

IVAN VI

The Baby Tsar of Russia



A Drama in Two Acts
by
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CHARACTER NOTES

Ivan VI:

IVAN VI was crowned Tsar of Russia, anointed and deified at two-months of age, dethroned at fifteen months, and imprisoned by ELIZABETH II at the age of four. He remained alone in prison until he was murdered by his prison guards as the result of a standing order that he be eliminated if anyone tried to set him free. As the play begins, IVAN is twenty-four, tall and thin, with hair to his waist. His clothes are torn and dirty.

Two sides of IVAN's persona alternate throughout the play. When he's with the guards (the only "real" people in his life), he is illiterate, stammers out disconnected sentences, and is uncertain about his identity. When he is alone in his cell with the SHADES that live in his mind, he is articulate, angry, and childish, but thoroughly royal. *Note:* It will be up to the actor playing IVAN to stutter and stammer where indicated. For clarity, most of his lines have been written in plain English.

Elizabeth II:

ELIZABETH II, Peter the Great's eldest daughter, exists only as a SHADE in Ivan's mind. She is appropriately magnificent, but tattered and ragged since she "lives" with IVAN in his cell and his memories of grandeur have deteriorated. She should be costumed in gray. She was thirty-two when he last saw her (he was eighteen months old), and has been dead for two years when the play begins. She speaks using the *Royal We*. At this point, Catherine II (the Great) is in power.

Count Alexis Razumovsky:

ALEXIS was ELIZABETH's *favorite* when she took IVAN's throne, thus he also "lives" as a SHADE in the boy's cell. He is also a degraded version of what he actually was, likely in his late twenties when Ivan last saw him. Also costumed in gray.

Captain Danilo Vlasev: VLASEV is the guard in charge of the nameless boy known only as *Prisoner No. 1*. In his early forties, he is an army professional, forbidden to leave the prison as long as IVAN is alive. In every respect, he and CHEKIN (see below) are also imprisoned. Thus, IVAN is being guarded by two men authorized to kill him under certain circumstances and whose primary goal is to be free of him so they can resume living normal lives.

Lieutenant Luka Chekin: VLASEV's subordinate, roughly IVAN's age. Only he, VLASEV, and the prison Commandant know who IVAN is, although there are persistent rumors throughout the prison opining that *Prisoner #1* is *Ivanushka*, the Baby Tsar.

PRODUCTION NOTES

The setting is a tiny cell in the grim Schlüsselburg Fortress where IVAN VI has been kept in solitary confinement for eighteen of the past twenty years. There is a narrow, raised pallet for a bed against the back wall. The cell is cluttered and filthy, with broken and cracked walls, and piles of rubble at different levels that can be used for seats and tables. One of these is set against the wall **SL** at the top of the bed. There should be a barrel or empty box of some sort at the lower end of the bed to provide a seat when needed. The only light comes from a small, barred window set high in an angled wall, stage left. There is a rudimentary table of some sort against the wall under the window. The large, heavy metal door is set into an angled wall **SR**.

The details of the set can be left to the designer, but there's one specific requirement. The characters of CATHERINE and ALEXIS must be designed into the walls, perhaps as bas-relief statuary (Schlüsselburg was an old, crumbling castle even then), ELIZABETH **USR**, ALEXIS **USL**. This should be done as subtly as possible so it seems they come out of nowhere the first time they speak (they are figments of IVAN's imagination). They will appear and disappear in and out of the set as needed.

In addition to general lighting for the playing area, and "daylight" pooling on the floor from the high window, there should be four spotted areas; the door, the bed, and the two SHADES (ALEXIS and ELIZABETH) where they are set into the wall at the ends of the bed.

Through the entire play, prison noises sound in the background; a constant sonic environment (**S/E**) with heavy doors clanging, distant screams, scraps of conversation, guards issuing orders, an occasional scuffle, etc. This is important and will increase in volume between scenes to voice the rumors that IVAN *is* the reigning Tsar (he is), and that a Lieutenant named Mirovich is plotting to set him free. See the *Sound Addendum* at the end of this script for dialogues to be inserted where indicated. The **S/E** continues through all scene breaks and the Intermission.

SYNOPSIS

It's 1764 and Tsar Ivan VI is twenty-four years old. He's been living alone in a prison cell for twenty years, seeing no one but the two guards who have been ordered to kill him if anyone should try and set him free. Many in Russia consider him to be the legitimate Tsar. The grandson of Ivan V, Peter the Great's older brother, he was crowned, anointed and deified at the age of two-months, removed by his cousin, the future Elizabeth II, at fifteen months and thrown into prison. Many attempts to free him have taken place, but none have so far succeeded. Is he merely the uneducated simpleton he appears to be, or is it possible he might return to the throne one day and replace Catherine II (the Great)?

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Tsar Ivan VI Antonovich Ulrich Wolfenbuttel of Russia, son of Prince Antony Ulrich of Brunswick-Lüneburg and Grand Duchess Anna Leopoldovna (the daughter of Ivan V), was crowned at the age of two-months, deposed at fifteen months, and thrown into prison where he was kept in solitary confinement until he was murdered at twenty-four by his prison guards.

During his short lifetime, Ivan VI was a constant source of anxiety for Elizabeth II (who removed him from his throne) and Catherine II (the Great) who succeeded Elizabeth after the murder of her own husband, Peter III. Ivan had been crowned, anointed and deified, and many Russians considered him to be the legitimate Tsar. By any standards of sanity, he *was* the legitimate Tsar. He was male, a direct descendent of Ivan V, the brother and co-Tsar of Peter the Great, and had been recognized by the Russian Orthodox Church.

But then, as now, it seems that sanity and power are always in conflict. Thus, this little boy, who grew up alone in a prison cell with guards ordered to kill him if anyone attempted to set him free, became a political tool, so important that, in spite of the sometimes herculean efforts to restore him, he lived his entire life bereft of education, comfort, friendship, or even a modicum of affection. It is in his memory, and in memory of all such children who are abandoned and alone, that this play has been written.

ACT ONE

SCENE ONE

As the curtain rises, it's early evening. The stage is dim. A narrow shaft of sunlight streams through the window SL, throwing a patch of light on the floor. IVAN is sprawled across the bed, fully dressed in the filthy rags he apparently never removes. His hand is in his pants and he's masturbating (no direct physical exposure anywhere in the play). This should continue just long enough to establish what he's doing. As he reaches his climax, the cell door abruptly opens and CHEKIN enters carrying IVAN's evening meal in a small bowl. During this scene, the light gradually dims as night comes on.

CHEKIN

(Sneering) At it again, you son of a whore? *(Calling out as he X's SL and carelessly drops the bowl on the table)* He's defiling himself again, Captain. He's got his hand in his pants. *(To IVAN, hissing)* You're going straight to hell, nitwit.

VLASEV enters, crosses directly to IVAN, who is still in the throes of his orgasm, grabs him by his shirt and throws him onto the floor.

VLASEV

(Angrily) Damn it, boy. Stop that. How many times have I warned you about this?

IVAN

(Stuttering and sobbing as he desperately tries to recover) I ... I ... I ... c ... c ... c ... can't ... s ... s ... stop ... oh ... p ... p ... please ... please ... please ...

VLASEV

(Kicking IVAN as he speaks) If you don't stop, you're going to burn forever *(kick)* forever *(kick)* and forever *(kick)*. *(Grabbing IVAN's shirt, pulling him up, and staring directly into his face)* Say something, Moron. Tell God you're sorry. Say "I'm a sinner, God. Save my miserable soul from hell, God."

IVAN

(Barely able to speak, he cries and stutters) I'm a sinner, God. Save my miserable soul from hell, God.

VLASEV *drops IVAN to the floor and stands over him as he rolls into a fetal position.*

VLASEV

(Sternly) Say it again.

IVAN

(Babbling) I'm a sinner, God. Please save my miserable soul from hell, God.

CHEKIN

(Scornfully) He doesn't know what he's saying. He's an idiot. Do you think he knows what *hell* is?

VLASEV

Do you know what *hell* is, boy?

IVAN

The ... p ... p ... priest said it ... it ... it ... was ... *hot* ...

VLASEV

... and, what is *hot*?

IVAN

I ... I ... don't know ... *hot* ...

CHEKIN

(Laughing) You'll find out soon enough.

VLASEV

Not soon enough for me. When was his last confession?

CHEKIN

Father Maksim won't come, says the boy has nothing to confess. Even the Church has lost interest.

VLASEV

(Snorting, then sighing) Just what I need. Now, *I'm* responsible for his soul. *(To IVAN)* You hear that, you little pervert? *(Slapping him angrily)* Who it is that has to save your dirty soul?

IVAN

(Putting his arms over his head and stuttering) You, Sir? You. You have to do it.

VLASEV

(Exploding) No, I *don't*. You have to do it, dolt. I just have to *make* you do it *(Kick)*.

IVAN

(Stammering) Please, Sir. Please. I'm sorry. So sorry *(he cowers and sobs)*.

VLASEV

(Studying IVAN for a moment) He has no idea what I'm talking about.

CHEKIN

Sir?

VLASEV

Or why I'm talking about it. He is too dim to appreciate my efforts on his behalf. *(To IVAN)* But, it doesn't matter *who* he thinks he is. *(Yelling)* There are consequences for lying.

CHEKIN

There are rumors all over the prison.

VLASEV

Ignore them. Look at him. Do you think *that* could be God's anointed?

CHEKIN

I'm just saying ...

VLASEV

We'll, don't. It's not your business. *(To IVAN)* Ingrate.

VLASEV spits and exits. CHEKIN follows and slams the door behind him. IVAN screams, leaps to his feet, runs to the door and hysterically bangs on it.

IVAN

(Enraged) You can't do this to me. I'll cut off your heads. I'm the sovereign of Russia. You can't treat me like this, you can't ... you can't ... you can't ...

IVAN ad libs as he screams and bangs on the door. Finally, he exhausts himself and slides down the door into a panting heap on the floor. ELIZABETH appears out of the wall for the first time.

ELIZABETH

(Amused) Well, boy, you're hardly *acting* like a Tsar. *(X'ing grandly to the table, she picks up IVAN's breakfast bowl.)*

IVAN

(Insisting softly) ... I ... am ... the ... Tsar ...

ELIZABETH

(*Sniffing*) Cold turnips ... and ... and ... something. (*Laughing*) We would take their heads for *this*.

Picking himself up and X'ing to her, IVAN grabs the bowl, backs up, sits on the bed and eats with his fingers. She X's him SR.

IVAN

(*Childlike*) Why do they do that? They won't let me do anything.

ELIZABETH

Even a Tsar must use *some* discretion. You do that ... that thing with your hand a lot.

IVAN

(*Petulant*) I don't know why. It just feels good. (*He raises the bowl to his face and licks it clean*) I need it.

ELIZABETH

(*Waving her hand*) Yes, all of you say that. Men are pigs. Your *needs* are an excuse for everything.

ALEXIS

(*Stepping out of the wall, he X's to ELIZABETH*) Don't be so hard on the boy, my dear. He has a point (*he kisses her on both cheeks*).

ELIZABETH

You *would* take his side. You're no better than he is.

ALEXIS

All of us go through something like that ... for a while. The priests scream, but who cares. (*Laughing*) They wear dresses.

ELIZABETH

Shouldn't he be done with it by now?

ALEXIS

(*Sympathetically*) He has nothing else to do, Elizabeth. Not even a book.

ELIZABETH

Didn't they give him a Bible? Our order allowed for a Bible.

ALEXIS

I doubt the Epistles of St. Paul made much of an impression. For that, one must be able to read.

ELIZABETH

(Defensively) He was to have been taught the alphabet.

ALEXIS

(Dryly) Reciting *A B C* is just the thing to keep a boy's hands out of his pants.

ELIZABETH

(Seductively) Well, at least *you* moved on.

ALEXIS

(Amused) I had options.

ELIZABETH

Thank God

ALEXIS

I haven't heard any complaints. Certainly, no one calls *me* a miserable sinner ...

ELIZABETH

(They embrace) ... which you certainly are. But, you sin with so much ... charm *(they kiss)*.

IVAN

(Throwing the bowl at the door) Stop that or I'm going to tell my mother and have your heads cut off.

ELIZABETH

(Turning to IVAN, she sits to his right as ALEXIS X's USL to sit above the bed) I doubt that, Ivanushka. We are Elizabeth Petrovna and your mother was *nothing* but an unrepentant slut.

At this point, ELIZABETH and ALEXIS must be close to their original positions so they can "vanish" when CHEKIN enters below.

IVAN

(Spitefully) ... and you're *nothing* but my cousin.

ALEXIS

At the moment. But, a very important cousin, none the less. Do you know what a Tsar is, Your Majesty?

IVAN

It's ... it's ... it's ...

ELIZABETH

Don't, Count. He wasn't old enough when he fell to have *any* idea about it.

ALEXIS

(Turning away) I hate this. I hated it when we did it.

ELIZABETH

Nonetheless, we *did* do it ...

IVAN

(Petulant) I know who I am, and I can do what I want, and if you ...

*CHEKIN throws open the door and enters.
ELIZABETH and ALEXIS vanish as IVAN falls
on the floor SC and grovels.*

CHEKIN

(X'ing SR of IVAN) All right, Idiot, where's your piss pot?

IVAN

(Stuttering desperately) I ... don't ... know ... where ... it ... is ...

CHEKIN

(Bending over and glaring down) What do you do? Pee on the walls?

