike are watching:

HELEN model her new coat and cap which are made of genuine Russian Astrakhan.

There are a dozen or so "instant" photos scattered about the coffee table. Anne reaches for the camera on the table and takes a picture of Helen just as she strikes some exaggerated pose. They are all a little tipsy.

MIKE

You didn't even aim the thing.

ANNE

You don't have to. This is one of those that you just pick up and it does everything for you.

He gives her a "good grief" look as the PHONE RINGS. Helen answers it.

HELEN

Hello. Merry Christmas!

GEORGE

(V.O. thru phone.)  
Hi honey.

HELEN

It's our goodwill ambassador to Russia. Hello George.

ANNE

Hi George! I mean, Hi Yuri!

Helen glares at her. Mike nudges her. She hits Mike.

HELEN

(Flatly.)  
Mike and Anne send their best.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAWN

GEORGE wipes water from his face with the corner of the sheet, almost dropping the phone.

GEORGE

Please come over here. I need you.

HELEN

(V.O. thru phone.)

You know where I am if you need me that badly.

He pauses for a moment, closing his eyes..then sits up, trying to compose himself.

GEORGE

Hey! Did you like my presents?

INT. ROMANS' LIVING ROOM - DUSK

HELEN touches the fur coat.

HELEN

I didn't open them.

ANNE rises. MIKE tries to grab her, but misses.

ANNE

Helen.

GEORGE

(V.O. thru phone.)

Oh.

Anne lights a cigarette...obviously annoyed.

HELEN

Well this is costing money, we'd..

GEORGE

(V.O. thru phone.)

Hey! You know what?

HELEN

What?

GEORGE

(V.O. thru phone.)

I slept with your nightgown last night.

HELEN

You did what?



INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAWN

GEORGE holds the nightgown in one hand, phone in the other.

GEORGE

I slept with your nightgown last night.  
You must've grabbed it up with one of  
my things when you packed. It was kind  
of, uh, special. But I'd still rather  
have you here in person.

HELEN

(V.O. thru phone.)  
Forget it. And as for the nightgown,  
I think it's...

GEORGE

Okay, I'm sorry. Good night...  
Merry Christmas.

HELEN

(V.O. thru phone.)  
Good night.

We hear a CLICK thru the phone. George hesitates for a moment, then hangs up the phone. He lies back on the bed, rubbing the negligee against his cheek.

INT. ROMANS' LIVING ROOM - DUSK

HELEN walks back to the coffee table, picks up her glass of brandy and downs it. ANNE moves closer. MIKE stands.

ANNE

Are you all right?

HELEN

I'm fine.

ANNE

What was that about a nightgown?

HELEN

He, uh, said he slept with my  
nightgown last night.

ANNE

Aw, that's sweet.

HELEN

It's sick.

ANNE

I think it's romantic.

MIKE

You think it's romantic that he  
slept in her nightgown?

HELEN

Not in it, with it. God, I think  
that's what he said.

Helen gets a horrified look on her face. Anne laughs.  
Mike looks disgusted.

INT. VOLSK CAFE - DAY

This is one of the older and better cafes in the city.  
The furnishings and decorations are old, dark and ornate.  
We HEAR snatches of Russian, French, German and English  
in the background. A portrait of Lenin hangs on a back wall.

GEORGE is seated at a table with the young man who greeted  
him at the Volsk airport, RANDY by name. He's about 25  
years old, tall, hair slicked back, clean-shaven. He eats  
like a horse, but is skinny as a rail. He's nervous as  
hell and looks over his shoulder at every little noise.  
His accent is a mixture of London and Chicago.

The two men are seated at a table for four. Two or three  
finished dishes sit off to the side near Randy, he's working  
on a dish of something at the moment and there are two or  
three still-to-be-eaten dishes off to the other side of him.

George has only one dish before him: a bowl of hot borshch  
with a far too generous portion of some stringy meat of  
unknown origin and there is a large island of thick sour  
cream rising up from the center of this very large bowl.

Randy attacks his food with relish throughout the scene.  
Most of his dialogue is interspersed with smacking, chewing,  
swallowing and napkin wiping.

George, on the other hand, is subdued and just plays with  
his soup. He doesn't look well at all. He's gotten even  
thinner. His beard is scraggly. His clothes are rumpled.

Randy looks quickly over his shoulder, then back to George.

RANDY

You're not eating much.

GEORGE

Just not hungry I guess.

RANDY

Oh.

GEORGE  
Meat's a little stringy.

RANDY  
Rotten luck. Want some of this?

GEORGE  
No thanks.

RANDY  
I'm ever so glad you called me today. Being a "junior" diplomat, I seldom get to deal directly with the public. I just hope I can be of some help to you. Did you have some particular problem?

