“JANOSIK'S GHOST”

A SCREENPLAY

BY

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NON SERVIAM

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NOTE – THIS WHOLE SCRIPT IS SET IN THE POOREST PART OF, STILL SOCIALIST, EASTERN-SLOVAKIA, IN THE CARPATHIAN MOUNTAINS

FADE IN:

TITLE – LESSER CARPATHIANS. SLOVAKIA. NOVEMBER 1998

EXT. KELP'S PEASANT COTTAGE – NIGHT

There's a horrendous storm blowing outside as autumn passes to winter, yet pre-snow. An unknown MAN lurks in the garden. Lights shine from inside the house

INT. KELP'S HOUSE – KITCHEN – NIGHT

A fire crackles from inside a large arga-type oven. The room is decorated with religious Icons. A wooden table and a set of chairs are in one corner of the large room. An Englishman, Kwik, dressed in garish ski-clothes is standing in front of another, seated, Englishman, Kelp; only his tied hands are observed. Behind Kwik are 3 large goons, all in their early 20's. The atmosphere is unpleasant

KWIK
Now don't say you didn't see this coming.

On the wall, the shadow of Kwik slaps Kelp

KWIK (CONT.)
I've had enough pretending to be a teacher, a'peda-fucking-gogue'.

Kwik slaps Kelp again, loudly, across the face. Kelp's eyes (only his eyes are visible) seem dazed and unfocused. He doesn't react to the slap.

KWIK (CONT.)
As you may have noticed, chum, I haven't been playing ball with your scheme for a while. In fact, it's got to where I'm spending more time with Jaro and his mates here, than with yourself.

Kwik indicates the skinheaded, leather jacketed goons.

KWIK (CONT.)
As you may or may not know, Jaro’s daddy is the mayor

JARO, one of the goons, grins

JARO
(Slovak. subtitled)
We’d love to stay and chat, but we really must be going.

Jaro leans forward to speak in Kelp’s ear. Kelp’s face isn’t visible, but we can see him trying to loosen his tied hands. Jaro indicates Kwik while speaking

JARO
(whispering)
This tosser says you owe him money. Ordinarily, I wouldn’t care, all of you foreigners can go fuck for all I’m concerned. However, your mate has offered us 20% of his share if we can get it back. I don’t want to hurt you, so I’m asking nicely. And, I’m in a hurry.

Jaro steps back and confers with his goons. Kwik looks anxiously excited, awaiting Kelp’s reaction.

KELP
(Slovak. subtitled)
I’m well aware of who your father is, Jaro. I’m also aware of his reputation. Shame I've never met the man. Sadly, I’m unable to help.

Kwik’s face shows his anger, and Jaro and his goons show their surprise at the reaction. Is Kelp calling their bluff?

KWIK
(friendly)
Don’t be a fool, Mat. You know what these guys can do. Christ, his dad’s THE MAYOR…

There’s tension in the air, as if sudden violence is forthcoming. Everyone awaits Kelp’s reaction

KELP
I’m sorry. If I had the money, I’d give you it. As it is, you’re standing in it.

This takes a while to sink in.

KWIK
You spent it all on this fucking dump? How the fuck am I going to get back to England?

Jaro and his goons start laughing and shaking their heads. They start leaving – collecting their cigarettes, keys, etc -, ignoring the protests of Kwik. Jaro walks up to Kelp and taps him lightly on the cheek with a gold-ring infested hand, shaking his head

JARO
(Slovak. subtitled)
Why the fuck did you buy a house here? Dumb fucking foreigner. Everyone else wants to leave but doesn’t have the option. You WANT to stay?

The goons leave. Kwik is obviously nervous. We can now see that Kelp’s hands are untied.

EXT. UNTENDED FIELD – NIGHT – HEAVY LIGHTNING STORM

A man is digging a grave in the middle of a storm. Everywhere around him is mud. The wind is loud. Rain pours on him. He stops and rests on his shovel, then climbs out of the hole. He drags a bag, obviously containing a body, and rolls it into the grave. He wipes his dirty face with his hand, revealing himself as MATTHEW KELP, the Englishman.

CUT TO:

TITLE - LESSER CARPATHIANS. SLOVAKIA. NOVEMBER 2000

EXT. TOWN HALL - DAY

An impressive, socialist-realist structure, fronted by statues of brave Russian soldiers supporting smaller peasant women. A Large, but flaking, brass Star and a Hammer and Sickle are still overtly apparent over the entrance, which is flanked by Slovak national flags.

INT. MAYOR'S OFFICE - DAY -

Big hand on desk, twirling a gold pen. Cheap, shiny suit sleeve, big gold watch obvious. Face unseen

MAYOR
(SPEAKING GERMAN. SUBTITLED)

It's not a problem. A requisition order is already in progress…. This is my second term, no need to worry…Compensate whom? They don't LEGALLY own the land…it's always been that way, half of those trusting fools can't even read or write…you won't find anyone else as accommodating. Just you hold to your side of the deal…yes, yes……auf wiederhoren.

The room contains a chipboard cupboard filled with cheap, ceramic figurines and old photographs of a much younger MAYOR shaking hands with various, unknown, Russian dignitaries in military uniform. The glass fronted display case mirrors, weakly, the Mayor.

MAYOR puts down the phone, and presses an intercom.

MAYOR (CONT.)
(SPEAKING SLOVAK. SUBTITLED)

Slechna Nova. Find out how the state possession order for Brezova is going, and hold all calls. I have some paperwork to catch up on.

Mayor glances to see if anyone is watching or listening, then picks up the telephone. He opens a desk drawer, which shows us a PHOTOGRAPH of a middle-aged prim looking woman wearing glasses and bun-hair.

Traditional Slavic music can be heard, crackling from outside

EXT – HOJNOST CITY - DAY

Bleak, snowy city street. All the buildings are identical grey concrete 'socialist realist' structures. TANOI P/A SYSTEM on telegraph pole. The music coming from it is distorted and painfully loud

EXT – BREZOVA VILLAGE - DAY

TANOI P/A SYSTEM on telegraph pole playing same traditional music. Village street, thick with snow. Peasant cottages – some wooden. Surrounded by beautiful forests and hills

EXT. – BREZOVA – PEASANT BAR

Small, unwelcoming, socialist pre-fab bar, on main village street. Contrasts with traditional cottages

INT. VILLAGE PEASANT BAR – DAY

Barely furnished with non-matching Formica tables and chairs. Fading, dog-eared posters of socialist football teams, a decrepit girly calendar. A bear-like man in waiter's suit (BARMAN) is stocking a wood burner in the corner. Muttered VOICES can be heard.

Table in front of bar (very few drinks – one beer tap and some vodka and slivovica bottles. Very few packets of cigarettes on offer). Seated at the table are two old men (Old Man with NO TEETH and Old man with NO EAR), and KELP, the Englishman. The old men are dressed in old farming/army clothes held together with string. They have weathered faces. They're both drinking vodka; KELP is drinking beer. Apart from these men, the bar is empty

NO TEETH
(Laughing Hoarsely)
This silly pig…

No Teeth points at NO EAR, while speaking to KELP

NO TEETH (CONT.)
…thought he was a partisan. How old were you?

HANDS (NO EAR'S) POURING two shots of vodka. His hands are leathery and massive; his arm is in a ripped army jacket. His face can't be seen. No Ear's Shotgun rests by his side

NO EAR
I reckon I was 9, 'cos that was the year Margret, my sister, got pregnant to your cousin Ivan.

KELP, late 20's/EARLY 30'S, handsome in a manly way, clean cut, drinking beer, wearing a dark fisherman's jumper, wipes the froth from his lip. The old men continue as KELP looks around the room

NO TEETH
(Cackling)
Yep. That's right. Silly pig thought he would run errands for the real partisans, all the while the Nazis were living in his house!
(No Teeth swigs some vodka and smacks his gums)
They did for you proper when they found that note. Cut your bloody ear off!

No Teeth laughs himself into a coughing fit

KELP'S POV. No Ear turns his large head to show a complete absence of ear, then starts laughing and slaps KELP on the back. The lack of ear is now horrendously apparent

NO EAR
I'm telling you, boy, you haven't lived until a fucking Nazi pig has taken a penknife to your ear. Taught me a lesson that did.

NO TEETH
(Between coughs and cackles)
Lesson, my arse! You'd joined up with the partisans good and proper the year following. You were carrying that fucking machine gun for them, and that was a cunt of a winter. What was it called?

NO EAR
Maxim.

No Ear speaks to Kelp, while almost fondling his shotgun.

NO EAR (CONT.)
Ever seen one of them? Fucking heavy guns they were. Jammed all the time but would mow a platoon down like they were hay.

No Ear points at the continuously coughing No Teeth

NO EAR (CONT.)
Show him your bullet wounds….

BARMAN, bringing another bottle of vodka and beer, breaks up the conversation. BARMAN spills some of the drink on the table, but doesn't wipe it up. Instead, he wipes his wet hand on his trousers, and then pulls a PAPER from his shirt pocket.

BARMAN
While you're telling your war stories, we're losing our land.

No Ear looks at the PAPER, which is an official looking document, then looks back at BARMAN

NO EAR
I've forgotten my glasses. You better read it.

NO TEETH
Glasses, my cock. You can't read!

No Ear reaches for his shotgun, but decides against it

NO EAR
Fuck your mother. That didn't stop the Soviets from decorating me for bravery. Fuck all use an education is when you're fighting Nazis in the mountains.

BARMAN
All right you two. Anymore of that and I'm shutting the bar for the day. This here….