IVAN

(Barely intelligible) I ... don't ... know ... it's ... in ... the ... corner ...

CHEKIN

(Viciously) Crawl over and get it, pig.

*IVAN X's CHEKIN crawling toward the foot of
the bed. CHEKIN shoves him with his foot.*

IVAN

(Trying to get away) Please ... stop ... please ... please ...

*IVAN picks up a soiled chamber pot and
trembles as holds it up to CHEKIN.*

CHEKIN

Moron. *(Muttering under his breath)* The sooner you're gone, the better.

*He spits on IVAN, X's him and storms out of
the cell, slamming the door behind him. IVAN
just lays there, sobbing.*

IVAN

(Wistfully) Why is being Tsar so hard?

ELIZABETH

(Reappearing) Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown, Ivanushka. An obscure quote from a 16th Century poet.

IVAN

It hurts.

ALEXIS

(Reappearing, he sits SL) Yes, it surely does. I really don't know why anyone would want it.

IVAN

I *don't* want it. I want to go home *(he throws himself onto the bed as ELIZABETH sits to his right)*.

ELIZABETH

We didn't want it, either. That's why it went to you.

ALEXIS

(To ELIZABETH) It would have been kinder if you'd decided sooner. You had ample opportunity before this poor child was born.

ELIZABETH

(Sharply) Anna Petrovna wanted it, and civil war is expensive. *(Coyly)* Besides, she was the older sister and *we* were otherwise occupied ... with *you* as I recall.

ALEXIS

Don't you think throwing a little boy into prison was a bit extreme?

ELIZABETH

(Snapping) His mother threatened to send us to a convent. Did we have a choice?

ALEXIS

He was fifteen months old, my love. Crowned, anointed and deified, the grandson of Ivan the Fifth. Hardly illegitimate. You let him reign for scarcely a year.

ELIZABETH

(Angrily) We waited long enough, Alexis. *You* certainly didn't suffer from it. Besides, Anna Leopoldovna was impossible, and we were the only legitimate candidate.

IVAN

(Royally) I want my mother.

ELIZABETH

(To ALEXIS) Yes, well, that was a mistake. *(Putting her arm around IVAN's shoulders)* Anna was *not* a nice person, Ivan Antonovich. You're better off without her.

ALEXIS

(Laughing) You're certainly better off without her.

ELIZABETH

(Snapping) Remember who you are, Count Razumovsky. You were nothing but a pretty peasant when we raised you up. We can have you whipped.

ALEXIS

(He caresses himself suggestively and speaks softly) Do you really want to scar this beautiful body, my dear. You've enjoyed it so *much* over the years.

ELIZABETH

(Haughtily) Well, we hardly have a choice, do we? The boy never met any of our ... other lovers. So, you're all there is here ... in ... this ... *place*.

ALEXIS

He was two months old when he was crowned, Elizabeth. If you had taken the throne then, all this sordid imprisonment could have been avoided.

ELIZABETH

(Angrily) Anna Petrovna named him heir about twenty minutes after her first stroke. Then, God struck her again, and she died. The child was proclaimed Tsar the next day and everyone in sight was pledging eternal allegiance. There was *hardly* time to *plan*.

IVAN

(Demanding) What are you talking about?

ALEXIS

Does he know *you* took it from him?

ELIZABETH

He didn't the last time he saw us ... and, unless the guards and priests lied, he's been told *nothing* since he was four.

IVAN

(Petulant) What are you talking about? Why are those men so mean? They never leave me alone.

ELIZABETH

(Irritated) They want you *dead*, Ivan. They're looking for an excuse to kill you.

ALEXIS

(Concerned) Elizabeth?

ELIZABETH

Well, they are. As long as he's alive, they can't leave the prison.

IVAN

(Insisting) What are you talking about? What does *dead* mean?

ALEXIS

(To ELIZABETH) You've wanted him dead for twenty years, since you condemned him to this dreadful place.

IVAN

(Yelling) What is *dead*?

ALEXIS

He was a baby, Elizabeth, hardly a threat.

ELIZABETH

(Hissing) His *mother* was a threat. We had no choice.

IVAN

(Demanding) What is *dead*?

ALEXIS

Good, God, boy, don't you know anything?

ELIZABETH

We thought too much education might be ... inconvenient.

ALEXIS

You certainly avoided that.

ELIZABETH

(She rises and paces SL) An anointed Tsar running around loose was *not* in our interest, particularly an educated Tsar. There hasn't been a moment since we took power that someone or other hasn't threatened to put him back on the throne. If he could read and write ... well ...

ALEXIS

(Dryly) This way, he's a dead issue.

ELIZABETH

(Facing them) Basically.

IVAN

(Plaintively) If I'm dead, can I go home?

ALEXIS

(Kindly) In a manner of speaking, Ivanushka, yes. Some people think that's what *dead* means.

ELIZABETH

Don't be jejune, Alexis. *We're* dead, and this place is hardly *home*.

ALEXIS

Does Archbishop Alexander know you think that? Anyway, whose fault is it? I didn't take him from his mother and throw him in prison.

ELIZABETH

You certainly helped, you and the Preobrazhensky (*pree-ah-brah-zhen-ski*) Guard. If we had failed, you would have been beheaded long before you fell from our favor.

ALEXIS

(Dryly) And, yet, here we are.

ELIZABETH

Yes, here we are.

IVAN

(Petulant) I want to be dead.

ELIZABETH

Oh, Ivanushka. *(To ALEXIS)* See what you've done.

IVAN

I want to be dead so I can go home.

ELIZABETH

(Tenderly, she sits next to him again) Oh ... our dear child ... our dear, dear child.

IVAN

You go away, now. I'm tired. *(ELIZABETH soothes and pets IVAN as he speaks softly and falls asleep)* Leave me alone. I want to be dead and go home.

ELIZABETH

Oh, my sweet, sweet child. *(Speaking softly)* We couldn't regret it more, but ... we're terribly afraid that's going to happen all too soon.

As IVAN sleeps, the lights dim to about half and the S/E becomes more distinct, replete with distant voices echoing disconnected phrases (see Sound Addendum #1). This builds for a moment, holds with the lights, then builds again as the lights fade to black.

END SCENE ONE

SCENE TWO

When the stage is completely dark, and the sounds are almost overwhelming, the SHADES vanish into the wall. We hear the cell door slamming open. The S/E drops to normal and the lights come up full. IVAN is on the floor in front of VLASEV, who is seated on the rubble above the bed, angled toward SC with his right boot propped up on the boy's leg. IVAN is licking his boot clean and drying it with his hair. The cell door is still open.

VLASEV

(Condescending) At least you're good for something, boy.

IVAN

(Stuttering as he looks up) Thank you, Sir. Thank you. Thank you.

VLASEV

(Viciously, he slaps IVAN) I didn't say you could stop, you little pervert.

IVAN

(Stammering as he redoubles his effort on the boot) Sorry, Sir. I'm sorry. So sorry.

CHEKIN

(Entering, carrying the chamber pot. He throws it on the floor at the foot of the bed)
Good morning, Captain. Did *it* have its hands in *its* pants again?

VLASEV

Not this time. He was sleeping when I came in.

CHEKIN

Perhaps your words on self-abuse have borne fruit.

VLASEV

(Snorting) I doubt it. He doesn't know *why* what he's doing is a sin.

CHEKIN

As I recall, the priests don't explain it particularly well. *(Laughing)* "Don't do that" is all I remember. *(Gesturing at IVAN)* I see you're putting *it* to good use.

VLASEV

(Snapping) Have *some* respect, Lieutenant. He's not an animal.

CHEKIN

Sorry, Sir. I see you're putting *His Majesty* to good use.

VLASEV

Your smart mouth is going to get you whipped.

CHEKIN

I am sorry, Sir. I'll try to do better. I see your putting *Prisoner #1* to good use?

VLASEV

What else is there to do in this god-forsaken place.

CHEKIN

Did you speak to the governor?

VLASEV

Panin is no help. We're never going to get out of here. Catherine doesn't want the boy killed unless someone makes a serious attempt to free him. She thinks we should encourage him to become a monk.

CHEKIN

(Laughing) Good god, he can't even talk.

VLASEV

Monks don't talk. They just mumble and rock back and forth. *(He abruptly slaps IVAN)* Be careful, Idiot. You're drooling on my pants.

IVAN

(Stuttering) I'm sorry. I'm sorry. So sorry.

CHEKIN

How would that help?

VLASEV

If he takes holy orders he won't be *eligible* for the throne, so she can stop worrying about having to order the death of a crowned Tsar.

CHEKIN

(Tentatively) Why don't we just starve him to death.

VLASEV

(Angrily) No one is happy about this, Chekin. Least of all, me. My, God. He *was ... is ...* the sovereign. Given his legitimacy and his gender, Elizabeth had no right to take his throne and Catherine isn't even Russian.

CHEKIN

(Nervously) With all due respect, Sir, many have been put to *death* for saying less.

VLASEV

(VLASEV *sighs and gives IVAN his other foot*) I've said that to no one but you, and if you tell anyone, I'll deny it. Who do you think they'll believe, Lieutenant? Anyway, I'm not advocating Catherine be replaced. She'll make us rich, if we last long enough.

CHEKIN

What does it matter? I'm never going to see my wife again. (*He strikes IVAN across the top of his head*) You hear that, you little bugger. (*Angry*) Because of you I can't fuck my wife.

IVAN

(*Stammering*) Sorry, Sir. So sorry. Please. So sorry (*he attacks the second boot as VLASEV leans back and studies him*).

VLASEV

(*To CHEKIN*) We have new orders.

CHEKIN

Sir?

VLASEV

From now on, if he gets sick, we do *not* call a doctor. We call a priest.

CHEKIN

(*Disturbed*) Sir?

VLASEV

Nor is he allowed to *lie* about his rank. If he does, he's to be punished severely. He is *Prisoner #1* ... nothing more.

CHEKIN

It seems ... severe.

VLASEV

It comes from *very* high up.

CHEKIN

Panin won't even consider a reassignment?

VLASEV

That we might have to execute him is a state secret. Only four people know about the order, and we want to keep it that way. (*He stands and IVAN falls backward*) You hear that, Your Majesty? We're stuck here until you're dead.

IVAN

(*Desperately stuttering*) I can't help it. I'm sorry. So sorry. Forgive me, Sir.

VLASEV

(To CHEKIN) On the other hand, Panin is sending us each another thousand roubles. If we ever *do* go home, we'll be able to live the way *he* used to live. (To IVAN) You remember that, boy ... the way you used to live?

IVAN

(*Stuttering*) No Sir. No, I don't remember that, Sir. I can't remember that.

VLASEV

(*X'ing CHEKIN toward the door*) Maybe he'll just die of the plague. That would satisfy everyone. (*Stopping at the door and turning*) You coming, Chekin?

CHEKIN

One moment, Sir. I'll be right there (VLASEV *exits as CHEKIN looks down at IVAN*). (*Viciously*) Because of you I can't see my wife, Moron. Do you think that's fair?

IVAN

(*Stammering*) No ... no ... uh, no ...

CHEKIN

(*He kicks IVAN*) Get it out boy. (*Hissing as he leans down*) Answer me. Do you think that's fair?

IVAN

(*Frightened, he stutters*) No, Sir. No, no, no. It isn't fair. Not fair at all.

CHEKIN

(*Whispering loudly*) You're going to find out, you little fucker.

VLASEV

(*Calling from offstage right*) Chekin, I need you.

CHEKIN

Coming, Sir (*he kicks IVAN again*). Just you wait (*he slams the door as he exits*).

IVAN

(*Rising up and scrambling toward the door on his knees, he screams*) Take care. I am a prince of this empire. I am your sovereign. I ... am ... your ... sovereign ...

Crying, IVAN slumps down and falls back against the bed. He lays there sobbing, then stuffs his hand in his pants and begins masturbating again. After a moment or two of this, ELIZABETH and ALEXIS appear. IVAN ignores them, masturbating as they speak.

ALEXIS

(Disdainfully) I don't see how this can continue. He is a Romanov. He is the grand nephew of Peter the Great.

ELIZABETH

He is a danger. He was dangerous for us. He's dangerous for Catherine.

ALEXIS

(Angrily, he sits above the bed) He's a human being. He didn't ask for this. He doesn't even know it's happening. You people are monsters when it comes to power. Why did you do this? Wasn't there any other choice?

ELIZABETH

Another choice? An interesting question, Count. Another choice? You didn't object when you helped dethrone him *(She sits on the bed to IVAN's right)*.

ALEXIS

You said you were going to send him back to Brunswick, not imprison him forever. *(Looking down at Ivan who is still oblivious to their presence)* Not reduce him to this ... this ... sad, lonely infant.

ELIZABETH

Well, he seems to be enjoying himself, now.

ALEXIS

That is cruel and heartless. It's his *only* escape, and I wager he doesn't even know on what to focus. Has he ever seen a woman?

ELIZABETH

(Absently, looking at Ivan) Doesn't hair grow on your palms, or something? We believe a priest told us that, once.

ALEXIS

(Shocked) Elizabeth!

ELIZABETH

(Testily) All right. All right. We surely didn't know he would come to this.

ALEXIS

(Standing) You're lying, my love. Getting rid of him was an issue from the first moment. What did you *think* would happen?

ELIZABETH

(Dismissive) We didn't think about it. After he was removed, he was Panin's concern. We had important things to deal with. *(Angrily)* You are flirting with *lèse-majesté*, Count!

