

The Mystic Monk

By Flora-King Smith

ACT 1

SCENE 1

SETTING:

Open at Saint Petersburg Russia 1916. We are just outside the Yusupov Palace. The ground is covered with ice and snow. Far behind the scene lies a yellow and white palace adorned in light with gates out in the front. Snow continues to fall and music can be heard in the distance from inside of the palace. Two men (YOUSSUPOV and PAVLOVICH) can be seen dragging a large bound object (RASPUTIN) through the snow and towards the river. The men are wearing many layers of warm jackets. All of a sudden the scene stops as a record scratch plays. The large bound object stands up, shakes off it's bounds and the snow, and walks front center stage. It's RASPUTIN. He doesn't seem alarmed or scared, in fact, he seems content.

RASPUTIN:

(to the audience)

Hello and welcome to the show. Apologies I can not entertain you under better circumstances, but as you can see, I don't have much hold on the current standing. Though the bell is soon to toll, it has not yet, and so in these last moments I want to prove to you that this drunken monk can survive...but the story doesn't start here.

A beat

RASPUTIN

(to YOUSSUPOV and PAVLOVICH, gesturing at the set)

Youssupov, Pavlovich, the scene please.

(YOUSSUPOV and PAVLOVICH unfreeze. They begin to clean up the set. The river and gates are moved off stage, but the palace is moved to the side of the stage that RASPUTIN is on . The other side are outlines of houses and a bench (PRASKOVIA should probably bring these on when she enters). It should look like the village Pokrovskoye, Russia 1914. YOUSSUPOV and PAVLOVICH exit the stage. PRASVOKIA's side of the stage goes dark as THE CZARINA enters on the other side and stands next to RASPUTIN. She is dressed in a large fancy dress. She has a large crown with a veil. RASPUTIN looks like a disgusting trash man compared to her.

The russian word is pronounced "lyuBEEmy")

THE CZARINA

Grigori, Любимый.

(RASPUTIN to the audience)

RASPUTIN

Excuse me, I'm needed. You understand.

(RASPUTIN turns his attention to THE CZARINA)

RASPUTIN

Hello Czarina.

THE CZARINA

Please call me Czarina Alexandra.

RASPUTIN

I couldn't, too informal.

THE CZARINA

(laughs)

We're friends, friend's have no need for formality.

RASPUTIN

How have you been? My visit to Yusupov is nearly over and I've hardly seen you.

THE CZARINA

A tragedy really. But you've been out on the town so often.

RASPUTIN

Ah, what can I say? I am a man of the people. And what of Alexi? How is the boy?

THE CZARINA

Alexi is fine. I thought you knew? In my last letter to you I thanked you for your help.

RASPUTIN

I did nothing. I simply assured you he would live.

THE CZARINA

And that made all the difference.

RASPUTIN

So how may I assist you?

THE CZARINA

Well as you may have heard, Pyotr has passed.

RASPUTIN

Yes, always terrible when a Prime Minister passes.

THE CZARINA

(smiling excitedly)

But, now that he is gone you may formally return to the palace. No more sneaking back when things are most dire. Isn't it grand?

RASPUTIN

It is ever so nice to see you smile Czarina Alexandra.

THE CZARINA

Pyotr was a nice man, but I couldn't trust him. After what he did to you? I could never see him as loyal.

RASPUTIN

He was scared. People do many ridiculous things when they fear something.

THE CZARINA

But you healed his child. You helped him. And for him to believe rumors against the man who aided him in his time of need just a few months after the fact...it's despicable.

RASPUTIN

I suppose. But I did not expect much from a man who suppressed and took advantage of peasants.

THE CZARINA

Now then, I know this is a bit late, but I have set up a room for you. Permanent I might add. I picked out the bedding myself. I figured this would be easier for you in between traveling. And of course your girls can visit.

RASPUTIN

Czarina Alexandra, you are too kind.

THE CZARINA

But of course, (*Pronounced: lyuBEEemiy*) Любимый

RASPUTIN

I am so glad we got to meet before I returned home.

THE CZARINA

As am I. Please be safe and come back soon.

(The side of the stage with THE CZARINA goes dark and the side with PRASKOVIA goes up. PRASKOVIA and RASPUTIN meet each other and begin slowly walking together. PRASKOVIA is wearing an old long dress and many layers. She's also got on a medium black hat. While this scene is happening the palace side of the stage is cleared.)

RASPUTIN

And what of the kids?

PRASKOVIA

Oh, and now you have interest in the children, I see.

RASPUTIN

Praskovia, don't start.

PRASKOVIA

Start? I'm not starting anything, Grigori. I just find it shocking that after leaving your wife and children, you decide to come back for a visit. What is the comfort from the Czaria starting to wear off.

RASPUTIN

Honestly women, have you no shame, to speak of the Czaria in such a manner. You know we are just friends. She needs me. It's my job. I'm practically the advisor.

PRASKOVIA

"Practically" doesn't fill the stomach. We're starving out here.

RASPUTIN

I know, my love. I know and I am working on it. It's the Czar, he won't listen. I tell him the mills are full of grain and he says great and lets them rot. I am fighting for the people. As much as I can.

PRASKOVIA

And I appreciate that. I do, but I've never seen a man of the people more hated than you, Grigori. The people talk and say all sorts of things. Hear me when I say the excess drinking and

sexual charades aren't helping our case. You get around enough in our village, must you indulge your lusts everywhere else?

RASPUTIN

I indulge where indulgence seems fit. It's not my fault that Russia has such beauties.

PRASKOVIA

But they're saying you're a disreputable peasant. A social climber! They say you attracted an unsavory element within the court.