The PAPER, with a legal stamp, is thrust into view

BARMAN (CONT.)
…is a statement of intent to possess Brezova, as is the…

EXT. TOWN HALL - DAY

INT: MAYOR'S OFFICE – DAY

MAYOR is pacing around with hands behind his back, dictating to a tartly dressed SECRETARY who is typing on an old typewriter. She's pretty in a vacant-looking porn star way. He's fat and cheaply dressed, but his face still isn't visible.

MAYOR
(SPEAKING SLOVAK. SUBTITLED)
… as is the right of the Region of Hojnost, in that as no formal or legal right of possession has ever been claimed for the region or village of Brezova by any of its inhabitants. With the greater good of the state in mind, it has been deemed necessary to release the land from its present, illegal occupants, and to sell it to Hamsfar a.g, the German Corporation, who will bring much needed industry and jobs to the Region of Hojnost.
Unless legally standing objection is placed within the next three months, the auction of the area, previously mentioned, shall take place. All queries are to be addressed to, etc, etc.

Mayor turns to SECRETARY

MAYOR (CONT.)
What do you think, darling?

SECRETARY
(Slightly flushed)
Oh, it's perfect, Mr. Engineer Mayor.

Secretary nervously stops typing as the Mayor slowly approaches her.

INT. PEASANT BAR (CONT.)

KELP is now reading the PAPER. He looks quizzically at BARMAN

KELP
Where did you get this?

BARMAN
Found some cunt nailing it to my door this yesterday morning

KELP
Why don’t you just register the land? You’ve all lived here for generations

NO TEETH
Since 1400 and something…

KELP
Exactly. No Judge would dispossess you. At worst, you have squatters’ rights.

BARMAN
And where would the villagers get the money to hire lawyers, and surveyors to mark out the land? Even if they had the lawyers, they’d still end up squabbling about whose great grandfather had which plot, or who built which cattle shed. This document says 3 months. There’s 78 per cent unemployment here; even the gypsies are richer then most of us folk. Don’t you have any money? You’re English - can’t your parents lend you some?

A LOOK passes between No Teeth and Barman, telling he’s said too much. Neither KELP nor No Ear notices this.

KELP
My parents are dead, and the only money I have is what I earn here, teaching. I’m sorry, but there’s nothing I can do to help you.

NO EAR
How long you been living here? 4 years? Like it or not, you're one of us now. We get turfed out, so do you. That pretty little cottage you keep will go under the bulldozer, just as ours will. You're the one with an education, you think of something.

KELP suddenly looks pale when he hears about his house and land being dug up.

FLASHBACK

EXT. KELP'S COTTAGE – NIGHT – STORM

Angry VOICES can be heard coming from inside, intermingled with the noise of the wind and the rain. Unknown MAN's figure can be seen, darkly, from behind.

INT. KELP'S COTTAGE - KITCHEN– NIGHT

The Voices belong to KELP, and Kwik. They are standing in front of a large, arga-type fire, gesticulating angrily and shouting at each other.

KWIK
And I'm saying it's safe to go back. It's been 2 years! No-one gives a fuck about us anymore

KELP
you want to go back? You go back, but neither the money nor I is going anywhere.

KWIK
What money? You spent it on this fucking dump

Kwik indicates the cottage with a sweeping gesture. Kelp lights a cigarette and evaluates the situation. His eyes are drawn to a hatchet in the wood box next to the stove

KELP
At least we've got an investment here. Back home we've got 15 to 20 to think about, and I'm sorry, but I'm not ready for that.

Kwik steps towards Kelp with violence in his eyes

KWIK
It was your fucking bitch that grassed us up in the first place, you fucking snob…

A fight ensues, with the more aggressive Kwik clearly having the advantage, until KELP grabs the axe and brings it down several times on his head.

FLASHBACK ENDS

INT. PEASANT BAR (CONT.)

No Teeth has stopped coughing. He looks up from his blood and phlegm spattered handkerchief and stares at Kelp

NO TEETH
When you was digging that hole for your shitter, you didn't find Janosik's gold did you?

Another LOOK passes between BARMAN and No Teeth, this time more like a cue

BARMAN
Jesus Mary. If it's not war stories, it's fucking Janosik's gold.

NO TEETH
You can laugh, but when I was a kid, the old ones used to tell about how their Grandfathers ran with him, when he was battling the Huns. He holed himself up somewhere about here.

No Teeth turns to No Ear, who's obviously thinking of days-gone-by

NO TEETH (CONT.)
Don’t you remember looking for his cave when you were a kid?

NO EAR
I was fighting the fucking Nazi’s – not looking for buried treasure.

KELP
Who’s Janosik?

BARMAN, who’s dipping glasses into murky water, then wiping them with a cloth, looks at KELP like he’s a retard

BARMAN
Janosik was like your Robin Hood; only he didn’t give the money to the poor. He just stashed it. He’d been in the Hungarian army, and for some reason thought it was better to rob their nobles than serve them. He did well for a few years, and then was tricked by some old woman.

NO EAR
(Distantly)
The Magyars caught him and hung him up on a meat hook, which they’d kindly spliced through his liver.

NO TEETH
They never found his gold though. Rumour has it that its buried somewhere around here.

Kelp orders another beer, but is refused, as the Barman wants to close shop.

KELP
Hasn’t anyone ever looked for it? There can’t be that many unknown caves…

NO EAR
Who’s to say it’s in a cave? Could have been buried. There’s hundreds of wells about these parts which have been filled in. you’re talking 200 years ago. He took his secret to the grave and the dead don’t talk, so it’ll remain buried.

NO EAR (CONT.)
As should his legend.

Beat

I'll tell you boy. There's too many who've lost their lives here, in one war or another. Too many who's too poor to be chasing legends.

Beat

Slovaks don't believe in ghosts.

The old men stand up and swig the last of their drinks. No Teeth whispers enigmatically, although not very quietly to KELP

NO TEETH
The dead do talk. Svetlana can talk to the dead. She sorted out my rheumatism as well.

KELP
Who's Svetlana?

EXT. BREZOVA – A PATH LEADING AWAY FROM THE VILLAGE – AFTERNOON

Kelp is walking along a snowy path. It's obviously below freezing and his breath is icy. The scenery is stark but beautiful. The conversation from the bar continues as he walks, occasionally losing his footing in the snow

BARMAN (O.S.)
He means Svetlana Nova. Some say she's got the gift. Personally, I think she's just a fat whore.

NO EAR (O.S.)
Hah! Ignore him. Svetlana stood him up years back and married his best mate. He's been dead a while. Our kamarat here could have gone courting her again, but he was too frightened that she's still talking to Vlado, her dead husband. Rumour has it Svetlana went for Vlado's cock as it was bigger than his here…

BARMAN (O.S.)
Right everyone out. I'm closing up.

NO TEETH (O.S.)
Svetlana’s having a zabijacka this afternoon – a pig kill. Your mate, Marek will be there. She lives at the end of the road, just past the river. You ain’t got nothing to lose by paying her a visit….

EXT. BREZOVA – SVETLANA’S GATE – DUSK APPROACHING

Kelp approaches the gate, slightly out of breath. There are chickens and turkeys running about and a little mongrel snapping at him from the other side.

KELP
(Loudly)
Hello. Anyone here?

A small, middle-aged man with a huge, bushy ‘desperado’ moustache, (MAREK) walks out of a wood shed at edge of KELP’s POV. MAREK has leather apron on and is holding entrails in his hand. He waves at KELP, then throws the guts to a huge white Cuvasz dog. He approaches, wiping his hands. He offers his hand to shake. Kelp looks at the bloodied and shitted hand

INSERT – shadow of KELP hitting Englishman with axe

Kelp takes the hand and shakes it

KELP (CONT.)
Ahoj Marek. I hear you’re having a pig-kill?

MAREK
(Smiling)
Already finished. Beautiful fat yearling.

Marek turns his head to the shed he’s just come from

MAREK (CONT.)
(Loudly)
TATIANA! We’ve got a guest!

Marek turns back to Kelp

MAREK (CONT.)
What brings you here? Are you hungry?

KELP
One of the old guys in the bar suggested I speak to Svetlana. Is she home?

MAREK
(Laughing lightly)
She’s home all right. Wouldn’t miss her favourite fat yearling, would she? That girl could eat one on her own, and wash it down with more vodka than a woodsman could drink in a year.

Kelp laughs with Marek, but is unsure why as he’s never met Svetlana

KELP
Do you think she’ll mind me visiting while she’s having a zabijacka? Anyway, what are you doing here?

MAREK
Same as my father, and his father before him. I’m the village zabijacka man. Most families get too close to their piglets and can’t bear to kill them, even though they need the food for winter, so they call me to do the job for them. I get a few jars of pate and some sausages, and usually have to be carried home what with all the drink they ply me with, so I’m happy.

KELP
I take it you’ve seen the Mayor’s notice?

Marek shows his first sign of aggression

MAREK
He’s a fucking fat arsehole. We’ve lived here for centuries – he’s a fucking newcomer. We’re not even the same race. Some Nazis shaft him up the arse like a virgin and he sells our homes – not his.

KELP
(Shocked)
What will you do?

MAREK
What can we do?

Marek indicates his apron and blood-smeared hands and face

MAREK (CONT.)
Why do you think I'm covered in blood and shit? If we had the money, we'd buy pork at a butchers, not go through a year of feeding a poor little swine, only to shoot it through the skull.

Marek leans closer to Kelp, taking him into his confidence

MAREK (CONT.)
There's some here who've been suggesting that you might be able to help….

KELP
How? I'm not a millionaire.

MAREK
(With a trace of disguSt)
You've always seemed a decent man, Kelp. It surprises me that you should abandon us now. Seems I should have listened to the others….