GEORGE  
Yes. I applied for a pass to visit the train station and it's been three days and they still haven't issued it.

RANDY  
Oh that could take weeks. They don't like foreigners hanging around places.

GEORGE  
But they were giving passes to others.  
Someone calls out "Nikolai." George looks and sees two older men greeting each other. He turns back to Randy.

RANDY  
Well, they were probably Soviets to begin with and they were probably seeing relatives off. Or, they were people with tickets and the proper travel papers.

GEORGE  
I have travel papers.

RANDY  
Only between Moscow and here, and by plane.

GEORGE  
Isn't there anything you can do?

RANDY  
I'm afraid not. Red tape, you know.

GEORGE  
I've heard about the Russian bureaucracy.

RANDY  
Soviet.

GEORGE  
Right. Soviet.

Randy looks over his shoulder, then returns to eating.

GEORGE  
Are you expecting someone?

RANDY  
No.

INT. ROMANS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

HELEN tosses and turns in bed, unable to get to sleep. She turns the bedside LAMP ON and gets out of bed. She takes a pair of George's pajamas out of a bureau drawer and lays them on top of the covers on George's side of the bed, then gets back in bed. Doesn't like it. She picks up the pajamas and throws back the covers. She fluffs his pillow and lays the pajamas out again, neatly and flat, and gets into bed, trying to snuggle with the pajamas.

INT. VOLSK CAFE - DAY

GEORGE watches as RANDY starts on another plate of food.

RANDY  
You're a writer, aren't you?

GEORGE  
Yes, I...

RANDY  
You write mostly about birds, right?

GEORGE  
Well no I...

RANDY  
Dad reads your column faithfully... has your paper sent all the way over here just for that. Of course he says he has to keep up with the news in the states, but I happen to know that your column is the only thing he reads.

GEORGE  
Your father's in Russia too?

RANDY  
Soviet Union.

GEORGE  
Oh right.

George's mind begins to wander during the following--  
not so blatantly to be obvious, but still inattentive.

RANDY  
Yes, Dad's the ranking officer  
in Moscow...diplomat his whole  
life. That's how I got into  
the thing, of course. Dad,  
Mum and I traipsing around  
the world...

INT. ROMANS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

HELEN fidgets in bed, then reaches over to the nightstand  
and turns the LIGHT ON. She looks at the rumpled pajamas,  
thinking. She unbuttons the pajama shirt, puts George's  
pillow on top of it, then rebuttons the shirt around the  
pillow. She straightens the pajama pants below the  
pillow, pulls the covers back up and turns the LIGHT OFF.

INT. VOLSK CAFE - DAY

RANDY finishes another dish of food, pulls another one  
in front of him as GEORGE plays with his borshch. He  
runs his spoon around the outside of the bowl, then makes  
a volcano out of the thick sour cream, as Randy goes on:

RANDY  
...in London ever so long. Oh,  
then there was an excruciatingly  
long sojourn in Chicago and that's  
where I became interested in art.  
I took classes at the university  
there. Wonderful faculty. One  
fellow took me under his wing,  
so to speak, and I thought for  
a while there that I'd like to  
try painting as a profession, but  
Dad wouldn't hear of it...

George spoons some of the soup into the crater of the  
volcano, then pushes in the sides to make it run out  
over the top.

## INT. ROMANS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

The LIGHT is already on and HELEN is just finishing stuffing the legs of the pajama pants with clothing. She fluffs the pillow that has the pajama shirt around it, puts the pants up against it and looks at the final product. She shakes her head.

She goes to the closet and gets a styrofoam head (a wig holder) from the shelf and brings it to the bed. This particular head has been decorated with pieces from a "Mr. Potato Head" set: plastic eyes, mouth, nose and ears. She places it above the pillow and shakes her head again. She returns to the closet and gets the new fur cap and puts it on the head. She gets into bed and pulls the covers up over the two of them. She turns the LIGHT OFF and cuddles.

## INT. VOLSK CAFE - DAY

RANDY eats. GEORGE is watching a rather heavy-set woman at a nearby table who is in the process of spooning huge dollops of sour cream on top of her plate of stew. One, two, three, George counts, four, five. The last scoop falls off to the table. She retrieves it with her fingers and then puts them into her mouth, lingering over a long, last suck on her middle finger. George stares. Randy talks and eats.

RANDY

Oh, I do still dabble a bit with my art...in my spare time...what little of it I have. I do wish I could do more. It's not only relaxing, but fulfilling as well. My lover is an artist and since we started sharing a flat, I've really gotten into it again.

The woman catches George staring. She smiles, then winks at him. He quickly returns his attention to Randy.

RANDY

Of course, my paintings aren't as good, but I'm working on it.

Randy looks quickly over his shoulder.

GEORGE

Would you like to trade seats?