RASPUTIN

Let them say what they want to say, they're hypocrites.

PRASKOVIA

Maybe so, but I understand their perspective. A peasant not only living, but having influence in the palace, it makes Russia look weak. Could you not worship in a way that makes this family and country look pure?

RASPUTIN

What is worship without sin?

PRASKOVIA

You say like you know.

RASPUTIN

I'm a monk.

(RASPUTIN AND PRASKOVIA walk till they reach a bench near a market. They sit down on the bench towards each other.)

PRASKOVIA

You're not a monk. You're a satyromaniac.

RASPUTIN

You know as well as I do, that that's not true.

PRASKOVIA

I understand you have your needs, but I have mine. If I can say there's enough of you to go around and I don't mind sharing, then you should be able to say you'll take care of me. You won't let this family go hungry.

RASPUTIN

And you haven't gone hungry yet, have you?

PRASKOVIA

Well no-

RASPUTIN

And Maria and Varvara attend a private school in Petersburg thanks to me, yes?

PRASKOVIA

That is true.

RASPUTIN

Then I have provided. For our son, our little ladies, and you. I don't understand the problem, Praskovia.

PRASKOVIA

I just worry about you.

RASPUTIN

What?

PRASKOVIA

You're one of the most hated men in Russia and I'm married to you. I'm allowed to worry. I know you love our children and you make sure I'm attended to. But when I hear gossip of the Duma ordering investigations on you I get scared. They are the government, they could've hurt us.

RASPUTIN

But they didn't. That was issued a year ago and here I still stand.

PRASKOVIA

Look, I'm not mad at my life or yours. I just miss your company and knowing you're safe.

RASPUTIN

I hear God. He watches me, guides me, speaks to me. How could I be any more safe?

PRASKOVIA lets out a small laugh

PRASKOVIA

Well, you're not exactly inconspicuous.

RASPUTIN

What do you mean?

PRASKOVIA

Well, for a man who lives in a palace...you're not exactly the cleanest.

RASPUTIN

Say what you will, but personal hygiene is just a blockade while communing with God. What's a better way to connect with the earth than to smell like it?

PRASKOVIA

Then you are aware of your...um...odor.

RASPUTIN

I have not changed my undergarments in six months. There is bound to be a remaining stench.

PRASKOVIA

And somehow I am still attracted to you.

RASPUTIN

It's not your fault. Though I have sinned I am a good man and you are a good woman. It is only natural that we connect.

PRASKOVIA trying not to be swayed or amused, touches his beard with a joking
condescension

PRASKOVIA

You have crumbs in your beard.

RASPUTIN

A smart maneuver on my part. I now have a snack for later. How do you think I triumphed in my many pilgrimages? I was always prepared for extra food.

(PRASKOVIA stands up and offers her hand to RASPUTIN. He takes it and uses it to stand up as well. KHIONIYA entered the scene from the opposite side of the stage. She wanders around the stage while PRASKOVIA and RASPUTIN talk, making herself busy. She seems to be keeping her eye on RASPUTIN.)

PRASKOVIA

Speaking of food, I may talk to a vendor while you go and deposit your telegram. Would you like anything, not that there are many options? I know you say you're satisfied with your crumbs, but I would be delighted if I could find a vegetable around here.

RASPUTIN

I'm fine, thank you.

(PRASKOVIA and RASPUTIN begin to separate. PRASKOVIA exits the stage left. As RASPUTIN begins to exit stage right, KHIONIYA nervously approaches RASPUTIN and stops him. She looks small and non-threatening. She wears a large cloak to hide a dagger she's holding. She stops RASPUTIN to get his attention.)

KHIONIYA

Excuse me sir, could I borrow you for a moment?

RASPUTIN

Yes. How may I help you?

(KHIONIYA gestures to RASPUTIN to bend closer to reach her height. RASPUTIN bends lowers, slightly confused.)

KHIONIYA

I'm looking for the Guseva family. You see, I was told we would meet here, but I haven't seen them. I was wondering if you knew them and if you did that-

(As RASPUTIN is listening to KHIONIYA. RASPUTIN turns to the audience as KHIONIYA continues talking.)

RASPUTIN

It was around this time I should have realized what was going to happen. The cloak, the prolonged dialogue, the nervous shifts in her body. I was about to experience my first assassination attempt.

(RASPUTIN turns back to KHIONIYA. She pulls out a knife. As soon as she does this the lights change and everything goes in slow motion)

RASPUTIN

It happened in slow motion. I saw the flash of my life within her knife and I remembered how she screeched.

(KHIONIYA stabs RASPUTIN. The lights and timing go back to normal. Realizing what has happened, RASPUTIN hunches over and steps back some. The people on the street gasp and all begin to gather and look and point.)

KHIONIYA

I've killed the Antichrist!

(RASPUTIN begins to run. KHIONIYA follows him with her knife out. The spectators run and follow the people. The last couple people to exit the stage should take the house outline backdrop with them. This ends the first scene.)

SCENE 2

(Small beds should be already set on the side of the stage THE CZARINA was previously on. The bench from the previous scene now has a blanket laid on top of it. It should look like a cheap hospital bed. The cast comes back on stage bringing beds for the side of the stage that PRASKOVIA was on. Each cast member (RASPUTIN and THE CZARINA excluded) should lay in a bed facing away from the audience. There is no backdrop, it should feel crowded with people, but lonely. RASPUTIN enters and sits on the bed bench. The lights are dim)

RASPUTIN

And that was the first of many ventures of my life. And as unsuccessful as it was, it did change me. The light you are about to see me in, isn't the brightest.