MAREK's spiel is broken when a rotund teenage girl (TATIANA) appears, bringing a tray with a bottle of vodka and two shot glasses. She's obviously blushing and enamored with KELP. MAREK pours and passes KELP a glass. They salute each other while maintaining eye-contact, and say at the same time:

MAREK (CONT.)
Nosdrovya!

KELP
Nosdrovya!

MAREK
(Bluntly)
Svetalana's in the house

MAREK points to the standard peasant cottage, then turns his back on KELP. KELP shakes his head and edges his way, nervously, past the Cuvasz, which is eating noisily.

EXT. SVETLANA'S FRONT DOOR – ALMOST DUSK

The door is wooden and recently painted bright green. The door stands out against the whitewashed wattle and daub walls. KELP rings the DOORBELL. DING! DONG!

INT. SVETLANA'S LIVING ROOM – DUSK

Simply decorated with TV, cupboard with cheap ceramic figurines, plastic wall-clock painting, electric heater, etc. hunting trophies of stags antlers, mounted, line every available spare inch of wall. KELP is sitting nervously on couch holding a large glass of vodka. Before him, on a coffee table, is a steaming pile of freshly cooked pork goulash. KELP is playing with the food with a fork. Also on the coffee table is a cheap woman's magazine, open on an article about a VERY OLD BOOK, supposedly written by the Devil, and a photo of its current owner (a MAFIOVSKY BOSS, fat and wearing a cheap, shiny suit) and his house, a modern manor. KELP doesn't notice it. He looks nervous or uncomfortable. A VOICE (SVETLANA's (O.S.)) can be heard.

SVETLANA (O.S.)
Eat up! You must be starving. It's fucking freezing outside.

HAND, pudgy and bedecked in 14-carat gold and zircon rings and bracelets (Svetlana's) fills a tumbler full of vodka on the coffee table, and pushes it to Kelp

SVETLANA (O.S.) (CONT.)
This will warm you up

Kelp takes a gulp of the obviously foul drink and gags, while Svetlana's HAND points very closely to his goulash

SVETLANA (O.S.) (CONT.)
Them white bits are lungs. Good for you…

KELP
(Nervously)
Pani Nova….

SVETLANA (O.S.)
Svetlana, sweetie….

KELP
Svetlana, I know this may sound silly but….

Svetlana ignores Kelp and points at the goulash again

SVETLANA (O.S.)
No wonder you're so fucking thin. Do you want some bread for that ? Come on, drink up…

SVETLANA sits down. She's in her late thirties, hugely fat and wearing see-through black stockings and white t-shirt. Her knickers, white, and bra, black, (both massive) are visible. She has a friendly face. She lights one cigarette after another and washes them down with vodka, which she keeps refilling.

Svetlana eventually stops and stares at Kelp, as if sizing him up. There is tension in the air.

SVETLANA
(Deadpan)
I know why you're here, sweetie. You're here to ask me to raise the Ghost of Janosik, so that you may speak to him and find out where his gold is buried. Am I correct?

KELP
(Astonished)
How did you know? I've only just left the bar…oh, I get it…this is just a set-up-job, right?

Kelp, obviously pissed off, gets up to leave, but is commanded otherwise.

SVETLANA
I feel we have more to discuss on this subject…you strike me as a man who doesn't fall easily for tales of fancy and practical jokes. Your history in this village has been a short one, and you've done little to help the other villagers. You've never offered to help bring the wood in, or clear a path in the snow. So why now?

Svetlana lights another cigarette and washes it down. She can see a hint of anxiety in Kelp

SVETLANA (CONT.)
Why would you go back on your principles and risk self-mockery, and almost inevitable failure, when you could quite easily hop on a plane and say good bye forever to Brezova?

KELP

(Thinking quickly)
Do I have to give a reason?

SVETLANA
No. I suppose you don’t. Strikes me as odd, though. Do you usually heed the words of drunken old fools?

The room plunges into a silence so thick that the electric heater and the drag of Svetlana’s cigarette can be heard. This lasts for a few moments

SVETLANA (CONT)
Ah! So be it! Ignore me. I’m just a nosy old cow. I’ll try for you, but you must be prepared for the unexpected. Sometimes, the line is busy and another spirit gets on instead. If there’s anyone up there you’d rather not talk to, you should tell me now.

Svetlana and Kelp stare at each other for a while. However nervous Kelp is, he’s not going to let on about Kwik

SVETLANA (CONT.)
No? So be it. This time, on Friday evening, we’ll have a séance. I heartily suggest you bring a translator who’s up for the job, as the spirit you’re looking for won’t speak like we do.

KELP
Is there anything else you need? Candles, incense…?

Svetlana taps the vodka bottle.

SVETLANA
Some spirits for the spirit, perhaps?

Kelp nods and leaves. Svetlana rushes to the coffee table and grabs the magazine. After a cursory glance, she stashes it behind the couch, then makes a phone call.

EXT. UNIVERSITY – MORNING

A huge baroque university with spires and a large park where students walk along paths – no students walk on the grass, which is covered in snow.

INT. UNIVERSITY – PROFESSOR KRALOVA'S OFFICE

KELP is seated opposite a formally dressed middle-aged woman with bun-hair (PROF KRALOVA – the same woman in the PHOTO of Mayor's desk). The office is decorated with usual university stuff, books, folders, an ancient desktop computer. Throughout the office there are stars of Lenin, busts of Lenin and Marx, certificates of 'Good Socialist', etc. PROF KRALOVA is very plain, but not quite ugly. Her eyes have a suspicious look to them and she peers through pince-nez glasses. On the desk facing her, but out of sight of Kelp, is a framed PHOTO, possibly her husband, of a fat man in a cheap suit, although he can't be seen clearly.

PROFESSOR KRALOVA
So your research requires a translator, heh?

KELP
(Lying)
That's right. My doctoral thesis needs a substantial section on medieval Slavic, and I'm afraid, mine isn't up to par.

PROF
And by me lending you one of my students, you believe that your thesis will be finished more quickly?

KELP
(Gaining confidence)
It isn't a case of 'more quickly', I just need a little expert help on some old documents regarding statutes, which would be too tiresome, and I'm afraid too expensive, for a translation firm to deal with

PROF
(Nodding)
Well – it would certainly be good practice for the students, but as I'm sure you realize, our department's budget has been cut drastically since the change in government…

KELP
You mean since socialism ended?

PROF
(Smiling thinly)
Exactly. I would be more than willing to lend you one of our more capable students if our department were to receive, shall we say, an incentive?

KELP
I was considering a charitable donation of 10,000 krowns to an educational establishment, for the necessity of improving Slovak youth education. Would it be possible for you to oversee the donation for me, as I'm quite naive as to how I should go about making such a transaction?

KELP hesitantly passes an ENVELOPE full of money

PROF
Ahh! A philanthropist! I quite understand your concerns…there are many charities that spend more on office refurbishment, than on the needs of the students…I'm glad we understand each other…

KELP
Of course Pani Doctor Professor Kralova. Now, if I could meet the proposed student, and we could arrange their sabbatical….

EXT. TOWN HALL – MORNING

The air is very cold, and the few passersby leave trails of breath behind them

INT. MAYOR'S OFFICE – MORNING

SECRETARY is walking out the door, wiping her mouth with her hand. Her hair looks disheveled. MAYOR sits in a large fake-leather swivel chair; his eyes are closed. A VOICE can be heard over the telephone conference-call system. The conversation is in German

VOICE (O.S.)
(Subtitled)
My friend, we're glad to hear that there have been no upsets. However, we still have 2 and a half months to go, and as I'm sure you are aware, any disturbances in the pond will be noticeable to our friends in Belgium.

MAYOR
(Reluctantly.
Subtitled)
The European union is less than concerned with this side of the country; the disappearance of their 'European Introduction Fund' is of a much greater concern

VOICE
Even so, there are many other towns, countries even, in your region, which would appreciate our involvement and investment. We don't like repeating ourselves…

MAYOR
Your message is understood. Aufwiederhoren

Audible CLICK as the conference call ends

MAYOR
Fucking Nazis…

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD LEADING TO BREZOVA – DUSK

Friday night. The light is a strange mix of grey and fading sun. it's hard to see where the roadsides end and the fields begin as everything is covered in snow. Forests line the hills bordering the fields – a mix of evergreen and skeletal birches. A dark green Russian JEEP is the only car on the road and it billows out diesel fumes.

INT. JEEP - DUSK

Kelp is driving, NATASHA, the translator sits next to him. Natasha looks very serious and the poor light prevents us from seeing her well. She wears glasses. The interior looks unbelievably cold and the heater is very noisy. Both wear thick winter clothes and gloves. It’s obvious that they haven’t been talking much, only pleasantries.

SUDDENLY, there is a flash of white in front of the jeep, which causes NAT to screech

NATASHA
What the hell was that?

KELP
What?

NATASHA
Don’t tell me you didn’t see it. Something just ran right in front of us.

KELP
It’s just the snow. I hate driving at this time of day as it kills your eyes trying to concentrate

Nat looks like she’s going to reply, but decides otherwise. She changes topic

NAT
You didn’t tell me we were going to Brezova

KELP
(Surprised)
You know this place?

NAT
My grandparents came from here. We’re part of a minority people - a leftover from the Slavic migrations of the 1300’s. the biggest migrations happened in the 6th Century, but with all the wars and raiding hordes, groups like mine moved around a lot.

KELP
Are your grandparents still here?

NAT
No. They were killed in the war. My father was sent to an orphanage in Hojnost. He was 10 at the time.

KELP
How often do you come here?

NAT
(Finally smiling)
Never! Once, when I was younger. What would I do here?