RANDY

No I'm fine. Did you?

George shakes his head.

## INT. ROMANS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

HELEN SCREAMS!! She bolts up in bed and scrambles to turn the LIGHT ON. The pajama-wrapped pillow is in her lap; the stuffed pajama pants are lying across her legs; and she is clutching the styrofoam head to her breast. She stares at the loose head, dazed and confused. It's nose is missing. She looks around for it.

## INT. VOLSK CAFE - DAY

RANDY finishes off the last dish of food and wipes his mouth with the napkin, then looks back to GEORGE.

RANDY

...at least I'd like to. Oh dear, I'm afraid I've monopolized our entire conversation, when it was you who called me for assistance. You were saying something before about a dream you had...of a Russian ...uh, Soviet boy? Do tell me all about it.

Randy signals the waiter.

GEORGE

What disturbs me most about the dream is that it becomes more and more real each time and...

The WAITER arrives at the table.

RANDY

Excuse me, did you want dessert? I think I'll have something very special today.

(To waiter.)

DIGHTyeh mnyeh pahZHALstuh  
ROHmahvahyuh BAHbuh.

(To George.)

They have the best rum baba in the city in this cafe. You really should try some.

GEORGE

No thanks.

RANDY

Now, what were we talking about? Oh yes, your dream...

INTERCUT EXTREME CLOSE UPS: MIKE AND ANNE

He is looking slightly off to the side, not moving,  
and barely opens his mouth when he talks.  
She looks up, then down on each line of her dialogue.

MIKE

You could make it just a  
little bit bigger.

ANNE

No I couldn't.

MIKE

What would it hurt?

ANNE

No one's going to see this  
anyway.

MIKE

I know, but...

ANNE

No!

MIKE

Is it almost finished?

ANNE

(Impatiently.)  
Yes!

INT. HARRISES' BEDROOM - NIGHT

The floor is covered with a plastic tarp. An easel  
has been set up in one corner with a large canvas on it.  
ANNE stands behind the easel, clad only in an apron.  
She puts the finishing touches on a nude painting of  
MIKE, who stands on a box across from her, wearing  
only a jock strap. He steps down from the box as he  
speaks and walks toward her.

MIKE

Can we knock the easel over now?



## INT. VOLSK HOTEL LOBBY - NIGHT

A Russian man, SERGEI, enters the lobby from outside, shakes the snow from his coat, removes it and walks to the doorway leading into the bar.

## INT. VOLSK HOTEL BAR - NIGHT

We HEAR a burst of LAUGHTER and then APPLAUSE from a group of drunk men clustered at one end of the bar. SERGEI walks over to them to see what is going on. The bartender, VASILY, nods hello and serves another round of vodka to all. Sergei leans over the shoulder of one of the men to see a man face down on the floor. It's GEORGE!

George gets up from the floor, dusting his hands and clothes and goes on with his story:

GEORGE

...and that's when we went around  
a really sharp curve and I went  
sliding off the side of the train!

George mimes his sliding across the top of the coach and off the side. There are "oohs" and "aahs" from the group. George waves his arms in the air.

GEORGE

So there I am...hanging in mid-air!  
Looking right into the car where  
Nikolai is sitting. I'm waving  
my arms all over the place and you  
know what the kid does? You know  
what the kid does?

The men shake their heads, even though they don't have the slightest idea what he's talking about. Vasily and Sergei do speak English and respond together:

VASILY/SERGEI

Vaht didt he do?

GEORGE

He waves at me! The kid smiles  
and waves at me!

Vasily and Sergei laugh. The other join in.

GEORGE

He's such a cute kid, too.

SERGEI

Ahh.

George gets serious, dramatic...and the group leans in toward him.

GEORGE

Then I saw it coming! Heading  
right for the train!

Dramatic pause...group mimes "What, what?"

GEORGE

Biggest goddamn Avalanche you  
ever saw in your life!

PATRON

Shto?

SERGEI

LuhVEEnuh!

A collective GASP from the group.

GEORGE

Tons and tons of snow and rocks,  
roaring down the side of that  
mountain! Right on top of us!  
The train was buried!

VASILY

Terrible!

SERGEI

Oh no!

GEORGE

(With a tear in his voice.)  
That's when I woke up...but I  
just know he's going to die.

Sergei is crying. George is crying. They embrace.  
Everyone grabs a glass of vodka from the bar and downs  
it. Vasily fills them up again.

GEORGE

I've got to get into that  
train station!

SERGEI

Chust go.

GEORGE

They won't let me in without  
a pass and they won't give  
me one.

The three of them down their drinks and Vasily fills them up again. George offers him money, but he won't take it.

SERGEI

But, Vasily Vasilyevich, you  
yourself know of secret way  
into train station!