(RASPUTIN takes a flask from his pocket and takes a swig.)

RASPUTIN

But we do what must to cope.

(RASPUTIN, obviously drunk, tries to take another sip, but realizes it's empty. He turns the flask over and tries to shake it out. It really is empty. Upset, he places it on the bed and sticks a hand in his other pocket and pulls out another flask to drink from.)

RASPUTIN

The start of this story is just as gruesome as the end. You see, because this is the story of assasination. The constant murder of a man who refused to die.

(THE CZARINA enters, poorly disguised. She looks around the room until she spots RASPUTIN. She makes her way to him, obviously trying to avoid touching the other patients)

THE CZARINA

Grigori!

(RASPUTIN takes a moment, confused. He then realizes it's THE CZARINA)

RASPUTIN

Czari-

THE CZARINA

Shh. Really? What do you think you're doing? I'm undercover.

RASPUTIN

Yes, my mistake. Apologies, but I'm surprised to see you here. I thought you hated small villages.

THE CZARINA

It's a public hospital. I'm allowed to be here.

RASPUTIN

Yes, of course.

THE CZARINA

We need to talk. It's rather important.

(The CZARINA takes out a battered letter. She gestures it at RASPUTIN)

THE CZARINA

This letter you sent...is it- was it a joke?

RASPUTIN

No. I've been sitting in this hospital for weeks, I've lost the energy for jokes.

THE CZARINA

Was your head in the right place? Do you remember what you wrote?

RASPUTIN

Of course. Word for word.

THE CZARINA

Well?

(RASPUTIN lets out a sigh, he closes his eyes so recite the letter from memory)

RASPUTIN

A terrible storm cloud lays over Russia. Disaster, grief, murky darkness and no light, a whole ocean of tears, there is no counting them. And so much blood. The disaster is great. The misery: infinite.

(RASPUTIN opens his eyes and looks at THE CZARINA)

THE CZARINA

And how was I supposed to react to that. I was terrified, that's how. You cannot just begin a letter by asking about my day and then end with how you have been stabbed and Russia's infinite misery.

RASPUTIN

And why not? I was truly curious to how you were doing.

THE CZARINA

I am doing quite badly. This news is nightmarish. Do you know what this terrible storm cloud is? Is there a way to prevent it?

RASPUTIN

I'm afraid not. How did your husband respond? Has he prepared himself or your family?

(THE CZARINA looks confused before realizing)

THE CZARINA

What? Oh no, I took it from him before he could read it. You never write to him, I assumed you meant to address me.

RASPUTIN

I see.

THE CZARINA

Do not worry, I did fill him in. He seemed to think that the stabbing confused you.

RASPUTIN

It could have, but unfortunately do not think that is the case.

THE CZARINA

It is not that I don't trust you, Grigori. I do trust you more than most anyone else, but this is so unexpected. Our rule has been wonderful.

RASPUTIN

If I could offer my help, I would, but as of now, The Heavens have told me very little.

THE CZARINA

You don't think this has to do with The Archduke Ferdinand, do you?

RASPUTIN

I don't believe I follow.

THE CZARINA

You must have heard. He was assassinated. It was deeply sad, but of course you were stabbed on the same day and I only have time to mourn one person.

RASPUTIN

Dead? How did I not know of this?

THE CZARINA

I feel it's a waste of breath to share news with the dying. But you are not dead now are you? And now that I know this, the news is all yours.

RASPUTIN

I wish the nurses had informed me.

THE CZARINA

This place is filthy, I don't blame the nurses for skipping pleasantries and quickly getting out. Someone should really do something about the quality of these hospitals.

RASPUTIN

I will be out of here soon and then I will help you with this predicament. I promise.

THE CZARINA

Right. Yes, I know, but for now I must return back to my home. I'm glad our conversation could be so informative.

RASPUTIN

You're leaving? But you just arrived.

THE CZARINA

Indeed, I've been here for simply too long. Goodbye, Grigori.

(RASPUTIN watched THE CZARINA exit. As she exits, the cast exits the beds and drag them offstage in a different direction. Three of the beds are pushed together and left on stage.

RASPUTIN sticks a large headboard on the end)

SCENE 3

The lighting should change and become more shady. Like a dingy motel room vibe. RASPUTIN. RASPUTIN seems significantly more tired. There should be some obvious proof of a time shift. It is now 1916 in Russia and RASPUTIN is staying at an inn of sorts. Once the bed is placed, RASPUTIN sits on the end and looks to the audience.

RASPUTIN

With a death in every scene, this story is not for the lighthearted. My life was not for the lighthearted. And so we must harden ourselves...

(RASPUTIN takes a swig from his flask)

RASPUTIN

in more ways than one.

(RASPUTIN winks at the audience)

RASPUTIN

Enter Adriyana.

(ADRIYANA enters the opposite stage of RASPUTIN. She knocks on an imaginary door.

RASPUTIN pulls himself away from the audience and looks to the door, knowingly.)

RASPUTIN:

Come in!

(ADRIYANA enters, RASPUTIN stands and takes a few steps toward her.)

RASPUTIN

Why, hello there.

ADRIYANA

Grigori Rasputin?

RASPUTIN

Or so I've been called.

ADRIYANA

Of the Czar and Czarina?

RASPUTIN

Are you suggesting there's more than one of me?

(ADRIYANA pulls a revolver out and points it to RASPUTIN. RASPUTIN puts his arms in the air, but he doesn't seem to be scared of disgruntled. ADRIYANA seems nervous).

ADRIYANA

Any last words?

RASPUTIN

You're very beautiful. Care to stay the night.

ADRIYANA
(confused)

I don't sleep with dead men.