ALEXIS

Your threats are pointless, Elizabeth. We are figments of the boy's imagination and cannot change. We ... do ... not ... exist ...

They stare angrily at one another for a moment, then ALEXIS smiles, X's IVAN to ELIZABETH, and tenderly takes her hand. They embrace as IVAN comes to orgasm. Then, they turn and hold hands as they look down and watch him sink, exhausted, to the floor.

ELIZABETH

(Sadly) Oh, Alexis. Please. How could we have known what would come of him? He was the sovereign. We just thought ... I ... I just thought ...

ALEXIS

(Softly) You thought, perhaps, that *God* actually protects His anointed? You said something like that, once. Just leave it to God.

ELIZABETH

(Recovering) Whenever he came to mind, we saw a little boy sitting on a toy throne. We never *thought* about him in prison ... except when Panin insisted.

ALEXIS

(X'ing IVAN and sitting again above the bed) Power is *so* thoughtless and selfish. You were a popular Tsar, Elizabeth. Your people loved you, and, sometimes I wondered why.

ELIZABETH

(Amazed) Alexis! *(She sits on the bed to Ivan's right.)*

ALEXIS

You discarded this boy without a thought, then you brought in Peter and destroyed them both.

During the following conversation, IVAN gradually revives and begins to listen.

ELIZABETH

Peter was a mistake. The only intelligent thing he ever did was marry Catherine, and we *made* him do that.

ALEXIS

Another little boy, dear heart. You kidnapped him when he was fourteen.

ELIZABETH

We needed an heir. *(Laughing dryly)* Not that we hadn't tried ... for ... that.

ALEXIS

(Amused) More than once, I should say.

IVAN

(Coldly) Who was Peter?

ALEXIS

(To IVAN) Another sad child ravaged by politics. I see you're back with us, Sire. Do you feel better.

IVAN

We never feel better. Who was Peter?

Pushing himself off the floor, IVAN sits next to ELIZABETH.

ELIZABETH

Peter the Third. He was our heir.

ALEXIS

Another six month wonder. He didn't last even as long as you did.

IVAN

(Angrily) Did he have to lick boots?

ELIZABETH

Not once he came to power. Then, he proved to be cruel and stupid. We doubt boot licking would have helped ... maybe ... who knows?

ALEXIS

Another German mistake. You should have left him in Kiel.

ELIZABETH

He was our last male relative. With all the chaos after Ivanushka's ... *situation* ... we needed a legitimate heir we could control. If Peter had stayed in Germany, he would have been a constant threat. Frederick was looking for *any* excuse. So we made him a Grand Duke and kept him where he could be properly educated.

ALEXIS

Another great success.

ELIZABETH

It wasn't our fault he turned into an ignorant cretin. All he cared about was playing with toy soldiers and that ... that ... Vorontsova woman ... dreadful slut. If Catherine hadn't acted, he would have sent her to a convent and made Vorontsova Empress.

ALEXIS

(Amused) I doubt Sophie would have made a good nun.

ELIZABETH

(Ironically) She would have overthrown God and annexed the Elysian Fields.

ALEXIS

Not exactly timid, was she?

ELIZABETH

She had no choice but to depose Peter. He was an imbecile. Russia would not have survived.

ALEXIS

That Captain was right, she *isn't* Russian, after all. From ... what was the name of that place?

ELIZABETH

Anhalt-Zerbst.

ALEXIS

Anhalt-Zerbst? My, God. At best, a minor aristocrat ...

ELIZABETH

(Spitefully) ... says the pretty peasant. Anyway, Sophie vanished when she became Grand Duchess Catherine. That name suits her better.

ALEXIS

(Sarcastically) More *Russian*?

ELIZABETH

(Standing) Both you and that captain should be beaten ... severely ...

ALEXIS

(Amused, he shrugs and rises, X'ing to her) ... and yet, here we are ... and Captain Vlasev is hardly in danger, is he?

ELIZABETH

We should have hung you before the coup. Orlov would never have said that.

ALEXIS

(Taking her hand) Orlov was stupid. He certainly could not have served as Grand Master of the Hunt. *(Taking her in his arms, he swirls her around)* On the other hand, you loved me the last time Ivan saw you, so you will love me as long as he exists *(they kiss, tenderly)*.

ELIZABETH

(Responding and laughing) We do seem to be in your power, Count *(They kiss)*.

ALEXIS

There were times when you liked it.

ELIZABETH

A change of pace is sometimes necessary. Still, we should have hung you.

IVAN

(Looking at ELIZABETH, he interrupts) Why do you say you are Empress?

ELIZABETH

(With a deep curtsy, backing away from ALEXIS) Your Majesty?

IVAN

(With great authority) We are the Tsar. You cannot be Empress.

ELIZABETH

No, child. We cannot. You never knew us as Empress.

ELIZABETH X's ALEXIS and sits on IVAN's right. ALEXIS X's to SL, but does not sit.

ELIZABETH (Con't)

As Empress, we have now been dead for two years. After Peter was ... dealt with ... Catherine took power.

IVAN

(Wistfully) Will *she* let me go home?

ELIZABETH

(Softly) We're afraid that remains to be seen.

A great clanging sounds in the S/E. CHEKIN is trying to get in the door, and it's stuck.

IVAN

(Afraid) He's back. He's coming back *(he drops to the floor in front of the door)*. Go. Please go. Go *(Alexis and Elizabeth rise and exit)*.

CHEKIN

(Offstage) The damn door is stuck, Captain. *(More clanging)* God ... damn ... door ...

The door opens suddenly and CHEKIN, carrying IVAN's food bowl, stumbles into the room,

falls over IVAN and spills food all over the floor. They wrestle for a moment, then come to rest with CHEKIN on top of IVAN, looking directly into his face. The door stays open.

CHEKIN (Con't)

(Enraged) What are you doing, you little cunt? You *are* a fucking pervert, aren't you?

IVAN

(Desperately pushing him off, stuttering) ... no ... no ... what is that ... I don't know ... get off ... go away ... go ... go away ...

VLASEV

(Entering, holding some sort of military report) Chekin? What are you doing? Get off that boy.

CHEKIN

(Scrambling to pick himself up) Sorry, Captain. The little bugger got in the way when I came in.

VLASEV

(Annoyed) You are an Officer of the Empire. Act like one.

CHEKIN

(Coming to attention and saluting) Sorry, Sir. An accident. It won't happen again, Sir.

VLASEV studies CHEKIN for a moment, then waves the papers in the air as he speaks.

VLASEV

(Uncertain) Yes ... well ... make sure of that. In the meantime, we have news.

CHEKIN

I hope it's good news, Sir.

Reading, VLASEV X's CHEKIN and steps over IVAN to SL. IVAN is between them.

VLASEV

Hardly. The Gureyev brothers and Peter Khrushchev were arrested for trying to free his ... his ... *(waving at IVAN with contempt)* ... Imperial Majesty.

CHEKIN

Just arrested?

VLASEV

For the moment. Of course, Catherine wants them *hung*. Apparently, they got drunk during the coronation celebration and said a *real* Tsar should be restored to the throne.

CHEKIN

A *real* Tsar? God, the Empress must be livid.

VLASEV

They were part of the cabal that enthroned her. Gregory Orlov murdered Peter, so Catherine gave him 26,000 peasants, and Khrushchev was jealous.

CHEKIN

It doesn't sound like living at Court is exactly ... uh ... exactly ...

VLASEV

... a sleigh ride? Hardly. (*Glaring at IVAN*) Still, if they'd gotten a little further, we might have been able to get out of this place.

CHEKIN

Oh ... of course ... I see ... *not* good news, then. Certainly not.

VLASEV

Never any good news. Whatever, come with me, the Governor wants to see us.

He starts to step over IVAN, stumbles and shoves the boy flat with his foot.

VLASEV (Con't)

Good, God, boy. Chekin's right. You are *such* a pain in the ass (*he exits*).

CHEKIN

(*Viciously, to IVAN*) I'm not finished with you, Moron (*he exits and slams the door*).

IVAN

(*Sitting up, he is the Tsar*) Free? Free? Someone is trying to set us free? (*Looking up at ALEXIS as he steps out of the wall*) What is *free*, Count?

Alexis stands on IVAN's left and stares down as ELIZABETH moves around SR to pick up the bowl and spilled food.

ALEXIS

(*To ELIZABETH*) I don't want to tell him. It's an impossible concept. How can he ever understand?

IVAN

(Demanding) What is free? Is it a good thing?

ALEXIS

That depends.

ELIZABETH

(Looking at the bowl as she X's to them) If we didn't know better, we'd think they were trying to starve you to death. *(Ivan grabs the bowl and begins wolfing down whatever is in it)* Do you like to eat this, boy?

IVAN

(Snapping as he eats) Isn't this what free people eat?

ALEXIS

(Dryly) Not if they want to live past ten.

ELIZABETH

(Grimly) You're not helping.

ALEXIS

(Angry) How *can* I help? It doesn't matter *what* I say, those men would have killed him if the Gureyevs and Khrushchev had come even *close*.

IVAN

(Licking the bowl, insistant) What is free?

ALEXIS

(Snapping angrily) God, you are a *persistant* little bugger.

IVAN

(Speaking with great authority, he looks up) We are the Sovereign, Count Razumovsky. Watch what you say. We will know what *free* is.

ALEXIS

(Instinctively reacting to IVAN's change of tone, he pauses, then bows deeply) Your Majesty, *free* is when one is not under the control of another.

IVAN

Then, those men could not hurt us?

ELIZABETH

(She curtsies) No, sire. They could not.

IVAN

Then, that's what we want. We want to be free. *(Waving them away)* You may go.

SHADES

(With appropriate respect as they move into the wall) Your Majesty ...

IVAN quietly lies back on the bed and begins to masturbate, this time languid and relaxed. Once again, the S/E builds as the lights dim (see Sound Addendum #2). When the lights are about half, they pause, then continue to fade. When the stage is completely dark, the S/E is back to normal and continues into the next scene.

END SCENE TWO

SCENE THREE

The S/E is normal, continuing from the last scene. We hear the door open as softly as possible, and the lights come up as CHEKIN quietly enters the room. He is carrying water in a corked flask.

IVAN is asleep. CHEKIN closes the door gently and X's to stand and look down at him. His arrogance and anger is in abeyance. For once, he seems almost sympathetic. When this has been established, IVAN wakes up suddenly, sees CHEKIN above him and panics. He rolls off the bed onto the floor.

IVAN

(Frightened, he stutters) ... so sorry ... so ... so sorry ... please ... don't ... (he puts his arms over his head).

CHEKIN

(Roughly, but not violent) I'm not going to hit you, boy. Here.

He drops the flask on the bed. Surprised at first that CHEKIN doesn't hit him, IVAN pauses briefly, then desperately grabs the flask and gulps down its contents, spilling a great deal of it down his face and body. CHEKIN doesn't speak again until IVAN stops to breathe.

CHEKIN (Con't)

(Sarcastically) God, you drink like a pig.

IVAN

(Stuttering) What's ... a ... p ... p ... pig? (He drops the unfinished flask.)

CHEKIN

(Amused) That's what you are.

IVAN

(Looking up and stuttering) Does a ... p ... p ... pig wear a crown?

CHEKIN

(Softening a bit, he laughs) Some people think everyone who wears a crown is a pig.

IVAN

Do ... do ... you?

CHEKIN

I don't *have* political opinions. The army doesn't like it when ...

VLASEV *throws the door open*. CHEKIN
immediately changes his tone of voice.

CHEKIN (Con't)

(*Pointing at the flask, he yells*) ... pick that up, Idiot. You can't even fart without making a mess (*he shoves Ivan with his foot*).

IVAN

(*Stuttering again*) Yes, Sir. Sorry, Sir. So, so sorry.

VLASEV *X's them to DSL as IVAN picks up the flask and tries to drink the rest of the water*.
VLASEV *is reading from another report*.

VLASEV

(*Angrily*) Well, they got away with it.

CHEKIN

(*Grappling with IVAN for the flask*) Sir?

VLASEV

Khrushchev and the Gureyevs. They got away with it. Kyril Razumovsky intervened and convinced the Empress that they're just drunken *fools*, not anarchists. They're being sent to Siberia.

CHEKIN

(*Retrieving the flask with difficulty*) God, I went there once. (*Shivering*) I'm sure I saw Satan at the bottom of a frozen lake.

VLASEV

Now they can blame Catherine for everything that ever happened ...

CHEKIN

... and just die ...

VLASEV

... with no one *giving* a fuck.

CHEKIN

Isn't that ... sad?

VLASEV

They're all fools. Otherwise, this ... (*indicating IVAN*) ... *matter* ... would have been resolved by now and we could all go home.

CHEKIN

(Wistfully) Yes, I could see my family.

VLASEV

(Sympathetically) How long has it been?

CHEKIN

Before we were assigned this ... this ... unpleasant task, it had been, perhaps, two years. Since then ... *(he shrugs)*.

VLASEV

Yes, well, it seems like forever. *(X'ing CHEKIN to the door)* At any rate, there *is* other hopeful news.

CHEKIN

Dare I say glory be to God ...

VLASEV

(Laughing as he X's CHEKIN to the door) This time, God is directly involved ... *(he exits as he dryly observes)* ... if he can stay awake long enough *(CHEKIN follows him out, slamming the door behind them)*.

ELIZABETH

(To IVAN as she and ALEXIS reappear) I doubt *his* hopeful news is hopeful for you.