VASILY

Ay, I forgot! Of course!  
Ven I vass a boy, my friendts  
ehndt I vent often at night...  
ehndt vitout militsia findink us.

SERGEI

I said so.

VASILY

How stupidt of me to forget!  
Let's go!

Vasily takes off his apron and comes around the end of the bar, carrying a bottle of vodka. He and George down their glasses of vodka.

GEORGE

Now?

VASILY

Sure.

GEORGE

But the bar..?

VASILY

Sergei vill play concierge. Da?

SERGEI

(Donning apron.)  
Okey dokey.

VASILY

Ehndt don't giff away drinkss!  
Mehk the bumss pay! Ha! Ha!  
Come, Yuri, ve go findt Nikolai!

They exit.

## INT. VOLSK RAILWAY STATION - NIGHT

GEORGE and VASILY are sneaking around in the shadows at the rear of the platform area. They each take a swig from the bottle of vodka, then Vasily tosses it into a dark corner, shattering it. Both are drunk!

GEORGE

Shh.

VASILY

Sh!

They creep along a dimly-lit wall until they reach the edge of the passenger waiting area...ducking behind a series of large pillars as they go.

Vasily motions for George to remain there and he runs off toward a group of people. George peeks around the pillar trying to see what Vasily is doing, but he can't see him on the platform.

A hand taps him on the shoulder from behind. George jumps and whips around to see Vasily holding a boy of about ten. Vasily shoves the boy at George.

GEORGE

What...?

VASILY

Sh!

George looks at the boy. The boy looks at George, scared. Vasily runs off again.

GEORGE

(Whisper.)

Wait. Vasily, wait.

George looks at the boy: "What do we do now?" The boy realizes that George isn't holding him and takes off.

BOY

Militsia! Militsia!

George watches the boy run away, then looks to see if anyone's around. He peeks around the pillar, then runs to another pillar, on tiptoe. He disappears behind the pillar, then peeks out again.

A hand pats him on the shoulder from behind. George jumps even higher this time. It's Vasily! With another boy!!

This time, Vasily puts the boy firmly into George's hands, making sure he's holding on. He runs off again.

GEORGE

Vasily, don't. No more.

The boy kicks George on the shin. George reflexively holds the boy away from him.

GEORGE

It's all right. I'm not going to hurt you. It's just that Vasily thinks you might be Nikolai...

SECOND BOY

Sonofabitch!

GEORGE

Oh good, you speak English. It's all right, really.

SECOND BOY

Asshole!

GEORGE

Look kid, you don't understand...

SECOND BOY

Cocksucker!

GEORGE

Will you stop that!

SECOND BOY

Cocksucker!

GEORGE

Sh!

George pulls the boy closer, looking around to see if anyone can hear them. The boy kicks him on the shin, much harder this time.

GEORGE

Hey!

SECOND BOY

COCKSUCKER!!!

George clamps his hand over the boy's mouth and they struggle as: THE MILITSIA arrives! Four strong! With the FIRST BOY pointing at George!!

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY

RANDY is seated on the bed with his head in his hands.

RANDY

It's a good thing that bartender showed up--they'd've locked you up for good! And if it weren't for that special visa your friend got you, you'd've had a Soviet baby sitter all this time. They don't let people run around loose in this country...usually. So now you've got me! as your baby sitter. Know what that means? You can't go anywhere without me. And I can't go anywhere without you!

GEORGE

(O.S.)

Uhhh.

Randy gets up and paces.

RANDY

I don't understand you. How could you do something like this? I don't understand me. What am I doing in this business? I hate it. I never sleep well.

GEORGE

(O.S.)

Uhhhh.

RANDY

I should've done something to help you. Maybe I still can. Yeah, I'll go down there and tell them they have to give you that pass to the train station. Okay George? That'll make you feel better. You stay here while I'm gone. Shouldn't be too long. Now, don't go out!

Randy leaves. We finally see GEORGE through the open bathroom door. He's on his knees in front of the toilet, hands on the rim of the bowl, head posed for the next round of vomiting...which comes immediately.

INT. ROMANS' KITCHEN - NIGHT

HELEN is talking on the phone. She has a new hairdo, looser and more casual.

HELEN  
Please come home.

GEORGE  
(V.O. thru phone.)  
I can't.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY

GEORGE is seated on the bed, phone in hand.

GEORGE  
Won't you please come here?

HELEN  
(V.O. thru phone.)  
I can't.

INT. ROMANS' KITCHEN - NIGHT

HELEN stands silently, phone to her ear.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY

GEORGE sits silently, holding the phone. After a few moments of silence, he takes a deep breath.

GEORGE  
Well, uh, I guess goodbye then.

He hesitates for a second, then hangs up the phone.