RASPUTIN

And lucky for you, I am well and alive.

ADRIYANA

I have a gun pointed at you.

RASPUTIN

As many have before and many will again.

ADRIYANA

H-how are you so cocky?

(she sniffs the air)

Are you- Are you drunk?

RASPUTIN

Probably.

ADRIYANA

Are you not scared?

RASPUTIN

Look into my eyes, girl.

(ADRIYANA looks into RASPUTIN'S eyes.)

RASPUTIN

Do I look scared to you?

(ADRIYANA'S face slightly calms, she can't seem to pull herself away from his eyes.)

ADRIYANA

But--

RASPUTIN

I don't fear you. I can tell you that this isn't the way I die. God watches me, he loves me. Why would He kill me when I am his vessel?

(ADRIYANA staring into RASPUTIN'S eyes, lowers the gun ever so slightly)

ADRIYANA

God would never choose a man like you. If you're a prophet you're a false one. Why would He choose you?

RASPUTIN

The question is not why he did, but how it could benefit you.

ADRIYANA

You're disgusting and selfish. How could someone like you influence the Czarina? You aren't a medic or a minister.

RASPUTIN

You're right. I'm a mystic.

ADRIYANA

A Mystic?

RASPUTIN

I could mystify you if you let me

(ADRIYANA touches her breast)

ADRIYANA

And how would you- no. You've laid with the Czarina. You're ruining the country. I couldn't.

RASPUTIN

And if I was with the Czarina, how would that impact the country?

ADRIYANA

You're using her! Manipulating her.

RASPUTIN

Are you suggesting that fornication with me is so good it can cause mind control.

ADRIYANA

Yes! I mean no. That's not what I meant. You're not the type of man the Czarina should find herself attracted to.

RASPUTIN

And you?

ADRIYANA

What about me?

RASPUTIN

Do you not find yourself needy near me?

ADRIYANA

I beg your pardon?

RASPUTIN

Like you're going to melt in my arms.

(ADRIYANA lowers the gun a little bit more and takes a step forward, intrigued, but trying to cover it).

ADRIYANA

Would you be able to catch me?

RASPUTIN

I have traveled to amazing places and carried heavy and expensive things. To hold you would not only be a blessing, but a day off.

(RASPUTIN sticks out his hand. ADRIYANA, wonderstruck, hands him the gun. He takes it from her and puts it away.)

RASPUTIN

We hardly know each other. What quandaries could you possibly have with me? I have done nothing to you. Hurt no one you know. The only thing I can offer to you is redemption and a chance to connect with God through sin.

(ADRIYANA seems so tempted. She quickly changes the topic.)

ADRIYANA

But the cult. The Khlysty?

RASPUTIN

No, I'm not with them. But they aren't completely wrong. Sex is a righteous thing.

(ADRIYANA blinks her eyes, trying to think through how she got here and why she gave him the gun.)

ADRIYANA

Righteous?

(RASPUTIN walks to ADRIYANA. He lightly touches her shoulder.)

RASPUTIN

The way they...touch each other.

(RASPUTIN traces ADRIYANA's body lightly. His eyes wander all over her body, hungrily until he reaches her eyes and stares deeply into them. She seems transfixed. It's sensual. She swallows.)

RASPUTIN

To breathe so heavily it is like you're whispering your thoughts into Heaven. To drive out sin with sin. Like the garden serpent's satin tongue tracing the most sacred part of your body, each moan is like a prayer. And oh how I want to make you pray.

ADRIYANA

(choked up)

B-but the snake is- I thought the snake was the v-villain.

RASPUTIN

How could one who offers certain knowledge of good and evil be bad?

ADRIYANA

But The Lord said--

(RASPUTIN pulls ADRIYANA even closer)

RASPUTIN

(whispering seductively)

He makes exceptions for people as alluring as you.

(ADRIYANA and RASPUTIN begin kissing each other and making their way towards RASPUTIN'S bed.)

RASPUTIN

My dear, sometimes we want things and we shame ourselves for wanting them, so we trick ourselves into thinking we want something else?

ADRIYANA

And what do I want?

RASPUTIN

Me.

(They both lay down. They begin kissing and then having sex. As this is happening someone comes and pulls the bed off stage. The lights change to be bright, a fancy red couch with THE CZARINA lounging on it is pushed to the center of the stage. THE CZAR pushes a complimentary chest/vanity on the stage close to the couch. He crosses and stands on the other side of the couch to be near THE CZARINA.)

SCENE 4

(THE CZARINA is lounging on a beautiful red couch, taking up all the room. THE CZAR is standing next to the side of the couch with THE CZARINA's head. They adlib quietly to each other. THE CZAR is holding a watch or pocket watch and keeps checking the time. THE CZAR seems nervous.)

THE CZAR

Where is he, Alexandra? I'm not used to being stood up.

THE CZARINA

Calm down, it's okay, dear. He'll be here. You know how he is, he gets distracted. But he is a holy man and we cannot interrupt his process.

THE CZAR

Yeah, I mean yes. I get that I just feel like he doesn't value my time like I value his. I have a meeting in an hour and I can't be late. I don't want them getting mad at me like last time.

THE CZARINA

Nicholas, you're the Czar. You have the power over them, use it.

THE CZAR

I know, Alexandra darling. It's just I want to earn their respect, not command it. I just want them to think I'm one of them.

THE CZARINA

(Pronounced: lyubov moya) моя любовь, you are not one of them. You are you. And you are a big strong man who can handle a meeting.

THE CZAR

But I get so nervous talking in front of people. Ugh, I don't know. Why couldn't I just fight in a war like everyone else.