She sits on the right end of the bed as IVAN again picks himself up and joins her. ALEXIS remains standing SL.

IVAN

What is *hopeful*?

ALEXIS

(To IVAN) Not ... you ... I'm afraid ... Your Majesty. *(To ELIZABETH)* Whatever the circumstances, this is more than tiresome.

ELIZABETH

(Tenderly) Ivanushka, what ... do ... you remember? Do you remember Anna Leopoldovna?

IVAN

(Coldly) Mother was always busy.

ALEXIS

(Dryly) Servicing the Saxon Ambassador, no doubt *(he sits at the head of the bed)*.

ELIZABETH

(To ALEXIS) Do you really think that's necessary, Count?

ALEXIS

(*Disdainfully*) Public knowledge, my dear.

IVAN

Who was that?

ALEXIS

Who, Your Majesty?

IVAN

The Saxon Ambassador?

ELIZABETH

That would be Count Lynar ... a ... a friend of your mother's.

ALEXIS

A very close friend. So close, she posted guards at her bedroom door so he couldn't get out.

IVAN

(*Petulant*) She was *very* important.

ELIZABETH

(*Dryly*) Yes, yes, we all know what *she* was. That aside, I'm sure she loved you.

IVAN

(*Annoyed*) I didn't see her much.

ELIZABETH

Who did you see?

IVAN

(He softens) I saw *you* ... you were always nice ... and I saw the Count. (*Looking at ALEXIS*) You were nice, too. You carried me to ... to ... that other place.

ALEXIS

(*Ironically*) Riga.

IVAN

I guess. They didn't tell me. It was cold, and I didn't get much to eat.

ELIZABETH

Didn't your mother ...

IVAN

(Angry for having to repeat) She was *busy*. She was the *regent*. I *told* you.

ELIZABETH

Yes, we know. You told us. Were other women kind to you, other than us?

IVAN

Are you a *weh-men*?

ALEXIS

(Appalled) This is simply dreadful.

IVAN

Are you a *weh-men*?

ELIZABETH

(She corrects his pronunciation) Yes, Ivan. I am ... was ... a woman.

IVAN

You were nice.

ELIZABETH

(Almost in tears) Sweet, Ivanushka. We may not have been as nice as you remember.

ALEXIS

Not nearly ...

ELIZABETH

(Barking at ALEXIS) Shut up, Count. This is hard enough.

IVAN

There was another nice person. She fed me when I was hungry, with one of these *(he reaches out and cups ELIZABETH's breast)*.

ELIZABETH

(Taken aback, she quickly removes his hand) So, you remember the wet nurse who fed you?

IVAN

Yes, if that's who she was.

ELIZABETH

But, no others.

IVAN

I ... I ... don't think so.

ELIZABETH

(Softly, indicating her breast) How did you feel when you touched us here, Ivan?

IVAN

(Eagerly) Hungry ...

ELIZABETH

(To ALEXIS as she pulls away from IVAN) Oh, dear. What can he be thinking of when he plays with himself?

ALEXIS

(Shrugging) It might be you, it might be a horse. Little boys are extremely creative when they masturbate. *(Winking)* You can say the word. I won't tell.

ELIZABETH

He is not a little boy. He's a twenty-four year\ old ...

ALEXIS

... who has been deliberately denied information on procreation in case he might run amok and produce an heir.

ELIZABETH

We are *not* amused.

ALEXIS

Neither are we, Your Grace. There is nothing amusing about any of it. Whatever, if I wanted to amuse you, I'd go about it in an entirely different way. *(Laughing)* I can think of ... perhaps ... a dozen.

ELIZABETH

(Annoyed) Do you not love us at all?

ALEXIS

(Wryly) Which one of you?

ELIZABETH

(Laughing) Oh, Alexis. Really. Do you not love *me* at all?

ALEXIS

I always love you, even when you're wicked and cruel.

ELIZABETH

(Miffed) We are *not* wicked and cruel.

ALEXIS

(Sternly) At least once, Empress, you were thoughtlessly wicked and extremely cruel. *(Gesturing at IVAN)* Voilà. Not that it matters, now.

ELIZABETH

(Grimly, under her breath) We should have hung you. *(To IVAN)* Tell me, Ivanushka, can you remember anything else?

IVAN

(After thinking for a moment) It was warm ... and bright ... not dark like this. There were lots of little things ... sparkly things with fire on top ... and lots of sweet things to eat. There was a funny man who played with me ... and made me laugh ... and a man with a little box that made pretty sounds ... they were so pretty ... and it was nice when his friend picked me up ... he swung me around and around and around. That made me laugh. I like to laugh *(he smiles for the first time in the play)*. I laughed when they put a heavy thing on my head, and people clapped ... and everything was so big ... I could breathe better, and whenever I made a noise they gave me things and told me I was a good boy.

ELIZABETH

You are *still* a good boy, Ivan Antonovich.

IVAN

The Captain says I'm a moron.

ALEXIS

The Captain should be shot.

IVAN

Is a moron a good boy?

ELIZABETH

(Gently) A very good boy, dear heart. You are an exceptionally good boy *(she wipes tears from her eye with her sleeve)*.

ALEXIS

... and, afterward? At Riga?

IVAN

I didn't like Riga.

ALEXIS

No one likes Riga.

IVAN

It was cold and dark. Father said we would be going to B ... Bruns ... Bruns ...

ELIZABETH

... Brunswick. Your father's German principality. Anthony Ulrich was a good man. He deserved better than your mother.

IVAN

He looked like the Captain. He wore a coat with shiny buttons and was very loud. He talked about B ... B ... Brunswick a lot, but we didn't go.

ALEXIS

(Sadly, looking at Elizabeth) No. Too bad. You didn't go.

ELIZABETH

Did you like your father, child?

IVAN

(Coldly) I didn't see him much. At Riga, I didn't see anybody much.

ALEXIS

And, after that?

IVAN

I didn't see anybody. I've been here since then.

ALEXIS

(Sarcastically) Do the words *wicked* and *cruel* still mean nothing?

ELIZABETH

(Snapping) We are *already* burning in hell for this, Count Razumovsky. We've been in this cell one way or another since he has. Our punishment is going over this again and again forever ... ours *and* yours ...

ALEXIS

(Sighing) Give me strength.

VLASEV

(Outside the cell) Bring vodka, Chekin. A little drinking might be good for us. This could be happy news.

CHEKIN

(Calling out, also outside the cell) Coming Sir. Right away.

ELIZABETH

Come, Count. *(Rising)* Your Majesty ... *(she curtsies and exits)*.

ALEXIS

(Also rising, he bows deeply) Your Majesty ... *(he exits)*.

*VLASEV throws the door open and enters.
He's in an ebullient mood. He immediately*

X's USL and sits at the head of the bed. IVAN slips to the floor and cowers.

VLASEV

(Calling out) Chekin? Bring something to eat, while you're at it.

CHEKIN runs in carrying a small round table holding a bottle of vodka, two fairly large shot glasses, and a bowl of fruit.

CHEKIN

Here, Sir ... ahead of you, Sir.

VLASEV

Splendid. You're an excellent orderly, Chekin. A great help in this desolate hole. Sometimes, I don't miss my wife at all.

CHEKIN

Thank you, Sir. *(He positions the table SC)* But, I'm sure you miss her for other reasons.

VLASEV

(Laughing) Not for much longer, I think. *(Gesturing with his hand)* Sit, sit.

CHEKIN

(Grabbing a seat from the lower end of the bed, he sits) Thank you, Captain. Much appreciated.

They are now seated at the table across from one another. IVAN is on the floor. Apparently, this is familiar and he looks hopeful. Unless indicated, VLASEV and CHEKIN basically ignore him. The actors ad lib drinking vodka shots constantly through the following scene. By the end, both are quite drunk.

CHEKIN (Con't)

May I pour you a drink, Sir?

VLASEV

(Waving his hand in the air as CHEKIN pours for them both) I have news from Rostov.

CHEKIN

Sir?

VLASEV

Matseyevich is attacking the Empress.

CHEKIN

Who, Sir?

VLASEV

Arseniy (pronounced *Arseen*) Matseyevich, the Metropolitan of Rostov. Catherine is confiscating church assets and he's basically denouncing her for theft.

CHEKIN

Like something from an opera.

VLASEV

He says it's because of secularization. They all lie. It's about money, of course.

CHEKIN

Is he important?

VLASEV

What planet are you living on, Lieutenant. Yes. He is *more* than important. The See of Rostov owns 16,000 peasants.

He selects a piece of fruit from the bowl on the table and tosses it to IVAN, who scampers on all fours to retrieve it. Also ad libbed, this continues throughout the scene.

CHEKIN

(Noticeably drunker) Yes, very important.

VLASEV

I should say. He's a member of the Holy Synod, the first notable priest to question Catherine's authority. She cancelled a personal meeting with him.

CHEKIN

How is this good news for us?

VLASEV

When she snubbed him, he attacked her from his pulpit, the result being she has summoned him to Moscow for trial. (*Offering a piece of fruit to IVAN, who is on the floor somewhere in front of him*) Here, boy. Do you want this?

IVAN

(*Stuttering*) Please, Sir. I'm always hungry, Sir.

VLASEV

(*Laughing*) God, Chekin. Don't you feed this boy (*he tosses the fruit to Ivan*).

CHEKIN

Yes, Sir. Every day at four-thirty, Sir. He just wants to complain. That's what he does.

VLASEV

Yes, well ... *(throwing another tidbit)* ... it's rumored that Father Arseniy considers the Empress illegitimate. If that's so, who do you think he'll be forced to support?
(They both look at IVAN.)

CHEKIN

(Uncertain) Uh, well, I guess ...

VLASEV

Use your head, Lieutenant. *(Impatiently)* Who is the only living crowned Tsar?

He throws another tidbit to Ivan who is otherwise oblivious to their conversation.

CHEKIN

(Looking at IVAN) Christ, Sir ...

VLASEV

It's him ... he's the only one ... His Imperial Majesty, Tsar Ivan the Sixth.

They both freeze as IVAN abruptly stops whatever he's doing, sits up, and royally addresses VLASEV.

IVAN

(Clearly and distinctly) You have something to say, Captain Vlasev?

After a pregnant pause, VLASEV shoves IVAN with his foot, causing him to collapse onto the floor. The guards are clearly drunk.

VLASEV

(Furiously) Mind your own business, pig.

He throws a handful of fruit at the boy, who scampers all over the place putting pieces in his mouth. IVAN continues sneaking food into his mouth until VLASEV exits.

(Viciously) Slop is all you deserve.

IVAN

(Stuttering as he gathers the food) Yes, Sir. Thank you ... S ... S ... Sir.

CHEKIN

(Getting drunker) What if ... well ... what if he *is* the Tsar ... well ...

VLASEV

(Cutting him off) Even if he is, there's no chance in hell this creature can return to power. He doesn't even know what power is. Do you know what that is, Moron? Power?

IVAN

(Stuttering) No, Sir ... no ... no ... no ... C ... Captain, Sir.

VLASEV

(Sarcastically) Shouldn't that settle it? *(He drinks.)*

CHEKIN

(Having a little trouble pronouncing the name) Metropolitan Matseyevich is influential. An aristocrat. Rich. What if he ...

VLASEV

(Interrupting) If he even mentions the boy's name, he'll be gone like *that* ... *(snapping his fingers)* ... that's why it's good for us. It will remind Catherine of *this* *(indicating IVAN)* and her shaky claim to the throne *(he laughs)*.

CHEKIN

(Pouring two more drinks) Still ...

VLASEV

Arseniy won't hesitate to say what he thinks, and I doubt Catherine will wait more than a minute or two to have him drawn and quartered. It might be enough to make her finally decide about our inconvenient ... little ... prince.

After a pregnant pause, VLASEV suddenly jumps to his feet, followed by CHEKIN who hands him one of the drinks. They are both very drunk. IVAN becomes very still.

VLASEV (Con't)

(Holding up his glass) To Empress Catherine. *(He clicks his heels)* Nostrovia.

CHEKIN

To Empress Catherine *(Clicking his heels, they touch glasses and down the shots)*.

VLASEV

(X'ing to the door, he sets his glass on the table as he passes it) Clean up this mess. *(He turns back)* Supper will be late tonight. Mirovich is just in from St. Petersburg. Tell the cook to use the Imperial service. Mirovich thinks he's important, and since he loses at cards, we want him to believe that for a while *(he chuckles and exits)*.

CHEKIN *unsteadily follows VLASEV to the door. When he reaches it, he pauses for a moment without turning. Then, he steps back and slowly, deliberately, and quietly swings it shut. The sound of the door clanging gently is echoed and ominous. He slowly turns to face IVAN, who is still on the floor SC, sitting on his haunches.*

During the following, evening sets in and the lights slowly begin to dim. Almost imperceptibly, the S/E becomes louder as the spots on the SHADES begin coming up very slowly. The SHADES do not move out of the wall, but both slowly turn their upper bodies and heads to watch and listen to IVAN and CHEKIN as the scene progresses.

After a brief pause, CHEKIN walks straight toward IVAN who scrambles out of the way as CHEKIN X's and sits above the bed. After a brief pause, he gestures across the table.

CHEKIN

Sit. *(Retrieving the vodka bottle as Ivan looks uncertain)* Go on. Sit.

IVAN

(Fearfully) S ... S ... Sir. I ... c ... c ... can't ...