INT. ROMANS' KITCHEN - NIGHT

HELEN stands silently, holding the phone in the air.  
MIKE and ANNE enter through the back door.

ANNE  
Helen?

HELEN  
Huh?

Helen looks at them, looks at the phone, hangs it up.  
She is visibly upset and distracted...sad.

ANNE  
George?

HELEN  
Uh huh.

MIKE  
Is he all right?

HELEN  
I don't think so.

ANNE  
Are you all right?

Helen shrugs.

MIKE  
Is he coming home?

HELEN  
No.

ANNE  
Then you should go there.

HELEN  
No!

ANNE  
Then I will. He needs someone.

Helen snaps to, lashes out at Anne.

HELEN  
You take care of your husband  
and I'll take care of mine!

ANNE  
Then take care of him! Go  
to him!

HELEN  
Mind your own goddamn business!

MIKE  
Hey, come on, you two. He's all  
right. Besides, it's his own  
fault, running off like that over  
some stupid dream--worrying about  
a Russian boy when he ought to be  
home worrying about his American  
wife.

Helen looks to Anne, to Mike, then back to Anne.



HELEN  
Is that what I sound like?

Anne nods.

MIKE  
What?

HELEN  
Oh dear.

Helen looks at Anne: "Really think I should?" Anne nods.

ANNE  
I'll call the travel agent.

Anne starts to run off...stops...turns back.

HELEN  
What?

ANNE  
I totally forgot what we came  
here for!

MIKE  
The baby!

HELEN  
What baby?

ANNE  
(Hesitantly.)  
Mike and I..are..going to..have one.

Helen stiffens for only a half-second, then beams:

HELEN  
Uh..oh! That's wonderful!

ANNE  
We, uh, weren't sure how you'd  
take it.

HELEN  
Don't be silly. I couldn't  
be happier! Congratulations!

Helen hugs and kisses both Anne and Mike.

ANNE  
Now, let's get you to Russia!

They all exit toward living room.

INT. VOLSK: NEAR A RIVER - DAY

GEORGE wanders aimlessly along the bank of the river. He is visibly depressed. He finds a rock and throws it into the water, watching the circles widen and then disappear. He leans against the stone retaining wall and stares off into the distance, tears forming in his eyes.

EXT. RUSSIAN MOUNTAINS - DAY

The AVALANCHE roars down the mountain and hits the train, pushing it off the track. Through the window, we see NIKOLAI screaming!!

EXT. VOLSK: NEAR A RIVER - DAY

GEORGE doubles up in pain, then faints.

INT. LARGE COMMERCIAL JET - NIGHT

HELEN loosens the seatbelt in her first-class seat, stands, takes her fur coat and cap from the overhead and puts them on as other PASSENGERS pass by on their way out the door. Helen picks up her purse and carry-on bag and walks to the exit door. She kisses the STEWARD on her way out.

HELEN

Thank you for a wonderful flight!

INT. VOLSK HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

It's a very modern private hospital room with all the fancy gizmos over and around the bed, which is electric. We HEAR a paging system faintly--in Russian of course. GEORGE is seated on the edge of the bed, just finishing a large dinner. He looks rested and a lot healthier. He has shaved off his beard, but did leave a mustache.

George pushes the tray back and picks up a copy of "Crime and Punishment" from the nightstand and settles back on the bed to read. He adjusts his pillows, then picks up the bed control device and pushes a button. The foot of the bed rises. He pushes another button and it goes back down. He pushes another button and the head of the bed rises. He adjusts his pillow again, leans back and reads. The bed slowly begins to sink.

INT. MOSCOW AIRPORT - NIGHT

HELEN is next for customs inspection and moves her luggage over in front of the INSPECTOR--the same one George had!

HELEN

Hello! What a beautiful country you have. Of course, I haven't really seen it yet, but...

The Inspector gives her a dirty look and she shuts up. He finds George's pajamas in her luggage and looks at her: "Why me?" Helen gives him a smile and he waves her on.

HELEN

Thank you, you've all been wonderful. Where do I catch the plane to Volsk?

He points.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

GEORGE is asleep as a SMALL NURSE comes into the room and switches the LIGHT ON. George rolls over to avoid the light. The nurse carries a small pill cup and walks to the bedside. She takes a water pitcher from the nightstand, pours some in a glass, and shakes him gently. He does not respond. She shakes him again. He pushes her away in his sleep. She puts the pill and water back on the nightstand and hurries out of the room. George rolls over, adjusting his pillow.

The SMALL NURSE returns quickly with a very LARGE NURSE, who was undoubtedly an Olympic shot-putting champion at one time. The Large Nurse nudges George gently and he waves her away, still not waking. She gives him a "poor little baby" pat on the head. He cuddles the pillow. She smiles, picks up the bed control device and raises the knee portion of the bed slowly. George adjusts to allow his knees to rise with the bed.