THE CZARINA

You're too important to me to be like everyone else.

(THE CZAR smiles. There is a moment of silence. A beat.)

THE CZAR

Oh, where is he?

(RASPUTIN enters, he looks disgruntled and like he just had sex.. He makes his way next to the CZAR.)

RASPUTIN

I'm here, I'm here, apologies for my late entrance

THE CZARINA

(excited)

Grigori! Thank goodness you've made it.

THE CZAR

Though you reek of sweat, thank you for coming, Rasputin.

RASPUTIN

Please, Grigori is fine.

(RASPUTIN puts his arm around the CZAR)

RASPUTIN

I hope you can excuse me, I was busy doing holy work and the time got away from me.

(The CZAR shakes off RASPUTIN's arm.)

CZAR

Maybe you should sit. Alexandra, make room on the couch, if you could.

(THE CZARINA starts to sit up)

RASPUTIN

Ah, please don't on account of me.

(RASPUTIN goes and sits on top of the chest/vanity. THE CZAR looks shocked and uncomfortable. He looks like he's about to say something, but stops when THE CZARINA looks at him and shakes her head "no". RASPUTIN doesn't seem to notice as he adjusts and gets comfortable.)

RASPUTIN

See, I'm perfectly comfortable. Now, how are you both?

THE CZARINA

Better now that you have arrived. You are ever so wise and we really do need your help.

(RASPUTIN's smiles, he seems fond of CZARINA.)

RASPUTIN

Excellent. Why have you summoned me? Is something wrong with Alexi? How can I help?

THE CZARINA

No, no. Everything's fine with our son. Thank you so much for asking. See, as you might have heard we are currently at war.

RASPUTIN

Yes, I am aware.

THE CZAR

Excellent

RASPUTIN

Though I should warn you, I don't keep up with wars really. They are not quite my thing.

THE CZAR

You don't keep up with them? We were invaded just last year.

RASPUTIN

Hm? I must have been busy that day.

THE CZAR

(trying not to pop a blood vessel)

Busy?-

THE CZARINA

(trying to calm THE CZAR down)

He's just making a joke. You know our Grigori, funny man. He knows about the invasion, don't you (*lyuBEEmy*) Любимый.

RASPUTIN

(lying)

It was simply a jest, Czar. Apologies, I did not mean to offend you.

(THE CZAR takes some breaths and gains his composure)

THE CZAR

Of course, yes, but you must understand the amount of stress I am under. I don't have time for shenanigans

THE CZARINA

(hying him up)

You're so assertive dear.

THE CZAR

(happier)

Indeed. I must be. I command an army, don't I.

RASPUTIN

Excuse me? I think I misunderstood you.

THE CZARINA

How could you forget? Our wonderful Czar has named himself commander-and-chief of the military. Dismissing Grand Duke Nicholas was hard, but as family, he understood our reasoning.

THE CZAR

You were the one who encouraged me to do it, Rasputin.

(RASPUTIN looks to the audience)

RASPUTIN

I must have been very drunk that day. (thinking) Actually, I have been drunk for several weeks.

(RASPUTIN turns back to THE CZAR)

RASPUTIN:

Yes, I did. You are absolutely right. I must be tired.

THE CZARINA

Understandable. (To THE CZAR) Grigori has been helping me make the tough decisions around here. Ruling can be truly exhausting.

THE CZAR

I cannot blame you. I know that even with all by power, I would feel powerless without your help, dear. I am glad we have such a strong Czarina to lead our country while I'm away. Let's hope that Rasputin does not give too terrible advice.

RASPUTIN

If I understand correctly, you have put this country into war, left your position as Czar in order to command the army, though you have no experince, and left your wife to rule though she is deeply unpopular and has other duties she needs to attend to?

THE CZAR

You are a quick learner.

RASPUTIN

(RASPUTIN looks to the audience. He seems to be losing his composure.)

I am starting to see the dark clouds approaching. I can feel them getting heavier, it's about to rain. I was the wind that pushed the storm over Russia.

(A pause, RASPUTIN is thinking about this statement.

RASPUTIN

Just as it is my fate to die, it is also my fate to kill. God was supposed to lead me and He led me here? To destruction? And so all of Russia was correct, I am the villain they painted me to be?

(After he looks like he processed it, he seems to come to a conclusion)

RASPUTIN

I suppose if I must be the downfall of those I call "loved ones", I shall do it in a way no one will forget.

(RASPUTIN pulls a flask out of his pocket. He takes a few big chugs. With a slightly manic look on his face, he looks ready. He turns back to THE CZARINA)

RASPUTIN

A beautiful point you make it. I hope to help you make Russia just as beautiful. And how do you feel you have done so far?

THE CZARINA

]I've taken on the mantle quite well I think.

RASPUTIN:

(to THE CZAR)

And what have you told the people? What have you done for them?

THE CZAR

Well..I...

(THE CZAR trails off as he looks to THE CZARINA for help)

THE CZARINA

Well, he has trouble with public speaking.

RASPUTIN

And is that why he's often "sick" during most formal occasions?

THE CZAR

Please, I'd rather not talk about it.

RASPUTIN

Understandable. Then, what could I do in assistance to you both?

THE CZAR

Well, we would love to hear from you about how God is doing. Is He doing well? Does He think we're doing a good job? That sort of stuff.

RASPUTIN

God?

RASPUTIN

(to the audience)

There is no God in war.

THE CZAR

You are our spiritual connection.

RASPUTIN

But of course. It is just I have advice too, I am more than just a line to God. I believe that involvement in this war will create a catastrophe here, in Russia.