CHEKIN

(Pouring himself another shot) Of course you can. *(Forcefully, as he leans back)* Stand up and sit *(he downs the shot).*

CHEKIN continues to drink on and off until indicated, getting progressively drunker and, eventually, violent.

IVAN

(Totally confused) Why, uh ...

CHEKIN

(Angrily) Christ, boy. Take a seat. You know how to do that, don't you? Sit in a chair?

IVAN

Uh, yes. Yes, Sir.

CHEKIN

(Firmly) So, stand up and sit *(he downs another shot)*.

Ivan stands slowly, not taking his eyes off CHEKIN. He walks around the seat, studies it, and finally sits.

CHEKIN (Con't)

See, that wasn't hard.

IVAN

No ... Not hard.

CHEKIN

(He leans forward and pours both shot glasses full) So, let's have a drink together, like friends.

Leaning back, he indicates the shot glass remaining on the table.

IVAN

Like ... friends?

CHEKIN

Do you know what friends are? *(Softly)* Have you ever had a friend? *(Ivan can't take his eyes off the shot glass. Chekin speaks kindly)* A drink with a friend?

IVAN

(Still staring at the glass, he speaks clearly) No, I never had a friend.

CHEKIN

I can be your friend. *(Ivan's head jerks up, he looks at CHEKIN)*. Would you like that? If I was your friend?

IVAN

I ... I don't know.

CHEKIN

Go on. Pick up the glass, and we'll drink together ... like friends.

IVAN almost picks up the glass, then looks fearfully at CHEKIN, as if he might be hit.

CHEKIN (Con't)

(He chuckles) Go on. It will make you feel better.

Tentatively, IVAN picks up the shot glass. He looks at it as if it's poisonous.

CHEKIN (Con't)

Go on. *(Holding up his own glass, he leans forward and clicks it against IVAN's)* It's all right. *Nostrovia.* Like this *(he downs the shot).*

IVAN

(Innocently) Like a ... f ... friend?

CHEKIN

(Warmly, he smiles) Exactly that. Like a friend. Say, *Nostrovia,* first. That's how we salute one another.

IVAN

(Smiling, tentatively) N ... N ... *Nostrovia.*

Ivan lifts his glass, looks at CHEKIN, and downs the shot. The reaction, as might be expected, is choking, sneezing and vodka shooting out of his nose. CHEKIN laughs, gets up and circles around behind IVAN. He pats him on the back, pets him a little.

CHEKIN

(Laughing) There, there. It gets easier after a while.

IVAN

(Coughing) I don't like it.

CHEKIN

(After a final comfort pat, he returns to his seat) Doesn't it make you feel *hot* right here? *(He rubs his stomach.)*

IVAN

(Straightening up and taking a breath as he calms down) Uh ... warm. Yes, a little warm. It ... it ... does. Right here *(he smiles as he rubs his stomach).*

CHEKIN

Good boy. *(Pouring two more drinks)* Here, we'll try again, then wait a little bit. I don't want you to feel ... uh ... too good all at once.

IVAN

(Already feeling the liquor, he smiles and speaks clearly) Thank you ... friend.

For a moment, CHEKIN is moved by IVAN's use of the word "friend." He pauses, studies IVAN for a moment, then raises his glass.

CHEKIN

Of course. My pleasure. Nostrovia.

IVAN

Nostrovia.

This time, IVAN reaches across the table and clinks the glasses himself. He takes a deep breath, and they both down their shots. He does better this time, breathing hard as he chokes a little and rubs his stomach.

IVAN (Con't)

(Smiling) It is warm, right down here. It's ... it's better ... but, I still don't like it much.

CHEKIN

(He leans back. By now, he is very drunk) You can't tell the Captain about this, you know. It's between us ... friends ... you see.

IVAN

The Captain isn't a friend?

CHEKIN

(Reaching out to pour one more shot) No, he's not. *(He leans back and gestures toward the shot glass)* But, you can count on me. *(Smiling coldly)* Drink. You have to do three shots ... the first time.

IVAN

(Already dizzy) No ... uh ... I ... c ... can't.

CHEKIN

(Angrily) Are we friends, or not?

IVAN

(Confused) Uh ... yes ... yes. I see ... *(mumbling)* n ... n ... nostrovia ...

IVAN places the glass to his lips, without ceremony this time, and fumbles with it as he clumsily drinks and spills vodka all over himself. CHEKIN rises, looming over him.

CHEKIN

(*Coldly*) I have a question. Have you thought about my wife?

IVAN

(*Frightened, stuttering*) Uh ... what? No, Sir ... do you have ... please ... please ...

CHEKIN

Don't you remember, Moron? You apologized for keeping me from her. We agreed it wasn't fair.

CHEKIN starts to move very slowly around the table toward IVAN. IVAN slips off the chair as best he can and cowers on the floor. He backs slowly C away from CHEKIN.

IVAN

(*Stuttering*) Please ... please, Sir ... I remember now ... yes ... your wife ...

As CHEKIN slowly continues to force IVAN backward toward the bed, the prison S/E increases in volume (see Sound Addendum, #3), and the spots on the SHADES become brighter. Their expression should be as horrific as possible. Except for their faces, they do not move.

As the scene plays out, the stage lights dim completely, leaving the spots on the bed and the SHADES increasingly bright. By the climax, the spots are up full, the rest of the stage dark, and the S/E should be overwhelming.

CHEKIN

It wasn't fair, was it.

IVAN

(*Terrified*) No, Sir. No ... no ...

CHEKIN

(*Evenly*) Not fair. Not fair at all.

IVAN

(*Stuttering desperately*) No ... no ... n ... n ... not fair at all.

CHEKIN

(Menacingly) So, what are you going to do about it, Idiot?

IVAN

(Hysterically, as Chekin forces him against the bed) Sir ... s ... so sorry ... Sir ... please ... I don't know ...

CHEKIN

That's not enough. Not enough, at all ... *(spitefully)* ... Your Majesty ... *(the SHADES should be fully lit; the bed, not quite full)* Not ... enough ... at all ...

Chekin is now a drunken monster. He moves forward until he is at the center of the bed with his back to the audience, straddling IVAN's legs, while IVAN lifts himself with his elbows until he is lying below CHEKIN half on and half off the bed.

IVAN

(Screaming and crying, ad lib as needed, but leave the last line intact) No ... no ... please ... please ... I am your sovereign ... *(shrieking)* I ... am ... the ... Tsar ...

The S/E grows until it is loud enough to all but mask IVAN's last line. CHEKIN can be seen from behind to be fumbling with his pants. Once that is established, he falls forward on his knees and straddles Ivan.

IVAN

(Screaming as loudly as possible and electronically enhanced) I AM YOUR FRIEND!

The SHADES scream. The S/E grows unpleasantly loud (see Sound Addendum #4). the spot on the bed flashes briefly to full bright, as CHEKIN falls forward onto IVAN's body. There's a brief pause, then the stage abruptly plunges into darkness, the sound returns to normal and continues into the next scene.

END OF ACT ONE

CURTAIN

ACT TWO

SCENE ONE

The S/E fades up and ghost voices speak clearly of this tragedy (see Sound Addendum #5). It builds, then holds, then recedes as ACT II opens and murmurs throughout. The stage becomes brighter, a shaft of sunlight pools on the floor. The table is gone, the room tidied up a bit. IVAN is sprawled across the bed. The SHADES are sitting in their onstage positions, at each end of the bed. The room brightens as morning comes.

ALEXIS

(Gently, to Elizabeth) He's quiet, for the moment. Does that make you happy?

ELIZABETH

We're what we'll always be. He ... is ... doomed. We don't know if *happy* can apply.

ALEXIS

He was violated like an animal.

ELIZABETH

Do animals do that? Surely not. It is a question of pleasure or power. Not a *need*. Nor some sort of ... mental construction. Animals are kinder ... or ... somehow oblivious.

ALEXIS

We are all animals, my pet. Watch any mother nursing a child, and that's clear.

ELIZABETH

... and, yet, he's sleeping ... isn't he? Not angry, not complaining, not throwing a fit?

ALEXIS

(Annoyed) Is he not entitled? He *is* the Tsar, imprisoned and abused, with nothing at his disposal to prove his existence. God, I throw more fits than he does. *(Sadly)* He asks for so little.

ELIZABETH

He is a Prince. He accepts his life as his duty.

ALEXIS

(Sharply) Because he has known nothing else. Nor was it *ever* his duty to be raped, although what's been done to him every day of his life is certainly *that*. Rape.

ELIZABETH

(Amused) Your moral scruples have certainly ... ripened, Count. Did the relentless drinking and all those naked bodies finally become tedious.

ALEXIS

(Wryly) How unfair to remind me of that. For the young, nothing becomes tedious. If it did, no one would ever produce an heir.

ELIZABETH

Which you and I did not do ...

ALEXIS

... which *you* did not do, my dear. My sons are healthy and well placed. I tried my best to produce an heir for Russia ... *(he takes her hand tenderly)* ... as you know, but it was not to be.

ELIZABETH

Ivan is young.

ALEXIS

Ivan will always be young.

ELIZABETH

The last time he saw us, he was our Liege Lord. We still serve him.

ALEXIS

(Wryly) Yes ... our Liege Lord ... still sleeping ... oddly enough.

IVAN suddenly sits up, awake and aware. He doesn't move, just stares straight ahead with a blank look in his eyes.

ALEXIS (Con't)

(Wryly) Uh ... not sleeping, oddly enough. *(Rising, bows)* ... Your Majesty ...

ELIZABETH

(Rising, curtsies) ... Your Majesty ...

The SHADES hold their positions, not rising as they wait for him to respond. He just stares. Ad lib eye contact between the SHADES, slowly agreeing to stand up. They do, then sit down.

ELIZABETH (Con't)

(Gently) Your Majesty ... Ivanushka ... *(she touches his leg).*

IVAN

(Jerking angrily away) Don't ... *(he stares at her)*.

ELIZABETH

(Pulling away but not rising) Your Grace? *(Softly)* Ivan Antonovich?

IVAN

Our head hurts *(he raises both hands to cradle and rub it)* .

ALEXIS

From drinking vodka, Your Majesty. An unfortunate side-effect?

ELIZABETH

What else, Sire? *(She touches his arm this time.)*

IVAN

(Reacting violently) Don't touch me. I don't want to be touched. *(Pushing her away)*
Leave me alone. Get out of my head. *(Putting his hands over his ears)* Get out, get
out, get out *(they lean back, but do not leave)*.

ALEXIS

(Quietly) If only that were possible, my Prince.

*IVAN tears up and sobs helplessly as long as
it works. Then, he pulls himself together and
sits up as the Tsar.*

IVAN

(Wiping his eyes, he surprises them both) We have decided he is our favorite. We
want him.

SHADES

(Simultaneously) Sire?

IVAN

(Evenly and strongly) We shall have him.

ELIZABETH

(Surprised) The Guard?

ALEXIS

(Objecting) Your Majesty. Surely not. He *hurt* you.

IVAN

(Enraged) He didn't *hurt* us ... he *touched* us. *(The SHADES are shocked)* He *touched*
us ... and held us ... and hurt us ... but, then it didn't hurt ... and I want him.

ELIZABETH

(Overwhelmed) Oh, my child.

IVAN

(A determined child) We want him.

ELIZABETH

(Concerned) Ivanushka.

IVAN

(A full blown tantrum) We want him, We want him, We want him.

ALEXIS

Dear heart ... Majesty ... if he brings you joy ... take him. You are the sovereign.

IVAN

(Calming down) Is he not already ours?

ELIZABETH

Your Majesty, you are the Tsar of *all* the Russians.

IVAN

(Smiling softly) Yes. Yes. We are, aren't we. *(Slowly laying back on the bed)* We shall take him. He is our favorite.

SHADES

(Ad lib genuflecting and agreeing) Yes, Sire. He is your favorite, Sire.

ALEXIS

(Cautiously) Do you know what that is, Your Grace? A favorite?

IVAN

(Petulant) Whatever it is, everybody has one but me ... and, I want one. Now, I'm tired and have a lot to do. *(Slipping his hand into his pants)* Let me sleep. Go away. Let me sleep

SHADES

(Bowing and scraping) Your Majesty ...

*The SHADES solemnly resume their seats.
After a moment, Ivan sleeps. The lights dim
as the S/E increases in volume (see Sound
Addendum #6). This also builds and holds,
then subsides back to normal and continues
into the next scene as the stage grows dark.*

END OF SCENE ONE

SCENE TWO

The lights come back up as VLASEV abruptly enters and walks around the cell. IVAN is masturbating in pleasure, which does not stop the Captain from roughly slapping his hands out of his pants. The S/E is normal.

VLASEV

(With disgust, he hisses) We're going to cut off your hands if you don't stop this.

IVAN

(Terrified, he stutters) Oh, Sir. Please, Sir. No. No. I'll stop. I'll stop.

VLASEV

(Laughing arrogantly) No, you won't. That's what makes it endurable.

IVAN

(Stammering) Oh, please ... oh, please ... no ... no ...

VLASEV

(Calling out as he stares down at Ivan) Chekin? Chekin, where are you, Chekin?

CHEKIN

(From offstage) Sorry, Sir. Coming, Sir. I ...

CHEKIN runs in the open door, snaps to attention and salutes. He is nervously distant).

CHEKIN (Con't)

... I overslept.

VLASEV

(Laughing) A night off is a good thing, it keeps one sane.

CHEKIN

Too much vodka, Captain.