Then, ALL IN ONE CONTINUOUS MOTION: she picks him up, flips him over lengthwise (so that his head is now at the foot of the bed and his ass is up in the air on the raised portion of the bed), whips a hypo out of her pocket, lifts his gown and gives him the shot!

George SCREAMS! The two nurses exit. George lifts his head up and looks around..his eyes wide open... in a daze, as in: "What the hell was that?!!!"

## INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - MORNING

An untouched breakfast tray is sitting on the table. GEORGE is asleep with his head back at the head of the bed, but he's lying on his side and the knee-portion of the bed is still raised--so he's in a most awkward position.

RANDY enters. He's wearing jeans and a sweatshirt which reads, "Tijuana Trade Tech." His hair is loose, tousled, hanging over his ears and down onto his forehead. He is much calmer and does not look over his shoulder.

RANDY

George?

George moves, but doesn't answer. Randy shakes him.

RANDY

George!

GEORGE

(Not awake.)

Hnh?

RANDY

My but you look better. I've got a surprise for you.

GEORGE

Unh hunh.

RANDY

Come on! Wake up!

George half-sits up. His neck is stiff. He tries to move it and flinches. His eyes are barely open--mere slits. He's extremely groggy--a space cadet.

GEORGE

Okay.

RANDY

Look who's here!

GEORGE

I haven't even seen you yet.  
Randy?

HELEN enters perkily. She carries flowers and wears her new fur coat and cap.

HELEN

Hello George.

George squints and tilts his head back trying to see.

GEORGE

Helen?

HELEN

Hi darling.

She puts the flowers on a table and rushes to the bed to kiss him.

HELEN

Are you all right? I got so worried when you weren't at the hotel this morning. I don't know what I'd have...

GEORGE

(To himself.)  
I'm fine.

HELEN

(No interruption.)  
..done if Randy hadn't been there.

George TALKS TO HIMSELF, works on getting his eyes open.  
Helen removes her cap and coat, puts them on a chair.

RANDY

And I wouldn't have been there at all had I not been fired this morning.

GEORGE

Your hair's different.

Helen takes a piece of toast from tray and eats it.

HELEN

You were fired?

RANDY

Booted right out the door.

GEORGE

So is his.

Helen offers Randy a piece of toast.

HELEN

Oh I'm sorry.

Randy shakes his head, so Helen eats the toast.

RANDY  
Don't be. Best thing really.

GEORGE  
My face is different.

George stretches his neck and grimaces.

HELEN  
George, you shouldn't have the  
bed like that. It's bad for  
your back. Did you want to  
get fired?

George takes the control device, pushes a button--nothing.

RANDY  
Sort of. I want to become  
a full-time artist.

GEORGE  
We're all so different today.

George tries another button--nothing.

HELEN  
Will you be staying in Volsk?  
George, let me help you with that.

Helen takes the device, pushes a button and the foot rises.

RANDY  
No, my lover and I want to move  
to San Francisco.

HELEN  
San Francisco's a lovely city.  
We live in Los Angeles you know.  
What's the matter with this thing?

RANDY  
Here, let me try.

Randy takes the device, pushes a button and the knee  
portion of the bed lowers, but the foot is still up.

RANDY  
We can visit each other on holiday.

GEORGE  
Did he say he got fired?

HELEN  
George, what's wrong with you?

GEORGE

I think they gave me a general amesth...

RANDY

He seems to be drugged.

GEORGE

..ama..

HELEN

Coffee, that's what he needs.

Randy spots the coffee caraffe on the breakfast tray.

RANDY

Here's some.

GEORGE

..amo..

Helen gets a cup and Randy pours, hands cup to George.

HELEN

Is your, uh, "friend" Russian?

GEORGE

..ana..

RANDY

Ukrainian. He's already applied  
for emigration to the States. We..

Helen picks up a sausage from the tray and eats it.

HELEN

He?

GEORGE

..sthe..

RANDY

..planned...Oh, didn't I mention?  
No, I guess I didn't. His name is  
Gregor. Actually, that's one thing  
in our favor--

GEORGE

..TIC!

George smiles. Helen takes another sausage.

HELEN

You're excused.

RANDY

The Soviets hate to admit there are gays in this country. They'll probably let Greg emigrate just to get rid of us.

GEORGE

Who's Greg?

HELEN

What George? Why don't you get up and finish your coffee over here?

She takes his cup, then helps him out of bed and into the chair where she put her coat and cap, which he fondles. She puts the coffee cup back in his hand and Randy fills it. George sips on the coffee. Helen makes up the bed (with the foot still up) during:

HELEN

Oh George I'm so glad I came. All the way over on the plane--god that's a long trip--I was reading about the Soviet Union. What a fascinating history they have! And so many wonderful old places to visit. Why, in Moscow alone, there are over...