KELP
I wasn’t strictly honest about your translation requirements…

NATASHA turns her head to Kelp with a look of concern. As she does so, the white shape streaks past her side window.

EXT. SVETLANA’S COTTAGE – NIGHT

Chickens can be heard cooing, and the muffled sounds of other animals can be heard from the barn. As Kelp and Svetlana walk across the garden, the snow CRISPS beneath their feet.

INT. SVETLANA’S LIVING ROOM – NIGHT.

The room is obviously very hot, as Kelp and Svetlana proceed to remove their multiple outer layers. Kelp places a full bottle of vodka on the coffee table, which is clear. Natasha is attractive in a professional sort of way. She wears a heavy black jumper, with a thick belt, and tight trousers in knee-high fur-lined boots. Her hair is in a ponytail. Svetlana is seated on her favourite armchair with one fat leg over an arm, wearing the same clothes as a week earlier, cigarette in hand. She smiles when she sees the bottle.

SVETLANA
Ah. You took my advice on two accounts. Vodka and a translator. Why, then, I wonder, did you ignore my advice and not leave the country? Or at least the area?

She waits for an answer, although the question was half rhetorical. She gives up and pours shots for her guests. She watches Kelp take a proffered cigarette and smoke it.

SVETLANA (CONT.)
Well, sweetie. Have you told this little chicken her purpose for this evening?

Svetlana stares at Natasha for a moment, then back at Kelp

SVETLANA (CONT)
Christ’s mother, you two make a pair. Both thin as my fucking little finger

To emphasize, Svetlana shows her finger, which is neither small nor thin. She begins lighting candles, then sits back down. The room is plunged into an eerie light. Unfortunately, her massive breasts held in their bra are even more apparent. Svetlana begins muttering. She pours cooking oil into a bowl of water at her feet, its surface reflecting the candlelight. She stares intently and continues to mumble

NATASHA
What is this? Witchcraft?

KELP, who’s trying to avoid Natasha’s gaze SHRUGS and stares at the water, even though he can’t see it properly. Svetlana begins convulsing, and her voice becomes deeper and more masculine. She speaks incomprehensibly, or so Kelp thinks.

NATASHA
Holy Mother of God!

KELP
What? What?

NATASHA
How is she doing that?

KELP
Doing what?

NATASHA
I recognize the words but the accent, or at least punctuation is all off…

KELP
Can you understand what she, sorry he, is saying?

Natasha is now completely enthralled by the medium’s antics

NATASHA
In the name of God, yes.

KELP
(Anxiously)
Then what?

Natasha mimes some of the words, as if to get her head around them

NATASHA
It’s some monk, Brother Eustus. Says he was burned for alchemy in 1400 and something…

KELP
(Smarmily losing interest)
I’m after Janosik, this ‘GHOST’ is too early. What’s he saying anyway?

As Svetlana speaks, Natasha translates

NATASHA
“Don’t dismiss me so easily, young pup. I know your venture, and although the intention is flawed, the heart is good. You’re looking for Janosik is that correct?”

KELP
(Now in doubt)
Yes, that’s correct.

NATASHA
“Why should I help you boy? You don’t believe in Christ and you certainly don’t believe in me”

KELP
What do you want…my confession?

NATASHA
“No boy. I want to hear your heart….”

KELP
Svetlana, joke’s over. The old man wanted me to find Janosik, not your impersonation of a dead monk….

NATASHA
Kelp. It can’t be Svetlana. She wouldn’t know the language. Let’s just hear it out, ok?

KELP
If we must…

NATASHA
"Janosik is of no use to you in this plane. If you seek his gold, he must show you in spirit. There is a book, which I myself wrote, and which condemned me to the flames. Take paper and write these instructions as to its location. Follow its ritual and offer a gift of his former possession and he will answer your call."

KELP
Well. Write it down then…

As Natasha writes, Svetlana collapses in a swoon on her chair. Kelp stands as if to wake her, but instead just stares at her mass.

EXT. SVETLANA'S COTTAGE. NIGHT

Kelp and Natasha are looking at the stars, which are abundant. An owl can be heard nearby.

KELP
So what now? Is there such a book? What does 'former possession' mean?

NATASHA
I've never heard of the book, but my Professor will have; she has a sideline in icon procurement which she keeps quiet. You'd be surprised at the price medieval religious artefacts go for. The former possession can only be his axe, which is now in the Cultural Museum of Hojnost. He was famed for it.

They start walking down the deserted but well moonlit snowy road.

KELP
Looks like that's that then.

NATASHA
What's that then?

KELP
I can’t imagine the museum lending me the axe, and whoever’s got the book is hardly likely to hand it over, especially if I tell them a dead monk told me to take it.

Kelp stops walking and speaks to no-one in particular

KELP
What am I doing? Am I going mad? This is all a sick joke!

NATASHA
(Sympathetically)
You still haven’t told me what this is all about…

Kelp turns to face her, and for a moment it seems as if he’s going to kiss her. He stops himself and points at the JEEP, parked at the side of the road.

KELP
I’ll drive you back to your dormitory. I’ll tell you en route.

FLASHBACK

TITLE - AUSTRIAN/SLOVAKIAN BORDER NOVEMBER 1996

EXT. SLOVAK/AUSTRIA BORDER CONTROL - NIGHT

A huge concrete structure breaks the road, with bulletproof glass cabins facing Slovakia and Austria. The whole structure has a canopy, shielding the border guards from the rain, but not the wind, which whips crisp packets and road debris in small cyclones. In the distance can be seen the vile sight of Petrazelka, with the lights of its thousands of concrete apartment blocks. CARS are lined up waiting for entry. One of the vehicles is a VAN, with Kelp and Kwik in it.

INT. VAN - NIGHT

Kelp is sitting in the driving seat, waiting to move forward to clear customs. Kwik is nervously tapping the dashboard.

KWIK
I don’t get it. Why don’t we just stay in Austria?

KELP
If we start spending notes in Austria, their numbers will be traced.

KWIK
Then why don’t we go to Switzerland? Why some poxy fucking commie country where they live on cabbage? I fucking hate cabbage

KELP
Until we’ve converted the money, we can still be traced. Slovakia is renowned for its corruptional banking practices. We’ll be safe there.

KWIK
Safe? The whole fucking region is gagging for another civil war. The average income is a potato. We know, collectively, not one fucking word of Slovak and the Mafiosky runs the country. You’re out of your mind.

KELP
I’ve already arranged jobs for us.

Kelp starts the engine and slowly edges up to the control booth. They are second in line. Kelp watches a border guard shine a torch into the front car’s window.

KWIK
Jobs? We’ve got 40 grand in notes. Why do we need jobs?

KELP
Don’t you think it would be a tad suspicious if two blokes show up out of the middle of nowhere and start living the life of Riley?

KWIK
What sort of jobs? Real jobs?

KELP
Teaching

KWIK
Oh Christ! What the hell do we know about teaching?

KELP
We can learn as we go along

KWIK
You mean blag it? And no one’s going to notice. I fucking hate teachers.

Kelp starts the engine again and pulls up in front of the guard’s booth. The Russian-style uniformed guard shines a torch through the window and takes their passports, scrutinizing them carefully.

GUARD
(In German)
Why do you want to enter Slovakia? What is the purpose of your visit?

KELP
We don’t speak German. We’re English

The guard stares at him, then signals for another guard, this time a fat woman.

WOMAN GUARD
What is the purpose of your visit?

KELP
We are teachers. We have work here

WOMAN GUARD
Show me your invitation to work

Kelp produces WORK INVITATION. It’s written in English, which the woman obviously can’t read

WOMAN GUARD (CONT.)
How long will you stay in the Slovak Republic?

KELP
One year. That’s the length of the contract.

WOMAN GUARD
You must report to your local police station and inform them of your presence. You may enter.

Their passports are returned, almost completely filled with similar looking stamps. Kwik breathes a SIGH of relief.

END OF FLASHBACK

EXT. HOJNOST UNIVERSITY – LUNCHTIME

Students, braving the cold are seated on park-type benches, eating their lunch. Workers, on cranes are fixing Christmas lights to lampposts.

INT. UNIVERSITY. PROFESSOR'S OFFICE – LUNCHTIME

Professor Kralova is seated at her desk, eating home-packed sandwiches. Her hair is tied in a bun. There are now some Christmas decorations up in her room. The photo of the fat man has tinsel on it. Natasha sits nervously opposite her.

PROF
(Mouth full)
So it wasn't translating statutes then?

NASTASHA
Not exactly, Pani Professor. I've come to ask your advice.

PROF
(Ignoring her)
Talking with spirits? How childish.

NATASHA
Ordinarily, I would have thought so, too, but it all seemed so real.

PROF
And what did this 'Spirit' have to say for itself?

NATASHA
It was a he, Pani Professor, a 14th Century Monk named Eustus. He gave us instructions to find a book, and a…

PROF
What kind of book?

NATASHA
Some medieval manuscript, like a Grimoire, that he'd written

PROF
Child, there are thousands of such books, most of which are now in any one of Budapest's countless libraries. Could you be more specific?

NATASHA
He asked me to write down the name of its current owner, and his address. Here…

Natasha shows Professor a scribbled NOTE. Professor's eyes show extreme interest, which she is quick to hide

PROF
Have you seriously considered this? Do you expect to contact this gentleman and ask him to hand over what is obviously a priceless item to you? And what if you get it? What then?

NATASHA
Brother Eustus said the book contains a ritual that needs to be performed in order to…

PROF
Go on child

NATASHA
…to raise a spirit.

PROF
And would this spirit be Brother Eustus, or did you have another in mind?

NATASHA
No, Pani Professor. The Englishman, Kelp wants to raise the ghost of Janosik.