VLASEV

(Shrugging) That's the point, isn't it? *(Laughing)* Until you go blind? *(To IVAN)* His Majesty would like that, wouldn't you, boy? *(Shoving IVAN with his foot)* Watching Chekin go blind. Wouldn't you?

IVAN

(Stammering) I don't know ... no ... please ... no ...

VLASEV

(To IVAN) Idiot. *(To CHEKIN)* Well, late or not, you must do what you do. *(X'ing to the door, he turns)* I will not suffer criticism. Report to me before afternoon roll call *(CHEKIN salutes as VLASEV exits and closes the door).*

CHEKIN watches the door close and stares at it. He is obviously nervous, but tries to conceal it. IVAN rises and becomes the Tsar.

IVAN

(Royally) What is roll call?

CHEKIN

(Not turning) They make sure you're still here, then tell you what to do for the rest of the day.

IVAN

(Amused) Your life is like ours. Are you free?

CHEKIN

We are *all* enslaved.

IVAN

Does it hurt?

CHEKIN

Always.

IVAN

You hurt us ... last night ...

CHEKIN

(Still turned away, he drops his head in shame and speaks softly) I ... know ...

IVAN

Did you want to hurt us?

CHEKIN

(Barely audible) Yes.

IVAN

Why?

CHEKIN

(Sadly) I ... I don't know.

IVAN

We forgive you.

CHEKIN

(Turning and facing IVAN) Sire?

IVAN

It hurt. Then, it stopped *(tenderly)* and I felt you touch me ...

CHEKIN

(Entranced, he bows) Your Majesty ...

IVAN

... and, we forgive you.

CHEKIN

(Not believing) Your Majesty?

IVAN

Touch us, again.

CHEKIN

What?

IVAN

(Urgently) Touch us, again.

CHEKIN

Sire, that is dangerous. Captain Vlasev will hang me if I blink ... and, God, I hate him. He is wrong. Christ, he is so wrong. *(He falls to the floor in front of Ivan and goes down on his knee)* You are the Tsar ... crowned ... alive ... worshipped by the Church. *(Looking up with adoration)* I looked in your eyes and God spoke to me. I know ... what's been done ... *(bitterly)* ... and how we'll burn for it.

IVAN

(Hopefully, pleading) Luka ... friend ... we would have you do it again.

CHEKIN

Oh, God. Ivan? Your Majesty? I can't ... I ...

IVAN

(Ordering) Chekin ... do it again!

CHEKIN

(He stands and backs out) I'll be back. When I can, My Lord ... I'll ... I'll ... *(exiting)*
be back *(he bows his way out the door)*.

IVAN

(Throwing a tantrum) We meant now!

ALEXIS

(Reappearing, amused and worldly) Ah, yes. Favorites. Must keep them in check.

IVAN

(Demanding) Now! Now! Now! *(He falls back on the bed.)* I want him now.

ALEXIS

Now may be inopportune, Sire. You may have to adapt your *needs* according to ...
circumstances.

IVAN

(Sitting up suddenly) You are my cousin's favorite?

ALEXIS

Count Alexis Razumovsky. *(Clicks and bows)* À votre service, Majesté.

IVAN

Her favorite what?

ALEXIS

(Laughing) Her favorite ... *companion?*

IVAN

Like the German Ambassador?

ELIZABETH

You are well informed, Your Grace.

IVAN

(Annoyed) Of course. We are *not* a moron, Cousin. Now, leave us. Go away. We need
to *think*. *(He lays back, stuffs his hand in his pants and drifts away)* Thinking is good.

ALEXIS

(Smiling) I'm sure he's *thinking* more clearly now than he was.

ELIZABETH

(Dryly) ... not about horses, we hope.

The lights dim, the S/E does it's thing, happy this time (see Sound Addendum #7). It builds, holds, then the stage fades to black, with the sound at normal continuing into the next scene.

END OF SCENE TWO

SCENE THREE

As the lights come up, it's late afternoon. The SHADES are back in the wall, and VLASEV stands over a sleeping IVAN as CHEKIN enters. The S/E normal and pleasant.

VLASEV

He looks almost royal.

CHEKIN

Is he not?

VLASEV

(Angrily) What if he is? Until he's gone I can't live at Court. *(He X's SL and sits)* He is *nothing*. Shoot him, for God's sake ...

CHEKIN

(Timidly) With all due respect, Sir. I have come to think he may ... be ... *something*.

VLASEV

What if he is? He barely exists.

CHEKIN

(Cautiously insisting) I ... I ... I think he might be the Tsar.

VLASEV

(Coldly) What if he is, Lieutenant? The order that keeps us here is succinct. "The prisoner shall not be allowed to fall alive into the hands of rescuers." A declarative sentence. What you *think* is not a consideration.

CHEKIN

(Painfully) May it be in God's hands, Captain.

VLASEV

God deserted him long ago. Since then, he's an illusion. *(He lights a cigar, speaks pensively)* The world knows of his tragedy. Owning that world, then helplessly watching it swirl down the drain ... it is unspeakably cruel ... certainly ...

CHEKIN

(Quietly) ... and, then, you die *(he sits without permission)*.

VLASEV

What, Chekin? You are a philosopher, after all, like the best soldiers.

CHEKIN

I am a realist, Sir. I deal with life and death.

VLASEV

As do we all ... finally. But, not quite yet. (*Standing*) Did I tell you, Father Arseniy will be leaving Rostov.

CHEKIN

Ah, a sea voyage, perhaps?

VLASEV

... to a cell in the Baltic. The fortress of Reval. (*Acidly*) 16,000 peasants and he has been *erased* ... no one at Reval knows who he is and no one there speaks Russian.

CHEKIN

Dare I ask?

VLASEV

(*Snorting, indicating IVAN*) He mentioned the unmentionable in front of Catherine while screaming at the Holy Synod. Then, he was degraded and stripped. It happened in ... very ... uh ... short order. He hasn't been seen recently.

CHEKIN

Politics are abhorrent, Captain. Wars are much safer.

VLASEV

(*X'ing to the door*) Even if he *is* the real thing, lieutenant ... (*turning*) ... even if you think you're right ... even if you *know* you're right ... do not get too close. Guarding a prisoner is dangerous in more ways than you know. (*Sternly*) Be warned.

VLASEV exits, slamming the door behind him. CHEKIN nervously faces the door without turning or speaking as IVAN abruptly sits up. He has not been sleeping.

By this point in the play, CHEKIN has made an about-face. During the rape, he experienced an epiphany and now believes IVAN's claim to be legitimate. He is in awe of the Baby Tsar, and his deeply ingrained belief in the romance of royalty has caused him to fall hopelessly in love.

IVAN, desperate for attention, beguiles CHEKIN to get what he wants. CHEKIN begins

to work in his interest, misleading VLASEV when necessary to make IVAN's life more bearable. So far, they have shared rape. In the following scene, they become lovers.

The SHADES are out, posed romantically (different heights) just in front of their niches in the wall. They comment as indicated. The S/E is nervous, and Mirovich is mentioned more than once (see Sound Addendum #8). It rises slightly, holds briefly, then fades to normal and continues. As this happens, IVAN rises and gazes at CHEKIN, who is still facing the door and thoroughly confused by his new infatuation.

IVAN

(Regally) You are our favorite.

CHEKIN

(Quietly, not turning) ... Your Majesty ...

IVAN

You serve us, do you not? *(He turns and sits regally at the head of the bed.)*

CHEKIN turns and sees IVAN sitting on the pile of rocks above his bed. He goes down on his knee.

CHEKIN

(Unsure) Sire, I am at your service.

IVAN

(Laughing) Of course you are. You are our favorite ... *Count* Chekin.

CHEKIN

(Disbelief) Your Majesty ... how ...

IVAN

All favorites are Counts. *(Amused)* Count Razumovsky belongs to my cousin.

CHEKIN

The Colonel of the Preobrazhensky (*pree-ah-brah-zhen-ski*) Guard?

ALEXIS

(Softly to IVAN) My son, Kyril, I think. *(CHEKIN does not hear the SHADES speak.)*

IVAN

(To CHEKIN) His father. We are quite sure.

IVAN spills onto the floor, facing CHEKIN on both knees, and speaks playfully.

IVAN (Con't)

So, you are our favorite, Count.

CHEKIN

(Looking up) Sire?

IVAN

(Almost pleading) Call me *Ivan*.

As the scene progresses, they become more and more like two boys sitting on the floor playing a game. The Shades speak as indicated. The S/E increases and adds laughter and "happy" sounds that continue throughout the scene (see Sound Addendum #9).

CHEKIN

(Reluctantly) ... Your Majesty ...

IVAN

(Testy) Call us *Ivan*, Count.

CHEKIN

Your Grace? (Gradually sitting back on his haunches) I ... *Ivan*?

IVAN

(Clapping his hands) Yes, yes. We are *Ivan* and you are ... *Luka*. (Grinning) My favorite ... *Luka*.

CHEKIN

(Beginning to warm up). Do you know what that is ... uh ... *Ivan*? A favorite?

IVAN

(Smugly) It means *companion*.

CHEKIN

It does?

IVAN

(Very pleased) Like the German Ambassador.

CHEKIN

(Laughing) I don't know the German Ambassador.

IVAN

He is not here.

CHEKIN

(Wryly) No, he's not.

Suddenly, IVAN laughs, reaches out and starts tickling CHEKIN wherever he can reach. They giggle and wrestle for a moment as CHEKIN ad libs resistance. Then, they roll around on the floor as long as it works. Finally, IVAN comes out on top and CHEKIN laughs. IVAN slips in and out of the Royal We as they play.

IVAN

Do you like that? Do you? The man who made pretty sounds did that with me.

They pause for a moment, breathing hard, then IVAN rolls DS onto the floor.

CHEKIN

(Warmly) Yes, Your Majesty. It is very pleasant.

IVAN

(Sitting up and throwing a tantrum) No ... no ... Ivan. We are called Ivan.

Taken aback, CHEKIN stands and offers his hand to help IVAN off the floor, pulling him up during the following.

ELIZABETH

He seems to know what he wants.

ALEXIS

(Dryly) Not what one might have hoped. More a necessary compromise.

Ivan X's CHEKIN to his seat, turns, and holds out his hand. Without a word, CHEKIN drops to his knee and kisses it.

ELIZABETH

He is innocent, Count. Your licentious thoughts are inappropriate.

ALEXIS

(*Smiling*) He is a young man, my dear. *Appropriate* does not apply.

IVAN

(*Withdrawing his hand and sitting*) You will call us Ivan.

CHEKIN

(*Looking up*) Yes, Ivan ... yes ... when we are alone. But, I do not want to die ...

IVAN

(*Nodding in understanding*) The Captain is not nice.

CHEKIN

Sometimes, but he's a lion when it comes to orders, and this ... (*shrugging*) ... this, we have been ordered *not* to do.

IVAN

What are orders?

CHEKIN

Things I must obey. If not, I will be hurt.

IVAN

(*Laughing, sitting back, he waves Chekin to a seat on the bed*) You will not be hurt. You are my favorite. If you are hurt, I will have the Captain whipped.

CHEKIN

An interesting thought. (*Alarmed*) But, Ivan, you don't understand. I fear for my life.

IVAN

Are we not friends?

CHEKIN

Not if I'm dead.

IVAN

Dead. Yes. I remember that. So, we do not want that for our friends?

ALEXIS

(*Chiming in*) Not unless we must. Usually, it's a silly accident.

This continues as a dual conversation. The SHADES are commenting and the use of the word friend reminds CHEKIN of his earlier violence. He reacts immediately.

CHEKIN

Sir, I hurt you. I ... we ... we were drunk. I gave you vodka. Wrong, so wrong.

ELIZABETH

(To ALEXIS) Men are dogs. They will stoop to anything.

ALEXIS

(To ELIZABETH) Unlike women, who throw inconvenient children into prison

IVAN

Everything hurts. Always. Then, you did something ... else ...

CHEKIN

(Almost in tears) A kiss, Ivan. It is called a *kiss*.

IVAN

(Nodding) After that, it didn't hurt.

CHEKIN

(Helplessly) I *kissed* you on the forehead.

IVAN

Is that something free people do?

CHEKIN

Yes, dear Ivan. Yes. Many people do it ...

IVAN

(Soft, determined) Then, I will have you do it to me again (*he stands*).

CHEKIN

(Overwhelmed, he rises and looks Ivan in the eye) Oh, your Grace ... dearest Ivan ... (*barely able to speak*) ... I don't know what to say.

IVAN

(Firmly) Say nothing. (*Smiling broadly*) Kiss us again, Count. It does not hurt.

After a brief pause during which CHEKIN studies IVAN intently, he takes IVAN into his arms and kisses him as long as it works.

Note: CHEKIN is a cisgender man serving a Tsar deliberately denied sexual information. Believing in IVAN's royalty, CHEKIN is able to

rationalize their relationship as his duty. His own orientation is never at issue.

Ivan is totally innocent, having had no sexual contact other than himself. The physical demands he begins to make are purely instinctual. It is attention he wants, not sex, although, like most young males after spermarch, the more often he does it, the more often he wants it.

IVAN

(Passionately) ... again ... do it again ... kiss me again ...

They grapple, then fall on the bed. Ad lib relaxed affection, sexual activity centering on mutual masturbation (nothing salacious as they are always fully dressed), soft kissing, laughter. This should be simple and romantic for a young man who has been alone all his life. It continues as long as it works. The SHADES smile and observe.