RANDY

Uh, sorry! George has to leave the country--immediately.

HELEN

What?

George is finally waking up.

GEORGE

I do?

RANDY

I'm afraid so. Your visa has been revoked. You're lucky you're not in prison.

GEORGE

Immediately?

HELEN

But you said it wasn't his fault.



RANDY

They don't care. They want him out...now! I've booked you on the three o'clock train this afternoon. I thought you might prefer that to flying back to Moscow.

HELEN

At least I'll get to see some of the countryside.

RANDY

George? Train station?

GEORGE

I've given up.

RANDY

I'm sorry to hear that. Well, you can enjoy the scenery anyway. Here are you tickets and travel papers.

He hands an envelope to Helen.

HELEN

Thank you.

RANDY

I've gotta run. I'll take care of the hospital, hotel and the luggage. You just get him to the train station on time.

HELEN

I will. Thank you for taking care of George for me.

RANDY

It was my pleasure.

They hug and kiss. George stands, awake but subdued.

GEORGE

Thanks Randy.

They start to shake hands, but decide to embrace instead. They kiss each other on both cheeks.

RANDY

Bye.

GEORGE/HELEN

Bye.

Randy exits. George puts his arm around Helen.

GEORGE  
I'm sorry I ran out on you.

HELEN  
I'm sorry you didn't find the boy.

GEORGE  
I see you finally opened  
your presents.

HELEN  
I had them on when you called.  
Just too stubborn to admit it.

They kiss.

HELEN  
Mmm, tickles.

GEORGE  
I'll shave it off.

HELEN  
Don't you dare, I love it!

GEORGE  
Are you sure?

HELEN  
(Baby talk.)  
It's so cute.

She pulls his mustache. He grimaces.

HELEN  
Just perfect for a godfather-to-be.

GEORGE  
Mike and Anne?

HELEN  
Uh huh, and they're going to call  
it Nicky...just for you.

GEORGE  
That's great.

They kiss lightly, then long and hard. They inch over to the side of the bed, then down on it, still kissing, still embracing. Unfortunately, Helen's on top of the bed control device and the bed comes to life--all functions at once!!

INT. VOLSK RAILWAY STATION - DAY

GEORGE and HELEN stand near the entrance of the waiting room, looking at passersby. George is slumped against the wall, depressed and preoccupied.

HELEN

It's time.

GEORGE

Huh?

HELEN

We have to get on the train.

GEORGE

We have to wait for the luggage.

HELEN

It came an hour ago.

GEORGE

Then we'll have to check in.

HELEN

We did that too.

GEORGE

I guess we should go then.

They walk slowly to the platform area, then alongside the modern train toward their assigned coach. The area is very crowded and they have to zigzag their way around groups of people and stacks of luggage.

As they walk, and talk, we see that on the next platform over, beyond this train, NIKOLAI and BABUSHKA are walking along, staying just about even with George and Helen, who DO NOT SEE THEM.

HELEN

...and I can fix up the guest room for Nicky to stay with us on weekends if Mike and Anne want to go away. We never use that room anyway and we could put a gym and swing set in the side yard right behind the garage. The barbecue can go in the back next to the patio, don't you think?

They reach their coach and get on the train.

INT. PRIVATE COACH COMPARTMENT - DAY

A PORTER shows GEORGE and HELEN into the compartment and shows them where he stowed the luggage. George gives him a tip and he leaves. Helen begins taking things out of the small suitcase and a subdued George sits down with his back to the window, through which we can see:

NIKOLAI and BABUSHKA waiting for their train, but they look different up close. She's a little younger and he's a little older and their clothes don't seem as old and tattered as we remember from the dreams. But, it must be them. It has to be them!

HELEN

I'm sorry it didn't work out,  
honey. You did your best.

GEORGE

It'll be good to get back to  
writing...if I still have a job.

HELEN

You do.

George was about to look out the window, but turns back.

GEORGE

You talked to Harry?

HELEN

Often.

GEORGE

And he wasn't angry?

HELEN

He was at first, then..

GEORGE

What?

George turns slightly, about to look out the window...

HELEN

Promise you won't get mad?

..but turns back quickly to Helen.

GEORGE

Why should I be angry with you?

HELEN

Promise.

GEORGE  
I promise.

HELEN  
Well...I...uh, wrote a few, uh,  
columns for you when, uh, this  
first started and...

George almost looks out the window again, but turns back.

GEORGE  
Huh?

HELEN  
Just two at first. Then Harry  
said he liked them, so I just  
kept writing them.

She tenses, waiting for an explosion. He's still quiet.

GEORGE  
Thank you.

HELEN  
Did you hear what I said?