PROF
For what purpose?

NATASHA
To find his gold, ma'am.

Silence falls on the room. Students' VOICES and LAUGHTER can be heard dimly from outside. Professor rubs her nose in thought. Natasha, feeling foolish, plays with her thumbs.

PROF
And how can I help in this matter?

NATASHA
Your linguistic abilities far surpass mine, and you have extensive experience with medieval manuscripts of this kind. I know you regularly sell to that shop in Zurich…

PROF
That’s enough, child. Yes, I may be able to help you. Bring me the book, and we shall see what we can do. What else is required for this ‘ritual’?

NATASHA
(Relieved)
Janosik’s axe. Although we don’t know how…

PROF
I can tell you now child, that neither the book nor the axe will be easily gained. I hope your new friend Mr. Kelp has some burglary experience, as I fear that may be your only option. Bring me the book and the axe, and we shall proceed from there…

INT. UNIVERISTY. PROFESSOR’S OFFICE – AFTERNOON.

Professor has obviously been considering the discussion. She reaches for the telephone. Throughout the call she strokes the photo of the fat man.

PROFESSOR
(Slovak. subtitled)
I know I shouldn’t be calling you at work, but there’s something I felt would interest you…

Beat

Remember the book I got you, written by the mad Monk? I’ve just had someone here who’s more than a little interested in it…

Beat

Seems like we were missing part of the formula.

PROFESSOR (CONT.)

Beat

Janosik! Can you believe it? It's an Englishman and he's going after Janosik's gold! I suggested….

EXT. SVETLANA'S COTTAGE – AFTERNOON

Kelp is walking across the snowy garden to the door. His eyes glance everywhere for the big white Cuvasz

INT. SVETLANA'S LIVING ROOM – AFTERNOON

The coffee table is full of empty glasses and plates, as if a whole army has recently been there. MAREK is sitting on a threadbare chair, eating a biscuit. He's dressed in paint-stained overalls. Svetlana is lounged out on the couch like Jabba the Hut. Kelp is forced to sit in her usual chair. She looks more than a little drunk.

KELP

…I mean, surely there must be someone else who can do this ritual. I can't be the only one…

MAREK

(Mouth full)

Svetlana says it's prophesized

Marek looks to Svetlana for confirmation. Her eyes are unfocused.

MAREK (CONT.)

No matter what they say about you, Kelp, I know you can do it.

KELP

(Confused)

Who says what?

SVETLANA

It's you or no one, and if no-one does it, the village is fucked, and if the village is fucked then we all lose our homes and will end up relocated to some shabby housing block in Hojnost.

MAREK
We've been here for centuries, kamarat. Bet you didn't know we still have our own language, did you? Same as it has been for almost a thousand years.

SVETLANA
(Quickly)
Sweetie, I know you're anxious. Who wouldn't be? This is something you've got to do by your own. Just think how you'll feel, knowing you've saved us.

KELP
The ritual is one thing, and completely hypothetical. But breaking and entry, followed by burglary? I've no wish to spend the rest of my days rotting in a Slovak jail.

MAREK
You won't be on your own. One of us will drive you were you need to be going, and will drive you back again.

KELP
What about guns? Just about every house here has a gun, and from what I see on the news, they seem to be used regularly.

MAREK
If you feel you need a gun, just ask

SVETLANA
Don't think about what-ifs, sweetie. Think about what your heart's telling you.

KELP
You know I'll do it, Svetlana, although God knows why.

Beat

I can't help shaking the feeling that I'm being led along on this one

SVETLANA
You're just tasting Destiny for the first time, that's all it is, sweetie

EXT. UNIVERSITY - MORNING

Kelp and Natasha walk along a path in the park, ambling without any sense of direction. There seems to be something unspoken between them.

NATASHA
I don't understand you, Kelp. If I were you, I'd be flying back to England now, knowing that I couldn't have done anything. You still can. Forget about Brezova, you've got your own life to lead.

KELP
Things aren't that simple, Nat.

Beat

Is there no way of asking for the book and the axe?

NATASHA
I'm afraid not. Professor Kralova agrees with 'borrowing' the objects, as she doesn't see another possibility.

KELP
She doesn't strike me as that sort of person

NATASHA
(Laughing gently)
Under socialism, people 'borrowed' things all the time. If one worked in a shoe factory, one 'borrowed' shoes.

KELP
This isn't like taking home products I've made. This is burglary

NATASHA
(Anxiously)
Sshh! I don't agree with it anymore than you do, but there really is no other option. That is, unless you can buy back the village's rights.

KELP
(Saddened)
Not a chance, and none of the villager’s believe me on that. They all seem to think that because I’m western, I must be a millionaire.

NATASHA
(Playfully)
You mean you’re not? Then I’ll have to find me another potential husband….

KELP
Do you believe in Destiny, Nat?

NATASHA
(Misconceiving question)
That depends on whose Destiny, Kelp…

EXT. ROAD LEADING TO BREZOVA - DUSK

No Ear is walking along the road, with his shotgun broken on his arm. He walks for some distance, occasionally checking for deer or boar tracks. The hills are full of trees and the snow is thick. Suddenly, a white shape flashes past him. No Ear breaks his shotgun and takes aim, he turns around trying to target the shape.

NO EAR
(Shouting)
Come out you Nazi bastard, I saw you. You want to play games with an old partisan, eh?

No Ear fires a warning shot in the air, and when it’s obvious no-one's going to appear, continues walking

EXT. KELP’S COTTAGE – BREZOVA – DUSK

The sounds of a pair of ravens can be heard as they fly home to roost. Smoke swirls out of the chimney. Fresh snow falling can be seen illuminated by the kitchen window.

INT. KELP'S KITCHEN – DUSK

Seen under a peaceful atmosphere, the kitchen is warm and friendly – a stark contrast to the bitterly cold outside. Kelp and Marek are focusing on a HAND-DRAWN MAP on the table while a young, large gypsy (SANDO), lights a cigarette from a burning ember he's taken out of the oven.

MAREK
We'll park the car there (POINTS) at the beginning of the driveway. From there it's best if you walk up the drive here and enter through one of the kitchen windows here.

KELP
And you'll be waiting in the car with Sando?

MAREK
As an extra boost for your confidence, yes.

KELP
(Sarcastically)
Thanks

MAREK
The book will most likely be in his study (POINTS) here. Chances are, it will be on display. He's a bit of a collector so make sure you get the right one.

KELP
You seem to know a lot about 'Him'.

SANDO
We've been doing recon on him and his house.

KELP
So who is 'he' then? He's got to be pretty damn rich judging by the size of the house.

MAREK
(Nervously)
He's the Mayor of Hojnost

KELP
You've got to be joking. He's the biggest Mafiosky boss in the area. Who do you think I am? Daniel?

SANDO
Daniel who?

KELP
Daniel who walked into a lion's den

SANDO

Beat
I don't get it….

MAREK
Don't worry; he doesn't have any lions. He has two German Shepherds, but they're caged at the back of the house.

KELP
Now I know I'm going to get shot.

MAREK
(Soothingly)
You're not going to get shot. The Mayor spends most of his time in his office, 'working late' with his secretary. He's got a small flat there so doesn't go home much. His wife is permanently at a health spa, curing one illness after another, and his kids are grown up and spend most nights at a club.

KELP
I've met his son

MAREK
See? Nothing to worry about.

Beat
Right then. i suggest we get going. This fresh snow will cover your tracks. It'll be like you were never there.

EXT. HOJNOST. TOWN HALL. NIGHT

The street lamps give an eerie, orange glow to the falling snow as it lands on the faux-marble steps of the building. No lights are on in the building

INT. MAYOR’S OFFICE. NIGHT

The room is dark. The mayor’s chair is slightly lit by an electronic desk clock which shows the time to be 1039 pm.

EXT. OUTSIDE OF MAYOR’S DRIVEWAY. NIGHT.

Tall fir trees block any view of the house or land, and the whole is set back from the main road, leaving the old white Skoda car virtually invisible in the darkness. Kelp, Sando and Marek go through final planning. Occasionally, the lighting of a cigarette can be seen through a steamed-up window.

INT. SANDO’S CAR. NIGHT

The interior is very cramped and smoky.

MAREK
So. We’ll wait for you here. You shouldn’t be any longer than…

Marek strains to read his WATCH in the poor light, fighting the urge to switch the vanity light on. The time shows 1039 pm.

MAREK (CONT.)
…15 minutes.

KELP
And if you’re not here?

SANDO
(Laughing)
Try the bar.

Beat.
Only joking. I brought along a bottle just in case.

KELP
That’s reassuring

MAREK
I don’t think he’s got cameras, but to be on the safe side, keep your mask on. Don’t take your gloves off and try not to make any noise

KELP
You’ve done this before, haven’t you? Why don’t YOU do it?

MAREK
Svetlana said it’s your job, Mat.

Kelp looks as if he’s going to make a comment, then just shakes his head.

KELP
Are you going to keep the engine running?

SANDO
Fuck off. Are you paying for the gas?

MAREK
No. It’ll make too much noise.

KELP
What if the engine freezes?

MAREK
Just get going…

Marek opens the door, letting freezing air in and cigarette smoke out. Once kelp is outside, he shuts it quickly.

EXT. END OF MAYOR’S DRIVEWAY. NIGHT

Kelp is standing, to the tops of his boots in snow. The sky is very dark because of the snow falling. Behind him he can hear Marek and Sando talking and laughing in the car, but can’t make out what they’re saying. He’s dressed in dark clothing with a balaclava rolled up on his head. He’s obviously very cold. He seems to be mentally preparing himself. He begins to walk, cautiously.