The S/E covers this, with warnings about Mirovich, and his associate, Ushakov (see Sound Addendum #10). It builds up, holds, then goes to normal continuing into the next scene as the lights dim to complete darkness.

END OF SCENE THREE

SCENE FOUR

The S/E holds for a moment, then the door clangs open and VLASEV enters carrying a burning torch. IVAN is alone and asleep. VLASEV is more than a little drunk; rough, as usual, but in a playful mood.

VLASEV looks around, sees a small pitcher full of water. He picks it up, then stuffs the torch into the pitcher to put it out. Then, he walks over and dumps the rest of the water on IVAN, who wakes up choking and spitting. VLASEV laughs. The lights come up slowly as they brighten into morning.

VLASEV

(X'ing USL he sits and lifts his right leg) Wake up, Idiot.

IVAN

(In panic mode, he stutters) Yes ... Sir. Yes, Sir. Clean your boots, Sir.

He scrambles to his position on the floor and attacks VLASEV's boot until indicated.

VLASEV

Faster, Idiot. Now, not tomorrow. *(Slapping IVAN)* What are you good for, anyway? *(Lighting a cigar, he leans back and laughs)* At least you're learning a trade. Russia's boots are always dirty.

IVAN

(Softly, under his breath as he works) ... I ... am ... the ... sovereign ...

VLASEV

(Stunned, he leans forward and grabs Ivan by the shirt) What did you say?

IVAN

(Looking directly at Vlasev and speaking clearly) We are the sovereign, Captain.

They freeze, staring at one another. After a moment, VLASEV loosens his hold on IVAN's shirt and tries to shove him away as he leans back. IVAN holds his position like a champ.

VLASEV

(Quietly hysterical) How ... dare ... you ...

IVAN

(Quietly insisting) Our mother was Grand Duchess Anna Leopoldovna, Our father, Prince Anthony Ulrich of Brunswick-Lüneburg. We are *not* a moron.

VLASEV

(Whispering in disbelief) Your ... Majesty ...

IVAN

(Turning back to the boat) You look like our father.

VLASEV

(Unsure how to react) He was Commander in Chief when I joined the Army.

IVAN

(Stuttering nervously and polishing until indicated) Was ... he ... n ... nice?

VLASEV

You'd know that better than I. I was just an adjutant then, and he was Commander for a very short time.

IVAN

(Slight stutter) I ... d ... d ... didn't see him ... m ... much.

VLASEV

(Snorting) Nobody did. Including your mother. She never saw him at all.

IVAN

(Looking up, he briefly stops polishing) Did you ... s ... see ... m ... me?

VLASEV

(Without thinking) Did I say you could stop?

He raises his hand to slap IVAN, then stops himself at the last moment.

IVAN

(Flinching, but determined) S ... sorry, uh ... s ... Sir. *(Persisting)* Did you see me?

VLASEV realizes his hand is still in the air. After a pregnant pause, he lowers it and leans back.

VLASEV

(Softly and reluctantly) Yes, Sir. I surely did.

IVAN

(Slight stutter) Did I look nice?

VLASEV

(*Almost choking*) I saw you at your coronation.

IVAN

(*Still working on the boots, stuttering slightly*) What ... w ... what is a ... c... c ... coronation?

VLASEV

(*Conflicted*) A ceremony where one is declared Emperor.

IVAN

(*Dimly remembering*) They put a ... b ... big thing on my head?

VLASEV

Yes.

IVAN

(*Asking again*) Did I look ... n ... n ... nice?

VLASEV

Uh ... here. (*He fumbles in his pocket and pulls out a large gold coin*) This was struck when you were crowned. It is a coin. This is how you looked.

IVAN

(*Studying the coin, he smiles*) I look nice ... but ... small.

VLASEV

(*Laughing*) The icons they sent to the churches were bigger, but not much.

IVAN

I don't remember being Emperor. What is Emperor?

VLASEV

(*Without thinking*) Your Majesty, Emperor is the same as Sovereign or Tsar. It's ... it's ... it's ...

Suddenly realizing where this is leading, VLASEV explodes and rises. Angry for admitting what he knows to be true, VLASEV berates and abuses IVAN viciously. This is not so much a beating as it is a screaming fit. Like everyone, he is obsessed with rank. He knows the truth, but has been specifically

ordered to punish IVAN if he insists on his status. This attack is loud but not as physical as previously. This time, however, IVAN does not cringe and stutter. He remains silent and detached, which infuriates VLASEV even more. VLASEV ad libs as follows.

VLASEV (Con't)

You are *not* the Emperor, Moron. You lie. You are *nothing*. You are *Prisoner #1* in Her Majesty's Schlüsselburg Fortress. Liar, liar, liar. You will never see the light of day. You are *nothing*. You ... are ... not ... the ... Tsar.

This goes on no longer than it must to work. VLASEV is vicious, IVAN is heroic. Morning has dawned in the cell and CHEKIN enters. Stunned by the violence, he is still cautious.

CHEKIN

Sir! Sir? Did I ... what's happening? (*Interrupting*) Has ... ?

VLASEV

(*Breathing hard, and pausing*) He will ... *not* ... *admit* ... what he is.

One last kick and he backs away L. CHEKIN X's to IVAN and looks down.

CHEKIN

(*Feigning anger*) Idiot. (*Nudging him with his foot*) Too stupid to remember anything. I'm sorry, Captain. I should have been here to take care of the little swine.

VLASEV

(*Still enraged, he X's Chekin and Ivan to the door*) Then, *do* take care of the little swine, Lieutenant. (*Turning back*) Beat him until he stops lying. I have to deal with Mirovich.

CHEKIN

Sir?

VLASEV

The idiot lost at cards last night. When he couldn't pay ... he got maudlin and said some ... stupid things.

CHEKIN

Is he a danger?

VLASEV

He's an aristocrat. But, has no money, and his attempts to deal with that are pathetic and misguided. (*Angrily*) Not that it matters, he's under surveillance ... and this has nothing to do with *him* ... (*indicating IVAN*) ... I meant it, Chekin. (*Viciously*) Whip the son of a bitch until he knows his place. (*He slams his way out the door.*)

CHEKIN

(*X'ing to lock the door as he hisses furiously at the exiting VLASEV*) He knows his place. He is Ivan the Sixth. (*He turns, X's quickly to IVAN, squats down, and speaks with compassion*) My God, he is the Tsar.

Tenderly, CHEKIN lifts IVAN and arranges him on the bed, perhaps dabbing him with a wet clothe. He also sits. The SHADES turn out of the wall and arrange themselves in a picturesque fashion at each end of the bed.

CHEKIN (Con't)

(*Quietly and urgently*) Haven't I said again and again, do not speak with the Captain. Yes, Sir. No, Sir. Nothing else!

CHEKIN and IVAN caress and wrestle through the following dual-dialogue, coming up for air to deliver their lines.

IVAN

(*To CHEKIN*) He looks like our father.

ELIZABETH

(*To ALEXIS*) Some said Anthony *Ulrich* wasn't his father.

ALEXIS

(*To ELIZABETH*) Which hardly matters if you're the grandson of Ivan the Fifth.

CHEKIN

(*To IVAN*) Vlasev is *not* your father.

IVAN

He says he saw me.

ELIZABETH

(*Superior*) Why do we need men at all, Count?

ALEXIS

(*Coldly*) Because we say you do, my love ... and you believe us.

CHEKIN

(Surprised) Yes? He did? When?

IVAN

(To CHEKIN) Before Riga. He has a picture.

CHEKIN

(To IVAN) What kind of picture?

ELIZABETH

(Dryly) You should be kept in caves and bred like cattle.

ALEXIS

Cave or palace, my dear. Even breeding can become tedious.

IVAN

It's pretty ... round and shiny ... but little ... *(Sitting up, IVAN holds up his hand, making a small circle with his fingers.)*

CHEKIN

(Softly) I've seen it, a coin struck for your coronation.

IVAN

(Not impressed) Yes. He told us that.

CHEKIN

The hypocrite. I'm so sorry I wasn't here sooner. *(They continue to fondle and kiss.)*

IVAN

Who is Mirovich?

CHEKIN

He's no one.

IVAN

He needs money. Will he clean the Captain's boots?

CHEKIN

(Laughing) He's a Lieutenant in the Army, like me; a poor Ukrainian, angry and stupid. He thinks ... *(they roll around on the bed, becoming passionate)* ... I don't know what he thinks ...

This goes on for a moment, then Ivan pulls back, panting as he looks into Chekin's eyes.

IVAN

Do it again, Count.

*Laughing, CHEKIN reaches into IVAN's pants.
IVAN giggles and removes his hand.*

IVAN (Con't)

No, not that. The other thing. You know, the first thing ...

CHEKIN

(Sitting up, unsure) Dear heart ... Ivan ...

ALEXIS

(Amused) Some things never change.

CHEKIN

(Softly) I don't want to hurt you again.

IVAN

It all hurts. What does it matter? *(Throwing his arms around Chekin and covering him with kisses)* Please ... please ... please ...

ELIZABETH

Why does he want these ... dreadful ... things ...

ALEXIS

(Sadly) What else does he *know* to *want*?

CHEKIN

(Trying to resist) ... Ivan ... Your Majesty ...

*Pulling away and sitting up abruptly, IVAN
throws a tantrum, beating CHEKIN on the
chest with his fists.*

IVAN

(Enraged) Do it! Do it! Do it!

*CHEKIN grabs IVAN's wrists and stops the
attack. They grapple for a moment, pause as
they look at one another. The S/E grows
slowly louder. The entire prison is getting
nervous (see Sound Addendum #11). As the
sounds build, the bed spot comes up full as
IVAN pulls his right arm loose and slaps
CHEKIN hard across the face.*

IVAN (Con't)

(Screaming) Do it!

The S/E builds as CHEKIN grabs IVAN's shoulders, shakes him hard, then pushes him backward. He falls on IVAN, they roll around, passionately kissing for a moment or two, then stop with CHEKIN on top. From a push-up position, he lowers his head and kisses IVAN deeply. They freeze as the stage abruptly goes dark. The S/E continues.

END OF SCENE FOUR

SCENE FIVE

The S/E continues at half as the two presumably have intercourse. After a sustained pause, it grows louder until it's almost unpleasant, at which point a huge church-type bell begins to toll (until indicated).

The stage lights come up full. The SHADES are gone. Simultaneously, the S/E drops to an enhanced normal (the bell continues to toll full voice (see Sound Addendum #12). Still on the bed, CHEKIN sits up like a shot. He desperately pulls himself together while IVAN is stretching. IVAN reaches out to pull him back.

CHEKIN

(Hissing as he pushes Ivan away) I have to go. Please. Please. I have to go.

IVAN

(Pouting) You always have to go.

Suddenly, the door clangs and the bell stops tolling. The S/E is still nervous.

CHEKIN

(Frightened) Oh, God. *(He pulls on his boots)* Oh, God. Oh, God. Oh, God.

VLASEV

(Pounding on the door) Chekin, fix this damned door or you're going back to the ranks. I mean it.

CHEKIN

(Whispering to IVAN) Just lay there. Don't move. *(Calling out as he runs to the door)* Sorry, Sir. Coming, Sir. When I got here it was fine. *(He unlocks it and pulls it open.)*

VLASEV

(Storming in, X'ing to stage L) God, Lieutenant, when *did* you get here? *(He turns.)*

CHEKIN

(Saluting nervously) I have the watch, Captain. I came when the alarm sounded.

VLASEV

(Vlasev studies them both and he nods suspiciously) Yes ... well done, then ... I suppose. *(Indicating Ivan)* Why is he still asleep?

CHEKIN

(*Eager to change the subject*) Sir, the alarm? That's the first time I've heard it since I was ordered here.

VLASEV

(*Angry and tired, dropping into the USL seat*) Christ, Lieutenant ... That imbecile, Mirovich ... he thinks he can do it.

CHEKIN

Sir?

VLASEV

(*Kicking Ivan with his right foot*) Wake up, Moron. This concerns you, you should hear it. (*Ivan "wakes," scrambles onto the floor C and cowers.*)

IVAN

(*Stuttering and frightened*) Yes, Sir. Please, Sir. Sorry, Sir.

VLASEV

Mirovich is saying out loud that *Prisoner #1* is the Baby Tsar and should be restored.

CHEKIN

(*Worried*) Dear, God.

VLASEV

So far, he's confined his stupidity to the barracks. He wouldn't dare say it in the mess.

CHEKIN

Rumors are rife, Sir. Don't some of the other officers ...

VLASEV

(*Snorting*) ... he owes us all money.

CHEKIN

Oh.

VLASEV

An impoverished aristocrat is like tits on a boar. No sympathy, no takers. As far as we know, his only follower is one Appolon Ushakov, who is *nobody*.

CHEKIN

(*Under his breath*) Actually, an orderly, I think.

VLASEV

His family's been trying to restore itself since taking Mazeppa's side in 1708. He's been taught *nothing* else, so he prays and gambles. (*Looking at Chekin*) Too many of you fall like that.

CHEKIN

The life of a third son isn't easy, Captain. I don't believe I've had a problem with either of those.

VLASEV

(Laughing) Not those. But, you're an exceptional drinker, Chekin ... you're not exactly a saint ... you and Mirovich have that in common ... excellent drinkers ...

CHEKIN

(Again, eager to change the subject) Sir, the alarm?

VLASEV

Yes ... well. *(Standing)* Mirovich is missing. He usually attends evening mass to beg God to give back his money. *(Kicking IVAN on the floor)* You hear that, nitwit? He thinks you can do that. *(Kicking him again)* If he restores you, *you'll* pay his debts. Is that right, Your Majesty? You're going to pay his debts?