GEORGE  
Yes. We could do some together  
when we get back, if you want.

HELEN  
You mean it? Oh George, that's...  
GEORGE! LOOK!! IS THAT THEM!!!

Helen points out the window. George jumps up, turns  
around and looks.

GEORGE  
Who?.....NIKOLAI!!!

George tears out of the compartment, Helen right behind.

INT. VOLSK RAILWAY STATION - DAY

GEORGE leaps down from the train, stops just long enough  
to look to see which is the shortest way around the train,  
and takes off running again. HELEN hurries down the steps  
from the train and runs after him, not quite as fast though.

At the end of the train, George leaps down from the platform  
to the tracks and then around the end of the last car, just  
as an old locomotive steams to a halt, just barely missing  
him.

One of two SOLDIERS on the first platform sees George and raises his rifle, aims at George. Helen sees it:

HELEN  
OH MY GOD, DON'T SHOOT HIM!!!

George looks over his shoulder, sees the rifle, then darts behind one of the cars and up onto the second platform. The second soldier turns to his partner at the same time, pulls the rifle down and scolds him. He speaks into a walkie-talkie, alerting three SOLDIERS on the far end of the second platform, who then start working their way through the crowd toward George.

Helen climbs down a ladder from the platform to the tracks and works her way across to the second platform, where George is running, leaping over luggage and pushing people aside. He sees Babushka hand Nikolai the cloth bundle.

GEORGE  
NO! DON'T! NIKOLAI WAIT!!

He runs up to them, swoops Nikolai up in his arms and hugs him, kissing him on both cheeks. The boy laughs. Babushka tries to pull Nikolai out of George's arms, but he's holding too tight. She hits him with her fists.

BABUSHKA  
IZverg!

GEORGE  
No, he can't go! You can't go, Nikolai!

BABUSHKA  
IZverg!!

The CROWD begins to react. The three Soldiers rush George, two grabbing his arms and the third taking Nikolai. They try to pull George away.

GEORGE  
Don't get on the train! There's going to be an AVALANCHE!! You're going to die!

George struggles with the soldiers, slowing their progress. Helen runs up to the crowd, near Babushka.

HELEN  
Didn't you hear him? Avalanche!  
AVALANCHE!!

Two or three people in the crowd start screaming:

CROWD

LuhVEEenuh! LuhVEEenuh!

More people start shouting and the passengers begin to rush off the train, tripping over each other and banging luggage, dragging kids, etc.

The CREW gets off the train, en masse. An OFFICIAL argues with them, ordering them to get back on the train, but they refuse to move. The YELLING gets louder.

Babushka crosses herself and takes Nikolai's bundle from him. She pulls him close to her and they turn to leave. Helen runs over to them, so excited she can't control herself.

HELEN

Thank you, thank you! You're  
doing the right thing!

She looks around for George.

HELEN

George?

She sees him being dragged away by the soldiers.

HELEN

George!!

He struggles and manages to turn back. Helen runs toward them at full speed.

HELEN

You did it! They didn't go!  
You saved him! You saved everyone!!

She can't stop! She hits George and the soldiers at full gallop, dislodging him from their grasp. They swing each other around, hugging, kissing, jumping up and down. They kiss the soldiers, too.

George looks around quickly to see what happened to Nikolai and Babushka. He can't see them at first, but finally catches sight of Nikolai. Nikolai sees George at the same moment and gets a big smile on his face. He waves at George. George laughs and waves at Nikolai.

CREDITS BEGIN OVER:

EXT. VOLSK AIRPORT - DAY

AERIAL VIEW of a long convoy of military vehicles leading and following a black limousine. The parade of cars leaves the main road and drives along an access road to the main terminal building. They pull up in front of the building and stop.

SOLDIERS surround the car as GEORGE and HELEN get out and walk into the building.

INT. VOLSK AIRPORT - DAY

The CROWD begins to stir immediately as GEORGE and HELEN enter the building surrounded by a squad of SOLDIERS. Groups of people buzz amongst themselves, trying to guess who this dignitary might be with such an impressive escort. A YOUNG SOLDIER near the passport desk salutes as the entourage passes and is immediately scolded by his superior.

EXT. VOLSK AIRPORT - DAY

A small jet takes off from the runway.

EXT. RUSSIAN COUNTRYSIDE NEAR VOLSK - DAY

BABUSHKA and NIKOLAI ride along in the sledge, heading for home. It's a bright clear day. There's snow on the ground, but the sun is warm. Even the old horse feels good now.

Nikolai scoots over closer to his grandmother and leans against her arm, holding it with both hands. She looks down at him. He smiles. She smiles!

The small jet plane flies over them.

NIKOLAI LOOKS UP!

FREEZE.

Roll remaining CREDITS.

FADE OUT.

THE END