

EXT. LODGE - RUSSIAN COLONY OUTSKIRTS - NIGHT

A humble, rustic lodge, bathed in arctic moonlight. Snow slowly drifts across the quiet scene. The lodge's small windows are illuminated by comforting torchlight.

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A sunken firepit lights the interior of the quaint, makeshift cabin. The walls and shelves are adorned with an eclectic mix of Aleutian art, carvings and tools. We see Yula with her back turned to us, she's preparing food. Her hair is messy and it looks like she's gotten thinner since we last saw her.

The sound of a distant HORSE NEIGH draws Yula's attention towards a nearby window. She cautiously pulls the curtain aside to see three distant figures on horseback weaving their way through the trees. They're coming in her direction.

YULA

(under her breath)

Shit.

Yula pushes her food aside, forcefully brushes one of her hands through her hair and leans up against a pillar, preparing to meet the mysterious visitors.

(She's notably within reach of her wall mounted rifle)

We hear the men DISMOUNT THEIR HORSES followed by a heavy KNOCK on the door.

YULA

Come in.

The door slowly swings open revealing three figures sheathed in dark, heavy furs and face wraps. The frontmost figure pulls down his scarf revealing himself to be GRIGORY SHELIKHOV, a grizzled fur trader (sixties). His eyes glare like daggers as they slowly sweep the room, light from Yula's deep burning fire dances across his face.

(As this scene continues, the fire will slowly fade until it reduces to embers by the end of the scene.)

Grigory's eyes land on Yula, his voracious gaze fades into a courteous smile.

GRIGORY

(cheerful)

Yula, old friend. It has been some

time, hasn't it?

Yula forces a faint smile and nods to Grigory, her eyes are not especially warm.

GRIGORY (CONT'D)
(smiling)
May I... be invited inside?

YULA
Of course.

Grigory signals his men away from the door and closes it behind him, he wheezes as he does so.

Grigory turns back to Yula and steps deeper into the room, the same, comforting smile still warming his face.

GRIGORY
Its been far too long dear.

Grigory extends his right hand for a shake. Yula hesitantly extends out her left hand, it is revealed that she now only has one arm.

GRIGORY (CONT'D)
Oh! please forgive me-

Grigory quickly corrects his mistake and extends out his other hand to shake Yula's.

(Grigory's hands are weathered, leathery, and clad in gold rings while Yula's hand is unkempt and dirty, a workers hand.)

GRIGORY (CONT'D)
I had forgotten about what happened,
(chuckles) with age you forget many things.

YULA
It's okay. Would you like to sit?

GRIGORY
I would love nothing more!

Yula drags a handmade chair over to the fire. Grigory comfortably plants himself in the chair while Yula continues to stand, leaning up against the pillar.

GRIGORY

You have a beautiful home (gesturing to his surroundings) I think I like it even more than the one you used to have in town.

YULA

Thank you.

GRIGORY

And to think you made all this with just one arm! Its very impressive.

Yula gives Grigory another hesitant, but grateful nod.

YULA

Would you like something to drink? I have ale and-

GRIGORY

Thank you! But no need to waste your fine drink on an old man like me... besides-

Grigory pulls an ivory flask out of his coat pocket.

GRIGORY (CONT'D)

I have brought my own poison.

Grigory's smile widens. His teeth are yellowed from decades of smoke.

GRIGORY (CONT'D)

Please, dear. Would you sit with me?

YULA

(softspoken)
of course.

Yula uses her leg to push over a cut log to sit on.

While Yula does this, Grigory's smiling façade dissolves. He watches Yula like a hawk, unblinking. We very slowly PUSH IN on this.

The moment Yula settles and looks up, Grigory's expression retreats back into its friendly disguise.

GRIGORY

Well... down the hatch!

Grigory unscrews his flask and chugs the entire bottle. Yula watches, unimpressed.

Grigory lets out a refreshed sigh before groaning forward in his chair to warm his hands by the fire.

We cut to a MEDIUM WIDE, we see Grigory leaning forward while Yula leans back up against a pillar behind the log she sits on.

(While they are positioned at equal height, it should seem as if Grigory has Yula pinned in a corner of the frame.)

There is an awkward beat. The fire CRACKLES.

YULA
Would you mind if I smoked?