EXT. MAYOR’S DRIVEWAY. NIGHT.

Kelp pushes his way through the fir trees and is confronted with the looming shape of a large modern house. The driveway snakes around the back of the house, and there is an ornamental pond with a garish, concrete statue of some sort of nymph as a non-functioning fountain. There are no lights on in the house. Kelp slowly crouch-walks his way to the house, using anything as cover.

EXT. MAYOR’S HOUSE. NIGHT

Kelp is now leaning with his back against the wall. His rapid breathing is evident as mist appears through his 3-holed balaclava. After a pause, he edges his way around to the side of the house, looking for both the dogs and the kitchen windows. He sees the dog cages at a distance; the dogs must be in their kennels as it is so cold. He sees the kitchen window, and pulls out a tool-roll from his jacket.

Selecting a flat bladed screw driver, he slips it under the rubber insulation, constantly pulling the window outwards, eventually the screwdriver is far enough inside so that he can lift the catch. He pauses then opens the window. The screwdriver falls inside and makes a clanging sound, probably against the sink. Kelp is worried.

He waits, and when there is no repercussion, enters.

INT. MAYOR’S HOUSE KITCHEN. NIGHT

Standing on a large metal sink, kelp switches on a Maglite torch he’s brought. He gets down and examines the room. It’s large and equipped with every mod con. The centre of the room is taken up with a large steel- and wood preparation table.

Following the discussed map he moves stealthily out of the kitchen and into a hallway.

INT. MAYOR’S HOUSE HALLWAY

The torch light shines around, illuminating kitsch modern furniture, although expensive. A large double-staircase goes to the next landing. Kelp knows he must walk up it.

The staircase squeaks every time Kelp steps on it. This makes him very nervous. He gets the feeling he’s being watched.

He makes it to the top of the stairs and enters the:

INT. MAYOR’S HOUSE BATHROOM.

Cursing, kelp shines his torch around the ceiling to floor blue ceramic tiled room. The bath is massive, more like a spa. There are bidets, wash basins, toilets and every other type of plumbing. Kelp curses again and tries to remember the map. He leaves the bathroom, goes back into the hallway and enters:

INT. MAYOR’S HOUSE. GUEST BEDROOM

A simply, but expensively furnished large room.

KELP
(Muttering)
Marek, you utter arsehole…

It is now obvious that the map is wrong

EXT. HOJNOST UNIVERSITY. NIGHT

INT. UNIVERSITY DORMITORY. NATASHA’S ROOM. NIGHT

A tiny, pre-fab room with one cupboard, one sink, one desk and one bed with shelves above it filled with books. Natasha is bent over the desk, seated on a school-type chair. A reading lamp helps her as she studies a large ENCYCLOPEDIA type book. She’s dressed in a negligee and her long blonde hair is down. she looks innocent, yet beautiful. She mumbles to herself as she reads.

The ENCYCLOPEDIA shows a WOOD CARVING of Brother Eustus, and there is a page dedicated to his biography

NATASHA
(Reading from book)

Eustus, Brother. Carmelite Monk. Born ? Died 1392.One of many of the so called 'Carmelite Bearers", Brother Eustus was recognized as one of the renowned herbalists of his day. His interest in the sciences, however, led him into direct confrontation with The Church, and he was warned on several occasions, most notably by Bishop Stavebinus (PP426-427) to restrain his activities.

Following the excommunication, and execution, of a number of 'Carmelite Bearers' for alleged alchemical practices, Brother Eustus fled his native Hungary for the sanctitude of the Carpathian mountains in Slovakia. Unfortunately for him, monasteries were the regular targets of Cossack and Hussite raiding parties and he again fled for his life.

For the remaining years of his life, Brother Eustus wrote several works of esoteric interest, thinly veiled as quasi-religious horticultural compendiums.

Eustus was finally executed, by order of the Church for, unusually, being suspected of the abduction and murder of several women. The inquisition found him guilty of 'the abhorrent misuse of life in the service of Satan'. Contrary to popular belief, Eustus, along with many others executed by the Inquisition, suffered death by garrote.

Natasha stops reading and lifts her head. She removes her glasses and rubs her tired eyes. She thinks for a moment that something isn't right. She gives up. Switches the light out and goes to bed.

EXT. MAYOR’S HOUSE. NIGHT.

Snow continues to fall. The house is dark

INT. MAYOR’S HOUSE. FIRST FLOOR HALLWAY. NIGHT

Kelp, now agitated, tries another door, almost knocking over a plant on a pedestal. He slowly creaks open the door and enters:

INT. MAYOR’S HOUSE. JARO’S ROOM.

Luckily, kelp didn’t use the torch as he entered the room. In the bed, making love noisily are Jaro and some dark haired girl. Kelp freezes in the door crack. They continue their sex as Kelp slips out, trying not to breathe heavily. He is now very nervous.

INT. MAYOR’S HOUSE. FIRST FLOOR HALLWAY. NIGHT

Kelp is almost panicking. Not only is he lost in the house and the map isn’t right, but the house is occupied by obviously not-sleeping residents.

Getting himself together, he makes a choice between another set of stairs and another door. Kelp enters:

INT. MAYOR’S HOUSE. STUDY. NIGHT

Kelp breathes a sigh of relief as his torchlight picks out shelves upon shelves of books, some very old. There is an ornate antique desk and some leather captain’s chairs in the room along with a walnut drinks cabinet. Taking pride and joy and primary place is a miniature lectern. On it rests an open medieval looking book. Kelp approaches, nervously, his head full of doubt. He shines his torch at the open pages and sees that it’s written in an illegible script. Hand drawn pictures of plants and strange circles abound.

Sensing that this is the right book, Kelp picks it up, carefully closing it and placing it in a bag, which was in his jacket.

To be certain he has the right book, he scans the shelves with his torch, but finds nothing quite as old as the huge tome. He exits the room

INT. MAYOR'S HOUSE. FIRST FLOOR HALLWAY. NIGHT

Just as Kelp is closing the study door, he hears a noise coming from the next room. Jaro's bedroom door opens and a beautiful, but bedraggled teenage girl, dressed only in panties shuffles out, heading for the bathroom.

Kelp pins himself against the wall and waits until she has closed the bathroom door. Then, he stealthily sneaks past Jaro's door towards the stairway. A voice calls out

JARO
(Slovak. subtitled)
Oi! Bitch! Get me a drink!

From the bathroom a muffled reply can be heard

GIRL
Get it yourself, you lazy swine.

Kelp listens as the bed creaks. Jaro is getting up. Kelp creeps to the stairway and shuffles down. The creaks and groans of the stairs sound extremely loud to his nervous ears.

Kelp makes it to the hallway, and finds his bearings. He needs to get out of the kitchen window, before Jaro comes down for a drink. He hears the bedroom door re-open and is caught in a dilemma.

Kelp decides against the window and runs to the front door, desperately trying to pull back the bolts. Jaro can be heard at the top of the stairs

JARO
Fuck you then. I'll get it myself.
You might as well go home.

Jaro begins descending the stairs as Kelp flings open the front door, letting icy air in. Jaro, dressed only in boxer shorts, feels it instantly

JARO (CONT.)

Beat
What the fuck…?

EXT. MAYOR’S HOUSE. NIGHT

Throwing caution to the wind, Kelp slams the door and sprints along the driveway to the awaiting car. Jaro runs after him, ignoring the below zero temperature on his bare skin

JARO (CONT.)
Oi! Stop!

EXT. OUTSIDE OF MAYOR’S DRIVEWAY. NIGHT.

Kelp bangs on the car window, startling the occupants. The door opens and he enters

INT. SANDO’S CAR. NIGHT.

KELP
Start the car!

SANDO
What?

MAREK
Calm down!

KELP
Fuck ‘calm down’. I’m being chased.
Start the fucking car!

Sando tries to start the car. The engine is cold and it takes several tries. Kelp wipes steam from the window and sees Jaro, now wearing a pair of boots running quickly towards them.

KELP
GO! GO! GO!

The engine starts, but the wheels spin in the snow.

MAREK
Put it into second and use the clutch

SANDO
Fuck you…

Sando does as instructed and the car slowly moves forward. Sando increases the revs and spurts snow at the chasing Jaro, forcing him to stop and use his hands to protect his face. They escape.

INT. MAYOR'S HOUSE. KITCHEN. NIGHT.

The lights are on, clearly showing a very expensive, large and well equipped room.

Jaro is standing in his boxer shorts and unlaced boots, draped in a coat. His Girlfriend has put on a T-shirt, and she is holding his waist. MAYOR is fully clothed in a suit and is holding a SCREWDRIVER, which he is examining. A wall clock reads 1102. they speak in SLOVAK. SUBTITLED

MAYOR
Not to worry, Jaro. It looks like you disturbed them before they could steal anything.

JARO
Where were you?

MAYOR
(Lying)
I was in my study. I must have dozed off.

Beat

It looks like he didn't get further than the kitchen and front door. (POINTS) you see where the window was pried open?

GIRL
He must be mental to break into your house, no offence. Everyone knows you…

MAYOR
Thank you. I hope you're saying that, as I'm such a well-loved and respected man….

JARO
Have you phoned the police or are we going to deal with it?

MAYOR
Why bother the police? The thief clearly didn’t succeed in his plan. I’m sure they’ll try again, and then we’ll catch them. Goodnight.

JARO

Beat
Goodnight, Dad.

Jaro and the girl head back to bed. The Mayor remains, half-smiling to himself, twirling the screwdriver in his fingers; thinking.

EXT. UNIVERSITY. PRE-BREAKFAST MORNING.

A small Bobcat snowplow clears the fresh snow from the paths, leaving ice in its wake.