THE CZAR

Yes, but you said those same words a year ago and I held it off for as long as I could. It has gotten to the point where we have no choice.

THE CZARINA

And maybe they do still apply here. The issue is that we no longer have much of a choice. Grigori, I think it might be best if you stay with us until this is all over. We do need your help and sending letters back and forth isn't the best form of communication in a time like this. Do you understand?

RASPUTIN

I do.

THE CZARINA

Excellent. I am ever so glad we had this meeting before (*Pronounced: lyubov moya*) моя любовь has to depart. We were supposed to have some time together before he left, but he's a very busy man.

THE CZAR

Well, I cannot help my position. I would change it if I could.

A beat

THE CZAR

I'm going to go say goodbye to the girls and Alexi before my meeting. I love you, dear.

(THE CZAR bends down and quickly kisses THE CZARINA. He stands up and nods to RASPUTIN)

THE CZAR

(awkwardly)

Rasputin.

RASPUTIN

(acknowledging)

Czar.

(THE CZAR turns and exits. THE CZARINA sits up and looks to RASPUTIN. She pats the spot next to her, offering for him to sit down. He does so. There is a moment of silence before RASPUTIN decides to speak up.)

RASPUTIN

And how are you?

THE CZARINA

I'm quite fine for someone who led a country into war. And you?

RASPUTIN

I am okay, worried about you I suppose.

THE CZARINA

(laughs) Don't be. This is an autocratic rule. Him leaving doesn't change the way we run things. I just got some recognition this time around. Although I do miss him when he's away. I don't want anyone for a second thinking I don't.

RASPUTIN

Is there anything I can do to help?

THE CZARINA

It is nice having you around, I will not lie. The children love you and your mysticism has always comforted me in my times of need.

RASPUTIN

Please, it is nothing. I just do what I can.

THE CZARINA

No, it really is something. When Nicholas and I got married, the court hated our union. They hated me. I think they still do, but mystics and their ways have always brought me contentment, even in a hard time like that. And no other has helped me or been as a good friend to me as you.

RASPUTIN

Czarina Alexandra, please. You must know what they say about me and about us.

THE CZARINA

Of course I do. They think that I would betray my husband. That I would lay with you. They say you control us. But I don't care. I am the Czarina of Russia. I know that I hold the power. That their words are just jealousies and meaninglessness. Nicholas knows it too. He may not be the most dominant man, but he trusts me. He believes and loves me.

RASPUTIN

And how nice that must be.

THE CZARINA

It is my sole belief that it is my duty to reassert Nicholas into power. And is that not love?

RASPUTIN

Your people say such horrible things about me. That I am drunkard, an addict, a whore. Are you not afraid this will lower your standing? Your status?

THE CZARINA

No, because I know the truth. I know if you were what people say you are, you would tell me because you love me. We are family, Grigori.

(RASPUTIN takes a moment to think. He looks guilty, but like he's slowly coming to terms.)

RASPUTIN

I have something to tell you. About the drugs and alcohol and the women, it's all tr--

THE CZARINA

Gossip. I know. You don't have to say. To me you are a saint. Though you may never say it, I know God sent you to us to save the throne and the common people. People may speak bad things, but I know that because of you the people of Russia remain loyal to the emperor.

RASPUTIN

But it is--

THE CZARINA

Grigori, please. I've been meaning to tell you all of this. I am with you. My family is with you. Though The Czar may not admit it, I know he cares about you. He is not great with people, but I can just tell. He gets more words out around you than most people.

RASPUTIN

Thank you, Czarina.

THE CZARINA

I do mean it. I have heard so much, pardon my language, bullshit surrounding you. But people don't know anything. They just think they do.

RASPUTIN

Have you ever thought about telling them...about Alexi? About why I'm here? Maybe then people will finally understand your situation and leave you be.

THE CZARINA

Oh no. If people found out that the next Czar of Russia was so easily weakend, they would panic. This family cannot be seen as helpless.

RASPUTIN

That is a feeling I understand.

THE CZARINA

Besides, not everyone is so prone to mystics like I am. If they knew your impeccable healing powers they could come up with even worse conspiracy theories then they have now.

RASPUTIN

I know you are right, but I just think people would let you have a break.

THE CZARINA

I will never have a break. I fell for the Czar of Russia and it led me to where I am today. I do not regret a moment. People are cruel and have always been cruel, but I have my family and I have power. What more could a woman like me want?

(THE CZARINA and RASPUTIN both stand beginning to walk to the exit)

RASPUTIN

You are correct about that. Since my wife first came to visit me here, she has gone on and on about your palace.

THE CZARINA

Our palace.

RASPUTIN

Yes, our palace.

A beat

RASPUTIN

If it helps, I do have a couple of ideas on how to make our country a better place.

THE CZARINA

Such as?

RASPUTIN

Well, you know of the ministers?

(RASPUTIN and THE CZARINA exit. People in army uniforms march and clean up the stage as the lights begin to change again.)

SCENE 5

The stage is completely empty. A spotlight appears in the center of a stage. For a moment it feels like nothing is going to happen, darker lights shift and change into themselves around the spotlight. RASPUTIN enters, dragging a chair behind him. He sets the chair in the spotlight and sits on it.

RASPUTIN

This is the part of the story that I normally enjoy the most. The moment just before the climax. The body shaking ever so slightly, begging for more. When you are just so close to finishing that you force yourself to keep going even if it hurts.

A pause

RASPUTIN

But alas, this is the only orgasm I can not provide, for you see I do not remember what led me here. I remember the alcohol and women. I remember dismissing The Czars ministers and replacing them with friends of mine. I remember all of the dancing and befriending Felix Youssupov. Most of all though, I remember the fear. There was a certain terror in my heart that I had never felt before. I knew I was going to die. I suppose we all know we are going to die, but I knew I was going to be killed...soon. All I needed to do now is tell The Czar.