GRIGORY
(smiling)
Not at all dear, it is your home after all!

Yula fumbles as she pulls out rolling paper and tabacco from her coat pocket. She's learned how to roll a cigarette with one hand, although she's not very good at it. Grigory watches this, hiding his amusement.

YULA
Grigory-

GRIGORY
Yes?

YULA (CONT'D)
As good as it is to see you, I must admit - your visit is a mystery to me.

Yula finishes rolling her cigarette and lights it on the fire. As she does so, she spots one of Grigory's men pacing outside her window, he has a rifle slung over his back.

GRIGORY
Well, I'll get to the point then. I've come with a proposition.

Yula's eyes flare with fleeting suspicion.

GRIGORY (CONT'D)
(raising his hands)
I would just like you to hear me out,

that is all.

Grigory grins.

YULA

Okay.

There is a tense beat.

GRIGORY

Yula... I am a dying man - and I wish
to die at home, far from this land.

Grigory looks down at the fire, his eyes somber. His face
quickly hardens as he looks back to Yula.

GRIGORY (CONT'D)

(rasping)

We have a foothold here on this
island, but it is upon the mainland
where our true riches lie. It has been
my life's work to establish a colony
there and I will not die a failed man,
I will not disappoint the Tsar!

Grigory's persistent smile returns.

GRIGORY (CONT'D)

And hopefully, you wont disappoint me.

Yula hides her discomfort behind her cigarette.

YULA

Go on.

GRIGORY

I know you lost a lot on your last
expedition. It was tragic. Igor,
Maxim... your arm.

Grigory leans back in his chair.

GRIGORY (CONT'D)

But, I need you to go out there.
Again.

Yula chuckles to herself. She doesn't make eye contact with
Grigory.

YULA

No.

GRIGORY

Yula, you are the best at what you do,
we need you-

YULA

Mr. Shekilov, I-

GRIGORY

(impatience boiling over)
Think about the people back at the
colony, starving! Your friends on your
expedition, they will have died in
vein! We need a second colony, we need
someone to lead us there, we need-

YULA

(bitter)

No!

Grigory doesn't flinch, but the smile is gone. Agitated
impatience is buzzing in his eyes.

Yula catches her tone and reels back her frustration.

YULA (CONT'D)

(gently spoken)

I can't, I- I have no arm. I can't...

GRIGORY

You can't, or you won't?

YULA

Mr. Shekilov, I can't go on an
expedition without my good arm. I can
barely cook as it is!

Yula takes a long, deep drag from her cigarette. She sighs.

YULA (CONT'D)

Besides, the last two guides died in
the mountain pass, it's no use without
them.

GRIGORY

(annoyed)

Oh yes... the guides.

Grigory stares back down into the fire, a slight snarl
contorting on his upper lip. His eyes dart back up to Yula.
He leans back forward.

GRIGORY (CONT'D)
 What was it exactly that happened up
 there, in the mountains?

YULA
 (discourteous)
 We've already spoken of this, you know
 what happened.

GRIGORY
 I'm old dear. My mind needs
 refreshing, now please, if you would.

Grigory gestures Yula to continue.

Yula clears her throat, she looks confident, this is not the
 first time she's been questioned about this.

YULA
 We got caught in a storm and were hit
 by an avalanche, I survived, but only
 after frostbite took my arm-

Yula flicks the stub of her cigarette into the fire.

YULA (CONT'D)
 All the others... they-

GRIGORY
 Died. Yes, I know.

Grigory and Yula lock eyes.

GRIGORY (CONT'D)
 Just not in an avalanche.

A suppressed rage boils beneath Grigory's face.

YULA
 (anxious)
 Grigory, I-

We cut to a CLOSE UP of Grigory.

GRIGORY
 (yelling through gritted teeth)
 Do NOT speak!

Yula is shocked. Grigory sits between her and the door. There
 is no way out. She tries to maintain her composure.

GRIGORY (CONT'D)

(fierce)

You're a liar Yula. You can trick the fools back at the colony, but I see through you. You think you can move out here into the woods and be forgotten? Just like how you forgot about what *really* happened up there in the mountains?! I may not know the full truth, but I know a RAT when I see one.

Resentment has engulfed Grigory's face.