IVAN puts his arms over his head and cowers.

CHEKIN

(Insisting) Captain, the alarm?

VLASEV

(Stepping over Ivan as he X's to the door) Yes, well, Mirovich can't be found and there are weapons missing. The Commandant is sure it's nothing, but I can't take a chance. *(He turns back, grimly)* We can't take a chance. Come. The sooner we find this cretin, the sooner we can drink.

He turns and exits, followed by CHEKIN who turns back at the door, pauses, then crosses himself (right thumb and first two fingers to forehead, chest, right shoulder, left shoulder), comes to attention and bows deeply.

CHEKIN

Courage, my love. I won't let him hurt you.

He backs out of the room and gently pulls the door closed behind him.

IVAN

(Getting up and calling out as he staggers to the door) Count? Count? *(He falls against the door and sighs deeply as he caresses it)* Don't go away. Please, don't go away. *(He turns back, leans against the door and whispers)* You all go away.

The S/E rises slightly, adding to the unsettled nature of the prison. Distant music begins to play (see Sound Addendum #13). The SHADES move out of the wall. For the rest of the play, they are courtiers; bowing and curtsying every time they move. IVAN VI reigns, if only for a moment.

ELIZABETH X's directly to IVAN as ALEXIS X's to the foot of the bed and retrieves a box seat. He moves it SC in front of the bed, picks up a blanket, spreads it with a flourish over the seat and backs away SL in a low bow. If possible, this blanket, which has been on the bed throughout the play, is ragged and dirty on one side, as splendid as possible on the other, thus allowing ALEXIS to create a temporary "throne" for IVAN. ELIZABETH, with her arm around IVAN's shoulders, guides him gently to the seat. He turns and sits. She backs away in a curtsy. The music, by Jean-Baptiste Lully, increases in volume, while the S/E lowers briefly to normal.

The SHADES bow and curtsy, raise their arms, move together, and dance the pavane (an elegant 16th century court dance) until indicated. IVAN is delighted. He claps his hands and laughs.

ELIZABETH

A pavane, Your Majesty. Something French, I think.

ALEXIS

Your mother's favorite dance. Count Lynar introduced it.

IVAN

Was *he* not her favorite?

ALEXIS

(*Amused*) It's a confusing concept, Your Majesty.

ELIZABETH

Suffice to say, Anna Leopoldovna liked them both.

ALEXIS

(Wryly) A lot.

IVAN

(*Clapping and laughing*) We like them both a lot.

ALEXIS

(*Amused*) Maybe not quite so much as your mother did.

ELIZABETH

Music is universal, Count. Lieutenant Chekin was a surprise.

ALEXIS

A welcome surprise, surely.

ELIZABETH

A final gift from the almighty, perhaps?

ALEXIS

(*Coldly*) A paltry token, considering. (*To IVAN*) Does Count Chekin please you, sire?

IVAN

He is our favorite. (*Smiling, clapping again*) He would like this.

ALEXIS

That would be his duty, Sire.

IVAN

(*Seriously*) He is our friend. He will not let us be hurt.

ALEXIS

A *true* friend, then.

IVAN

My *only* friend (*Laughing and clapping*).

The S/E begins to reflect a change in the prison. The sounds of conflict increase and the music grows louder. Apparently uneasy, the SHADES dance a bit more anxiously (see Sound Addendum #14). Regardless, the music and dancing still excite IVAN.

IVAN

(*Excited*) Me. Me. Me. (*Clapping*) Let us dance. I want to dance.

ALEXIS

(Reaching out to Ivan) Dancing is good, Sire. It will teach you elegance and grace.

IVAN laughs as he runs forward to a position between the SHADES. They part, take his hands on each side, and the three engage in a sort of 17th century line dance. IVAN stumbles a lot, but he has fun and there's a lot of laughing. This goes on as long as it works.

*Then, GUNSHOTS from outside are heard. Everyone is startled. The music stops abruptly. The SHADES pull away from IVAN, ELIZABETH to **SR** and ALEXIS to **SL**.*

ELIZABETH

(As she curtsies) I fear our conversation is coming to an end.

ALEXIS

(As he bows) As all things must.

Confused and frightened, IVAN staggers backward and falls onto his throne as the SHADES hold their positions. The S/E builds indicating that Milovich's attempt to free IVAN is underway.

The door opens. Chaos reigns outside. CHEKIN enters, slams the door and X's to IVAN. The sound decreases, but now includes distant violence.

CHEKIN

(Dropping to his knee and kissing IVAN's right hand) Your Majesty ... Ivan ... dearest. Mirovich is coming.

IVAN

(Wildly) We cannot pay his debts.

CHEKIN

No, no. Of course not. Why would you think that?

IVAN

The C ... Captain said ...

CHEKIN

(*Angry*) The Captain is an idiot.

IVAN

S ... So many idiots. Is that like a C ... *Count*?

CHEKIN

(*Beside himself*) Your Majesty, Mirovich is coming to set you free.

IVAN

(*Laughing*) Then, maybe we *will* p ... pay his debts.

CHEKIN

(*Furious*) Forget Mirovich's debts. He will be stopped. (*In agony*) You ... don't ... understand ...

CHEKIN crosses himself, grasps IVAN's hand and fondles it tenderly. The SHADES bow and hold their positions as VLASEV bursts into the room, grasps what's going on and explodes. He slams the door and drops the bar as the S/E increases to indicate an angry crowd outside, demanding to get in (see Sound Addendum #15).

VLASEV

(*Enraged*) You're going to hang, Chekin.

CHEKIN

(*Staying at IVAN's feet as he takes a stand*) He is the Tsar, Captain ... absolutely and beyond doubt ... (*kissing IVAN's hand*) ... His Imperial Majesty ...

IVAN

(*Frightened now, he stammers*) We are the Sovereign of Russia?

VLASEV

(*Viciously, at IVAN*) The *dead* Sovereign of Russia. Mirovich has *detained* the Governor. He and his radical friends are on their way.

IVAN

F ... For what?

CHEKIN

(*Crying*) To set you free, Your Majesty.

VLASEV

(*With cruelty*) To set us *all* free.

IVAN

(Worried) Isn't that a g ... good thing?

CHEKIN

(Choking) Oh, God. No ...

IVAN

(A short tantrum) Why *isn't* that a good thing?

CHEKIN *rises and steps in front of IVAN. VLASEV moves to face him, his back to the audience.*

CHEKIN

(Desperately) Captain, please. No ...

IVAN

(Hiding, stuttering and demanding) You will stop this. We will have your head.

VLASEV

(Snapping to attention, saluting) Your Imperial Majesty, Ivan the Sixth, Tsar of Russia, Ward of the Holy Synod. By direct order of Catherine the Second, you cannot be set free without her written permission. Since no such permission has been received, and since an attempt to set you free is in progress, it is ordered that you be executed in an merciful and timely manner. *(Dropping his salute, he backs up a step or two, looks at Chekin and barks an order)* Lieutenant, do your duty.

CHEKIN

(Horrificed) Captain Vlasev ... Sir ... no ... please ... you can't do this.

VLASEV

(Coldly) I'm *not* going to do it, Lieutenant. *You* are. Kill him.

CHEKIN

(Shocked and appalled) Sir!

IVAN

(As royally as possible while hiding and stuttering) I'll have your head.

VLASEV

(Drawing his sword) Do your duty or I'll kill you both. *(Loudly)* Kill him!

CHEKIN

(Agonized) I can't ... oh, God ... I can't ...

VLASEV

(Enraged) You can, Lieutenant. You can. By order of Her Imperial Majesty, Catherine the Second, *(screaming)* kill him!

CHEKIN freezes. *He's still directly in front of IVAN. Suddenly, he moves two steps away leaving IVAN there trembling, pulls a knife out of his belt with his left hand, and whirls around to face IVAN. He snaps to attention and salutes. He is crying.*

CHEKIN

(Hoarsely) Ivan ... my sweet friend ... no one will hurt you ever again.

With his left hand, in one sweeping motion, CHEKIN slits IVAN's throat. He steps back, drops the knife, and comes to rigid attention as IVAN grabs his neck.

IVAN

(Standing and surprised, IVAN looks at CHEKIN and smiles, as blood pours through his fingers and down his body. He speaks as innocently as possible) We think we will go home now, Count. *(Smiling)* It will be nice to go home. *(He coughs and falls lifeless to the floor as the SHADES back into the wall and vanish.)*

CHEKIN

(As splendidly as he is able) God bless Ivan the Sixth, God bless the Tsar. *(Falling apart)* God bless Ivan ... my Ivan ... *(crying, he falls to the floor and takes IVAN in his arms as he speaks softly)* Oh, Ivanushka ... *(Sobbing quietly)* Oh, my love. My dear, sweet love. *(Ad lib as appropriate until the end.)*

VLASEV

(VLASEV watches them for a moment, then looks straight at the audience) It cannot be denied. Lust is truth. For some men, it is the only truth they ever know.

Moved, in spite of himself, VLASEV snaps to attention, clicks his heels, salutes with his sword, and cries out with great heart.

VLASEV (Con't)

God bless Ivan the Sixth. God bless his Imperial Majesty, Sovereign and Autocrat of all the Russias. God bless the Tsar. *(Ringing out and echoed in the S/E)* God ... bless ... Ivan ... the Sixth. *(He freezes and the play goes dark.)*

END OF ACT TWO

CURTAIN

SOUND ADDENDUM

The basic sonic environment consists of a loop of prison noises; metal doors clanging, distant screams, guards giving orders, echoed noises supporting the idea of hard surfaces. This should be about ten minutes in length, or at least long enough so it isn't obvious that it repeats itself. Once it begins to play, it can be left alone throughout.

There are sixteen instances, indicated in the script, where the sonic environment features specific subjects. These are *suggestions* that should be blended into the mix as subtly as possible. In every instance, the words are distant, whispered and ghostly.

#1: (*General rumors. Indistinct and distant.*)

"Ivan VI," "Baby Tsar," "Prisoner #1," "True sovereign"

#2: (*General rumors. More specific, still distant.*)

"Ivan VI," "Baby Tsar," "Prisoner #1," "True sovereign," "God's anointed," "Crowned," "Prison," "Elizabeth II," "Grandson of Ivan V," "Is he the Tsar?," "Why does no one see him?," "Can it be true?"

#3: (*Buildup to the rape.*)

Distant screams, "Ivan VI," "Baby Tsar," "Prisoner #1," "True sovereign," "God's anointed," "Stop," "My wife," "Have you thought about my wife?," "You agreed"

#4: (*Ivan's Rape.*)

Echoed screaming, "Ivan VI," "Baby Tsar," "Prisoner #1," "True sovereign," "God's anointed," "Unholy," "Crowned," "Please," "Please stop," "No," "My friend," "Help me," "I am your your friend!" (echoed)

#5: (*The morning after. Quiet.*)

Soft sobbing. "Tsar Ivan VI," "True Tsar," "Ivanushka," "Prisoner #1," "Anointed," "Our sovereign," "Sweet boy," "Doomed," "Your majesty"

#6: (*Ivan expresses his desire for Chekin.*)

"We will have him," "We want him," "Waht him," "Our favorite," "He is our favorite," "He belongs to us," "Favorite"

#7: (*Ivan is happy for a moment.*)

Birds chirping. Distant laughter

#8: (*Ivan and Chekin prepare to hook up. Happy but Mirovich added.*)

Distant music box, Distant laughter, "Count Chekin," "Our favorite," "Set him free," "True Tsar," "Mirovich must be watched."

#9: (*Ivan and Chekin make love.*)

Music box and laughter more prevalent, Birds chirping

- #10: (*Ivan and Chekin make love. Still happy, but more Mirovich.*)
 Music box, laughter, "He might be the Tsar," "Mirovich, Mirovich, Mirovich,"
 "Is he the sovereign?" "Is he, is he, is he," "Free the boy," "Unholy." "Watch
 him."
- #11: (*The prison is getting antsy as they make love. This builds until #12.*)
 "Release him," "God will punish us," "Let him out," "The baby Tsar, the baby
 Tsar, the baby Tsar," "Ivan the Sixth."
- #12: (*Building to the ALARM BELL*)
 "Release him," "God will punish us," "Let him out," "The baby Tsar, the baby
 Tsar, the baby Tsar," "Ivan the Sixth, "Set him free," "Mercy for the Tsar,"
 "Mercy."
- #13: (*Music for dancing, a very nervous S/E.*)
 "Release him," "God will punish us," "Let him out," "The baby Tsar, the baby
 Tsar, the baby Tsar," "Ivan the Sixth, "Set him free," "Mercy for the Tsar,"
 "Mercy, mercy, mercy."
- #14: (*Music gets louder and stops. Mirovich is coming.*)
 Gun shots, "Release him," "Mercy for the Tsar," "Let him out," "Set him
 free," "God save the baby Tsar," "God save Ivan the Sixth."
- #15: (*Mirovich is here, trying to get in.*)
 Gun shots, pounding on the door, "God will punish us," "The baby Tsar,"
 "Free him, free him, free him," "Mercy, mercy, mercy."
- #16: (*Ivan's murder.*)
 Screaming, pounding on the door, "Set him free," "Mercy for the Tsar," "Free
 him, free him, free him," "Mercy, mercy, mercy," "God have mercy," "God
 bless Ivan the Sixth" (echoed).