(RASPUTIN takes out a piece of paper and hastily scribbles something on it. He stands up and looks directly at the audience)

RASPUTIN

When the bell tolls three times, it will announce that I have been killed. If I am killed by common men, you and your children will rule Russia for centuries to come; if I am killed by one of your stock, you and your family will be killed by the Russian people! Pray Tsar of Russia. Pray.

RASPUTIN takes the chair and drags it off stage. RASPUTIN also exits the stage. The lights change and brighten up.

SCENE 6

YUSUPOV enters. He walks to the center of the stage and mimes knocking on a door. He looks impatient.

YOUSSUPOV

Rasputin? Are you coming? We need to go!

(shouting from offstage)

RASPUTIN

I'm coming. Be patient.

YOUSSUPOV

I have been patient. We are going to be late.

RASPUTIN

Late? Late for what? We have plenty of time.

YOUSUPOV

I live by a strict schedule. Honestly, it's a wonder we are even friends

A beat

YOUSSUPOV

Hurry up!

(YUSUPOV knocks harder on the imaginary door. RASPUTIN enters wearing a light blue shirt, embroidered with cornflowers and blue velvet pants. He walks to the center of the stage and mimes opening a door.)

RASPUTIN

I'm here, Yusupov. You can stop being so stressed, I am ready to go.

YOUSSUPOV

Thank the heavens.

(YOUSSUPOV and RASPUTIN begin exiting. Right as they are about to exit, RASPUTIN stops, turns around and begins walking the other way.)

YOUSSUPOV

What are you doing?

RASPUTIN

I forgot my flask.

YOUSSUPOV

Drinks will be provided.

(RASPUTIN sighs and turns back around to YUSUPOV. They both exit)

SCENE 7

The lights are dim and stingy. A table is placed on the stage, making it the center of attention. It has plates of pastries and wine on it. YOUSSUPOV and RASPUTIN each enter from separate sides of the stage bringing a chair with them. YOUSSPOV takes off his jacket and drapes it across his chair. They bring the chairs to the table and sit down. PAVLOVICH enters pushing a little cart with drinks on it. Once the cart is set, PAVLOVICH mimes turning on a light. The lights become brighter and focus on RASPUTIN and YOUSSPOV. PAVLOVICH exits.

YOUSSPOV

You see, I provided for you. Only the finest pastries and wine for you my friend.

RASPUTIN

Yes, I see that...

A beat

RASPUTIN

Where is Irina? I thought she was joining us?

YOUSSPOV

Yes, well, you know my wife, she is ever the social butterfly. She will be joining us, I am sure, but for now she is occupied with unexpected guests.

RASPUTIN

(suggestively)

She is quite the woman, I can understand why she is so popular.

YOUSSPOV

(playing along)

You have no idea, old boy. She was quite excited to hear that you would be staying with us tonight.

RASPUTIN

As am I

YOUSSPOV

Please, try a pastry. They're freshly baked

RASPUTIN

Oh, no thank you. I can see the sugar on top. Those are too sweet for me. Besides, how could they be freshly baked? It's nearly one in the morning, if anything, they would be stale.

YOUSSPOV

(obviously displeased, but trying to cover it)

Of course, my mistake. Instead, may I offer you some wine?

RASPUTIN

I'm quite fine thank you. As it turns out I have a small bottle of liquor in my pocket.

YOUSSPOV

(stressed)

You don't want anything?

RASPUTIN

No.

RASPUTIN

(to the audience)

This is the man who is going to take my life. It is only fair I tease him a little bit.

YOUSSPOV

Excuse me. I have to go, um, check on Irina. I will be right back

(RASPUTIN nods as YOUSSPOV exits the stage. As soon as YOUSSPOV is gone, RASPUTIN turns to the audience)

RASPUTIN

And so we enter the scene of the crime. YOUSSPOV has lured me here with hopes of killing me. I was only here so I may have an attempt to be with his beautiful wife. He knew this, of course,

and used it to my disadvantage. But, now that I have neglected his poison food, he panics. Right now he has probably scampered off to his homicidal friends for advice. It's strange, I pity him. I ought to help him, no?

(RASPUTIN goes YOUSSPOV's chair. He sticks his hand in the jacket pocket and digs out a bottle labeled "potassium cyanide". RASPUTIN gives the audience a wink and downs the bottle. He then goes to the cart of pastries and wine. He pours himself a glass of wine and takes a pastry. He then goes and sits back down in his chair. He takes a bite of his pastry and sip of wine. He looks relaxed. YOUSSPOV and PAVLOVITCH both peer out to see what is happening. Upon seeing RASPUTIN in eating and drinking, YOUSSPOV pushes PAVLOVICH backstage. YOUSSPOV goes and sits in his seat, seeming a tad stressed)

RASPUTIN

You are right, my friend. These desserts are delicious. I did not think you were being truthful when you said they were fresh, but you've proved me wrong once again.

YOUSSPOV

I would never lead you astray.

RASPUTIN

Something seems off. Are you okay? Is something wrong?

YOUSSPOV

Me? Yes, I'm fine. Apologies. It is Irina, she is taking longer than I expected. She is very deep in conversation.

RASPUTIN

Do not worry. You alone are excellent company. I know you play guitar, how about you play us a song while we wait?

YOUSSPOV

Guitar? Are you sure you feel well enough for that?

RASPUTIN

Well? Why wouldn't I be feeling well?

YOUSSPOV

No reason. I just worry.