INT. UNIVERSITY. DORMITORY HALLWAY. PRE-BREAKFAST MORNING

A uniformed, OLD GUARD knocks on a door identical to the twenty or so others on the floor. He KNOCKS repeatedly until the door opens slightly, and Natasha appears.

Natasha has been woken by the noise and she looks disheveled. She pulls a white dressing gown around her to keep warm. She isn’t wearing glasses.

NATASHA
(Sleepily. SLOvak. Subtitled)
What is it?

OLD GUARD
I’m sorry to have woken you, miss, but there’s a gentleman downstairs who wants to speak to you about your project.

NATASHA
What time is it?

OLD GUARD
Six – forty-five, miss. Shall I tell him to wait?

NATASHA
Please. Tell him I'll be down in 5 minutes

OLD GUARD
(Smiling)
Better make that twenty, miss…

NATASHA
(Smiling)
You are a dear. Could you fix him a coffee?

Natasha doesn't wait for a reply; instead she closes the door, leaving the guard a little confused but happy that he's a service

EXT. HOJNOST. BUSY STREET. MID-MORNING

Cars beep in never ending traffic jams. Pedestrians rush past. Gypsies beg. The town centre is quite old, the buildings a mix of the modern and Baroque.

INT. BUSY STREET BAR. MID-MORNING

The bar is dark and separated into booths with only a few stools next to the bar proper. A spattering of business people having coffee with shorts, and seasoned alcoholics are in the place. Kelp sits in a tucked-away corner booth. Music is playing from a CD system.

Kelp is wearing a baseball cap, tinted glasses and a thick fur-lined parka. He doesn't look like Kelp. He's drinking beer. Next to him on his seat is a plastic shopping bag full of something square-shape.

Natasha enters the bar and spends a few minutes looking. She finally sees Kelp and walks over

NATASHA
What sort of game was that?

KELP
(Looking anxious)
What?

NATASHA
You get me up at the crack of dawn and tell me to meet you downstairs. I get myself ready, and you're not even there.

KELP
You got my note, though…

NATASHA
Obviously.

KELP
Anyway. You're here now. What do you want to drink?

Beat
Would you please sit down?

NATASHA
(Sitting)
I don't want a drink.

Beat
Okay, I'll have cappuccino. What game are you playing?

Kelp lets her run her questions, letting her relieve her anger.

KELP
(TO WAITER) One cappuccino. Another beer.

Kelp waits until the waiter's moved on

KELP (CONT.)
I've got the book

NATASHA
(Astounded)
How? Where? Here?

KELP
(Smiling)
I took it last night. No, it isn't here. I've spent the morning making Xeroxes of it for you. The book's in safekeeping for the moment.

NATASHA
Safekeeping? Don't you trust me?

KELP
This is going to sound awful, whichever way I try, Nat.

Beat

KELP (CONT.)
I’m finding it hard to trust anyone at the moment. I have this feeling that I’m being railroaded, but have no idea where to or why.

The Waiter reappears. Kelp waits.

NATASHA
(Sarcastically)
Nosdrovya!

KELP
I need a drink this morning.

NATASHA
So where is the book?

KELP
Wrong question, Nat. How about, “are you okay? What happened last night?”

NATASHA
I’m sorry. I just can’t really take it all in.

Beat
You actually stole the book? I didn’t think you had it in you…

FLASHBACK

EXT. SMALL POST OFFICE. SMALL TOWN HIGH STREET. ENGLAND 1996

A normal day in the life of a small town. Suddenly two men (KELP and KWIK) wearing balaclavas and boiler suits run out of the post office carrying bags and replica pistols. They sprint down the high street as an alarm goes off

FLASHBACK ENDS

INT. BUSY STREET BAR. MID-MORNING

NATASHA (CONT.)
Did everything go okay?

KELP
No. Not really. I was chased out of the house. The man who designed the map got the plan wrong. I feel like I'm being chased by one of the most dangerous men in the country, and…

NATASHA
Whose house was it?

KELP
The Mayor's….

NATASHA
Oh, God, Kelp. I knew I recognized that name from somewhere. What are you going to do?

Kelp looks across the bar and sees someone walk into the toilet. He's not sure if he knows the man or if he's just being paranoid. The man glances at him.

KELP (CONT.)
To tell you the truth, no idea.

Kelp passes the plastic bag to Natasha

NATASHA
Is this the book, sorry, the Xerox?

KELP
Yes. I need you to find the ritual for me. Unless there's anything else that's important, don't bother translating it. We've only got 2 months before Brezova is put on the market, which leaves us little time to put our registration in.

NATASHA
What about the axe?

KELP
That's next. Look, I'm going to give you my mobile number, just in case. I'm going to have to lie low for a while, so it's better if you don't try to call my home number.

Kelp passes her a business card which she exams cursorily.

NATASHA
I did some reading on Brother Eustus, Kelp. There’s something wrong about him that I can’t place my finger on

KELP
You mean apart from the fact that he wrote necromantic books and speaks from the dead?

NATASHA
Funny. I’ll have to think about it. When I’ve worked it out, I’ll call you. I’ve got this sensation that it’s something important that you should know.

Kelp pulls some cash from his wallet and leaves it on the table. He signals Natasha not to speak then starts to leave. Quickly, he kisses her lips and holds her face in his hand, and then leaves, leaving her slightly confused holding a plastic bag.

The man from the toilet sits at the bar and watches Kelp walk out.

EXT. BREZOVA. OUTSIDE SVETLANA’S HOUSE. AFTERNOON

Kelp is having problems parking his jeep, as there is a large collection of old and rusted Skodas on every available piece of roadside not covered in snow. There are even two tractors there.

Kelp finally parks and walks up to the house, watching for the Cuvasz, which he sees dozing in its kennel. The little dog barks his presence

INT. SVETLANA’S HALLWAY. AFTERNOON

Kelp can’t get into the living room as there are so many people in the house. A wide range of villagers, wearing shabby farm clothes to tracksuits. He looks to see if there’s anyone her recognizes. He spots Marek, Barman and No Teeth. He can hear Svetlana (O.S.) in the kitchen. Marek signals for him to enter the living room, which he does with great effort.

MAREK
Here’s our hero!

Villagers stop and stare, sizing Kelp up. Suddenly, a glass is thrust in his hand, and is quickly filled with vodka. Everyone cheers him

VILLAGERS
Nosdrovya!

Kelp is completely bemused by the reaction. He notices, however, by the remains of food and empty bottles on the coffee table, that the gathering has been going on for some time. He feels a heavy hand on his shoulder and smells an odd mix of cheap perfume, sweat and vodka.

SVETLANA
So, Sweetie. You pulled off the book stunt? I've always had faith in you.

KELP
Thanks

NO TEETH
Now we're one step closer to finding that gold and buying back our land… Nosdrovya, young fellow.

SVETLANA
Give the boy some room. Here, sweetie. Have a seat.

Svetlana indicates for someone to move so Kelp can sit on the threadbare armchair. The room is stifling hot and stinks of pig shit and vodka.

MAREK
We've got the plans ready for the next job. I guess you'll be wanting a day or two to relax first, eh?

SVETLANA
Strike while the iron's hot, sweetie. The longer you put it off, the harder it'll be

VILLAGE MAN
That mayor will be laughing on the other side of his fat face when he sees we've got someone who can out fox him, and pay the registration to boot.

SVETLANA
(Quickly)
Are you hungry? I've got some nice fresh sausage in the kitchen…

Kelp shakes his head, then leans closer to Svetlana

KELP
(Whispering)
Svetlana, can I speak to you alone for a minute?

Svetlana studies his face and sees that Kelp is worried.

SVETLANA
(Loudly)
All right then, everyone out. The boy needs some peace and quiet. We'll meet again tomorrow.

Kelp nods and smiles pathetically as the guests finish their drinks and leave, some saying gratuities or patting his shoulder as they shuffle out the door. Soon he is left alone with Svetlana.

SVETLANA (CONT.)
So, sweetie. What's troubling you? Too much excitement?

KELP
It could be.

Beat
No. It's not that.

Beat
Svetlana, is there anything you're not telling me?

SVETLANA
There's lots of things I don't tell you, sweetie. Some things are just between God and me.

KELP
That's not what I meant. Is there something about Brother Eustus, or this crazy idea to find Janosik's gold that I should know about?

SVETLANA
You're not getting cold feet are you? You've just managed to steal his book from under the mayor's nose.

KELP
Was that really a coincidence?

SVETLANA
Call it coincidence; call it destiny. You still managed to pull it off.

KELP
Two weeks ago I didn't believe in ghosts, and now I'm running around robbing dangerous men because one ghost told me to so that I could raise another one.

SVETLANA
Don't think of them as ghosts sweetie. They prefer the term 'spirits'.

KELP
Whatever, Svetlana. I feel that I'm losing my self-control and being led by the nose. I don't even understand the rules of the game

Svetlana lights a cigarette and considers her answer

SVETLANA
I tell you what you need: a bit of rest and relaxation. Why don't you take that girl of yours out for the evening? Go and have some fun. Marek will sort out the plans for the next job while you're gone.

KELP
I told her not to contact me. I was worried about her safety.

SVETLANA
Ever the gentleman! Well, sweetie, I suggest you contact her then…

INT: PROF'S OFFICE, AFTERNOON

NATASHA sits opposite PROF, while the older woman grunts into telephone. Prof preens her hair and looks almost excited. Eventually she gets her attention and produces Kelp's PHOTOCOPY. Prof examines paper, becoming angry as she realizes what it is

PROF
Where's the original?

NAT
I think he's got it with him. We don't need it do we?