GRIGORY (CONT'D)

We found Igor. (Scoffs) What was left of him.

Yula's eyes widen. Grigory picks up on this.

GRIGORY (CONT'D)

What? You thought we wouldn't go searching? His body was burnt like charcoal. I don't recall avalanches having that quality? Do you, Yula?

Yula's breaths are scattered and heavy, Grigory's eye contact is oppressive.

GRIGORY (CONT'D)

I can end you - burn the very memory of you. That is, unless, you do what you failed to do on your last expedition.

Grigory feigns strength as he uses his remaining energy to command Yula.

GRIGORY (CONT'D)

You will leave to settle this colony before the solstice, before I return to the motherland. If you come back empty handed I will show you a pain known only in hell. I own you, Yula. *Witchcraft* is still a serious crime in the far corners of this world and we stand upon its very EDGE. Do this for me and i'll let you keep your life, but nothing more.

Yula is in a state of shock, she's seen Grigory's ferocity

before, but never felt it first hand. She forces herself to nod "All right" visibly uncomfortable with her new orders.

YULA
(afraid)
I- it will be done.

Grigory lets out a SHRILL WHISTLE signaling the two men from earlier to enter Yula's home. One of the men helps Grigory out of his chair (**Grigory is too weak to stand up on his own anymore**) while the other watches Yula, closely. Grigory begins to hobble towards the door, exhausted.

YULA (CONT'D)
Sir...? I-

Grigory grudgingly turns back to Yula.

YULA (CONT'D)
I will need someone that knows the way, I need a guide. The journey is impossible without one.

GRIGORY
(agitated)
The only remaining native guides we had were killed by that 'avalanche' of yours.

YULA
(pleading)
But, how else am I suppos-

GRIGORY
(firmly)
- you will find a way.

Grigory is growing increasingly hot-tempered.

GRIGORY (CONT'D)
You place far too much trust in the people of this land. This frontier is our god given right and we WILL take it! You will leave no later than the fortnight. That is an order.

Beat. Yula is wrestling with something, and then:

YULA
I heard there was a woman.

Grigory raises his eyebrows. There is a brief pause.

YULA (CONT'D)
 From the tribe in the mountains, I
 heard there was a woman? Correct? She
 was brought to the colony... the only
 survivor.

GRIGORY
 (Trying to remember)
 A woman...

A grin crosses Grigory's face, like he was reliving a fond
 memory.

GRIGORY (CONT'D)
 Ahhhh yes, I remember her, she was a
 small thing when we got her. Her
 tribe... eh, not very agreeable
 people.

YULA
 (disgust)
 They welcomed us here, they gave us
 food when we starved!

Grigory chuckles.

GRIGORY
 Then you must remember what we did to
 them?

There is a deep hatred in Yula's eyes.

GRIGORY (CONT'D)
 Imagine what it must be like, staring
 down the barrel of some metal stick
 and then boom! Nothing. It must be
 like meeting a god.

Grigory locks eyes with Yula.

GRIGORY (CONT'D)
 A shame.... and if I remember properly
 (beat) you were there.

Grigory's smile fades.

YULA
 (tearing up)
 I. Hurt. No one!

GRIGORY

But you didn't stop us either. You're just as cursed as the rest of us Yula. You really think those people will find forgiveness for you? After everything we've done? They will tear you apart the first chance they get. The love you feel for them will only be returned with hatred. When they look at you all they see are the flames we brought to their shores.

Grigory spits into the waning fire.

GRIGORY (CONT'D)

So yes, there is a girl. What do you want with her?

YULA

I... I need-

GRIGORY

Oh a guide! Hm, almost forgot (smiles) She works the docks - can barely catch a fish to save her life, let alone be a guide!

YULA

(despondent)

I just need a name.

Grigory Wears a blank expression. He gestures with his hand and is helped to the door by his henchmen. Before leaving, Grigory gives Yula one final glance.

GRIGORY

Her name is Osha.

The door SLAMS behind Grigory as he hobbles out the door. Yula's composure shatters as she lets out an exasperated SIGH OF RELIEF immediately followed by tears. She tries to hold back her sobs, but cradles her face as she breaks down into a flood of emotions.

As Yula WEEPS we see a CLOSE UP of the once bright fire, now crumbling into embers.