RASPUTIN

(to the audience)

He really could not be more obvious

RASPUTIN

Instead of worrying, you should go get your guitar. I will pour myself another glass while I wait.

(YOUSSPOV nods. He goes to exit when PAVLOVICH's hand outstretched with a gun. RASPUTIN does not see this as he is going to pour himself more wine. After he pours he begins examining the bottle. YOUSSPOV takes the gun and PAVLOVICH's arm retreats. YOUSSPOV puts the gun behind his back and makes his way to RASPUTIN)

RASPUTIN

This is a fine bottle. It has aged quite well.

YOUSSPOV

Grigory Efimovich, you would do better to look at the crucifix and pray to it.

(RASPUTIN turns to face YOUSSPOV, confused. YOUSSPOV is holding the pistol and it's pointed directly at RASPUTIN)

RASPUTIN

Yousspov, look into my eyes...

(YOUSSPOV shoots RASPUTIN. RASPUTIN falls to the floor, convulsing. PAVLOVICH enters, excitedly. PAVLOVICH goes to high-five YOUSSPOV)

PAVLOVICH

You killed him.

YOUSSPOV

Yes...I thought that was the point, Pavlovich

PAVLOVICH

It was. I just meant to say that I am very impressed.

(As PAVLOVICH and YOUSSPOV talk, RASPUTIN slowly stands up and makes a run for it)

YOUSSPOV

I was left with no other choice. He was going to destroy our country.

PAVLOVICH

You have a good shot.

YOUSSPOV

I was two feet away from him.

PAVLOVICH

Can I have a turn now?

YOUSSPOV

What?

PAVLOVICH

Since he is running away, I was wondering if I could have the gun and then it can be my turn to shoot him

YOUSSPOV
(panicked)

What!

(YOUSSPOV turns to see that RASPUTIN is gone. RASPUTIN should be off stage. Frantically, YOUSSPOV hands PAVLOVICH the gun. They both exit, trailing RASPUTIN)

SCENE 8

The light changes and turns bluish. The table, chairs, and cart are slowly being pulled off stage backward as YOUSSPOV slowly pushes the yellow/white palace adorned in light with gates scene on stage. While the stage is slowly being set RASPUTIN enters, running in slow motion, being persuaded by PAVLOVICH in slow motion. Snow begins to fall. Once the scene is set, YOUSSPOV also begins to chase RASPUTIN. When RASPUTIN reaches the gate the scene goes back to normal speed. RASPUTIN begins to climb the gate.

PAVLOVICH

Stop running so I can shoot you!

(PAVLOVICH shoots the gun, but misses RASPUTIN)

YOUSSPOV

Lower your voice.

PAVLOVICH

No, it's not fair you got to shoot him and I didn't!

(PAVLOVICH shoots the gun, but misses RASPUTIN)

YOUSSPOV

Are you trying to get us caught?

PAVLOVICH

You took the first shot. You started it.

YOUSSPOV

I only shot him because the cyanide didn't work!

PAVLOVICH

Now look who's yelling!

YOUSSPOV

Listen, if you don't--

(PAVLOVICH shoots the gun and hits RASPUTIN in the back. RASPUTIN stopped in his tracks)

PAVLOVICH

Aha! Got him!

YOUSSPOV

(exasperated)

Great, now if we can quietly take him inside and--

(PAVLOVICH shoots the gun and hits RASPUTIN in the back of the head. RASPUTIN falls to the ground)

PAVLOVICH

Did you see that? Two in a row. I have got a master shot.

(YOUSSPOV snatches the gun from PAVLOVICH. They both slowly begin to walk towards RASPUTIN's body. They are cautious, but suddenly RASPUTIN begins to slowly crawl.)

PAVLOVICH

He has to be cheating somehow. There is no way he is still alive.

YOUSSPOV

He is...resilient

(YOUSSPOV and PAVLOVICH quickly run up to RASPUTIN's crawling body. PAVLOVICH shrugs and kicks RASPUTIN in the head)

PAVLOVICH

Bullseye.

YOUSSPOV

Go get something to wrap the body up in. I will keep watch.

PAVLOVICH

Sounds good. I will be right back.

(PAVLOVICH runs off stage. YOUSSPOV squats down to be closer to RASPUTIN)

YOUSSPOV

(to RASPUTIN)

You stupid bastard. You really thought you could tear apart Russia and get away with it? You expected to sleep and drink your way through life and everyone would allow you to drag Russia down with you? Well, not if I had something to say about it. You have hurt too many and fucked up too much. I can't wait to watch you burn in hell, you evil fucker.

(YOUSSPOV punches the body)

YOUSSPOV

You monster.

(YOUSSPOV begins hitting the body over and over in a fit of rage)

YOUSSPOV

You! Stupid! Fuckler!

(PAVLOVICH enters. He sees what is happening and goes to pull YOUSSPOV off the body)

PAVLOVICH

Stop. Stop Yousspov! You're going to get yourself covered in blood!

(YOUSSPOV stops and PAVLOVICH hands him some wrapping. They begin wrapping the body together)

PAVLOVICH

It is almost over, you know. And you are the hero.

YOUSSPOV

A hero, a murderer, it is all the same to me.

(YOUSSPOV and PAVLOVICH begin pulling the body towards the river. RASPUTIN enters the stage. Acknowledging the scene behind him he looks to the audience. The two assassins continue to drag the body)

RASPUTIN

(to the audience)

And so ends the story of Rasputin. The unkillable mad monk, finally killed.

A beat

RASPUTIN

Although...I haven't heard the bell toll just yet.

(RASPUTIN ascends. Lights out. End play)