PROF
(SHAKING HEAD)
Have you any idea of the value of that book? It's worth hundreds of thousands of dollars!

NAT
(BECOMING SUSPICIOUS)
I'm sorry. He wouldn't let me have it

PROF
My girl, that mad monk was garroted for what he wrote in that book, and you've lost it?

NAT
I didn't lose it…

NAT suddenly realizes what's wrong. Svetlana's 'Spirit' said monk was burned, not garroted. It was a set up for Kelp.

NAT (CONT.)
Oh my God!

PROF
What?

Before Nat can answer, door opens and in walks MAYOR. He smiles at Prof, and then sits on desk facing Nat

MAYOR
Now, my dear Natasha. Why don't you start at the beginning? Tell me what your English friend has found in my book…

EXT: BREZOVA BAR, NIGHT

KELP keeps trying to phone Natasha's dorm but she's not answering. He shakes his head and walks back into the loud bar.

INT: SANDO'S SKODA, NIGHT

The gypsy is driving very quickly through the outskirts of Hojnost. Windscreen wipers bat away falling snow. Streetlamps strobe in the poor light.

MAREK
You did it! You did it!

KELP
(Looking sad)
Yes, Marek; I did it.

Kelp turns bronze-headed axe over in his hands. The blade catches the light of the street lamps.

INT: SVETLANA' COTTAGE, MORNING

Svetlana can be heard happily humming in kitchen, the dogs are barking outside. Kelp sits on chair, watching old Slovak film with Marek. On coffee table are vodka, mobile phone and goulash. The phone rings and Kelp picks it up.

KELP
(Walking outside for better reception)
Yes?

MAYOR (V.O.)
Mr. Kelp?

KELP
Yes? Who is this?

MAYOR
I'm afraid we haven't had the pleasure of meeting yet…

Beat
I believe you have something of mine? A book?

Kelp's face registers his comprehension; he looks pale. He grunts in reply.

MAYOR (CONT.)
And I have something of yours.

KELP
(CONFUSED)
What?

MAYOR
A young lady

KELP
(OUTRAGED)
Natasha! What have you done with her?

MAYOR
(Chuckling)
Now, now, Mr Kelp. Let's be sensible.

Beat

You also have an axe, I believe. It was YOU who took it, was it not? I certainly hope so as this could become very difficult if it was someone else.

KELP
What do you want?

MAYOR
Good. I can see you're a reasonable man. I want my book, and the axe. In return, you may have your translator.

KELP
(THINKING)
Keep her. She's just, as you say, a translator. She means nothing to me.

MAYOR
(CHUCKLING)
Come, come, Mr. Kelp. I have information that you were seen kissing her in a certain bar in Hojnost. You were in disguise I believe?

FLASHBACK: KELP WATCHING MAN GOING INTO TOILET. SEES HIM AGAIN AT BAR, GLANCING OVER

FLASHBACK ENDS

MAYOR (CONT.)
I presume you are aware who I am?

KELP
Let's stop the bollocks. You can have your lousy book and axe. Release the girl.

Kelp sees the Cuvasz approaching and snarling. For once he's not afraid of it. He kicks snow in its face and it backs away.

KELP (CONT.)
Let me speak to Natasha.

MAYOR
Certainly, Mr. Kelp. Please don't ask her where she is though… we wouldn't want any accidents to happen, would we?

NATASHA
(V.O. TREMBLING VOICE)
Mat?

KELP
Natasha! Are you okay? Has he hurt you?

NATASHA
(AFTER SHORT PAUSE)
No. Just do as he says. Give him the axe, and the book. You know, the one the STRANGLED monk wrote.

Kelp frowns, missing her hint entirely. Was he supposed to have more than one book?

NATASHA (CONT.)
It's a shame the monk and the book weren't BURNED, as we wouldn't be in this mess.

NOISE on other end of mobile

MAYOR
Mr. Kelp. You can see that's she's alive. Let's set a date for our handover.

Beat

I'll call when I think of a suitable time and place. Oh, don't leave the country just yet. You might, however, start thinking of just such an action for later, though.

Phone goes dead. Kelp looks out across the garden and onto the white, forested hills. He shrugs and goes back inside.

INT: BREZOVA BAR, AFTERNOON.

Kelp and No Ear sit alone, drinking. Barman is stocking chopped wood by the stove. Every time he enters or leaves, wind blows snow through door.

NO EAR
I saw a Nazi the other day

As No Ear speaks, he strokes his shotgun

KELP
(DISBELIEVING, BUT SYMPATHETIC)
Really? I thought they'd all gone.

NO EAR
(LEANING FORWARD, CONSPIRITORIALLY)
Ah, my boy, that's what most think. This one was wearing white - snow camouflage. Thought I wouldn't see him. I fired a shot and scared him off.

Beat

Clever fuckers. Good soldiers, but I know how to deal with them.

Kelp nods. The old man's obviously lost it.

KELP
What are you going to do? Is it safe?

NO EAR
I'm going to keep guard. I'll make a patrol every evening and see if I can flush them out. Fucking criminals, they were

FLASHBACK: EXT: LARGE, OLD ENGLISH HOUSE

Kelp is sitting in Rover with window wound down. Pretty young woman is leaning into car.

KELP
It'll be okay. I'll be back soon.

GIRLFRIEND
Don't do this Matt. We don't need the money that badly.

KELP
Sarah, we're way behind on payments. I can't afford to lose my family home.

SARAH
(NOT CONVINCED)
Mat, don't do this.

KELP
What? You'll leave me?

SARAH
I won't live with a criminal, Mat. You do this and I'll phone the police.

Beat

Please Mat, if Kwik wants to do it, let him. We can try getting another mortgage…

KELP
I'm sorry, Sarah. It's my choice. You do what you feel you have to.

Kelp drives off on the long gravel driveway, leaving girlfriend standing with crossed arms in rearview mirror.

FLASHBACK ENDS

INT: SVETLANA'S COTTAGE, NIGHT

Cottage is packed with people. All village is present, except for No Ear. On coffee table, magazine is open to page showing book and Mayor. In the lounge is seated a young woman, MAYOR"S SECRETARY.

SVETLANA
My daughter tells me that the fat bastard Mayor's gone away for a week. Wonder if he's looking for his book?

ALL
(Laughter)

SVETLANA
Now then. Our Englishman's got the book and the axe. We just need to get them off him.

MAREK
Shouldn't be too hard, you just have to mention his kamarat in the flowerbed.

SVETLANA
No, Marek. Let's keep to the plan. He's got to give us the stuff of his own free will. We'll let him do the ritual, and when it fails, we'll suggest that we can sell the book and axe. He's as worried about Brezova being dug up as the rest of us.

BARMAN
He could keep the stuff, or sell it himself. We need a backup plan incase he welches.

SVETLANA
Sweetie, he won't welch, trust me. That girl of his believed every word I said, and he believed her.

Beat

We just have to pick our time carefully

NO TEETH
Svetlana, we don't have that much time left. If we don't get the money soon, them Germans will come ploughing through here anyway.

EXT: FORESTED HILL, AFTERNOON. PANORAMA IS EXQUISITELY WILD

INT: PARKED GAZ JEEP, ON FOREST TRACK, AFTERNOON

Kelp is seated in his Gaz, wrapped in many layers of clothing. On passenger seat are book and axe. He's clutching steering wheel, but has to repeatedly wipe condensation from windscreen. He looks sad and confused. Mobile rings and he removes it from inside pocket.

MAYOR (V.O.)
Mr. Kelp? December 21st okay with you?

KELP
Midwinter? What time?

MAYOR
Why, night of course. A certain friend of mine has deciphered the text and she believes that is the best night to perform the ritual.

KELP
YOU'RE going to perform the ritual?

MAYOR
Why not? Once you've given me what I've requested, I'll be in the perfect position, wouldn't you say? Janosik's gold! I'll be a very rich man, Mr. Kelp.

KELP
What about Natasha?

MAYOR
As I said, she'll go free.

KELP
How can I trust you?

MAYOR
(Chuckling)
You can't Mr. Kelp.

Beat

This isn't England, Mr. Kelp. Perhaps you should have learned that by now? Have you considered my suggestion that you leave after the girl is released?

KELP
Are you threatening me?

MAYOR
I don't need to threaten you. As I said, this isn't England. There are too many accidents that could befall a naïf foreigner, alone out here. Too many jealous people willing to take a risk for a few extra dollars. You never know who your friends are out here. Better not to get close to anyone, I say…

KELP
(Resigned, but angry)
Don't worry. I won't be sticking around. Just let Natasha free, okay. She's got nothing to do with any of this.

MAYOR
Mr. Kelp. You keep to your side of the bargain, and I'll try to keep to mine.

EXT: NIGHTCLUB, LATE AFTERNOON.

Dismal looking concrete building with partially working fluorescent lighting indicating what it is.

INT: NIGHTCLUB. BACK ROOM, LATE AFTERNOON

Jaro and his goons are seated at a table, drinking and joking. A heavy, glass ashtray filled with butts makes centerpiece. Sat on a camp bed in one corner is Natasha. Muffled music can be heard from without.

JARO
(SLOVAK, SUBTITLED)
Your boyfriend's a fucking head case. Why don't you find yourself a good Slovak?

NATASHA
(AFRAID, BUT DEFIANT)
Like you? Bullet head?

The goons laugh and Jaro silences them with a bark.

JARO
You think you're special because you're at a fancy university? You're a dumb fucking chicken, like all women. You'll end up someone's secretary, having to suck a fat dick just to keep your job. Just like all the rest.

NATASHA
That might be your fantasy but it's not mine!

Jaro jumps out of his seat, knocking it over. He storms over to Natasha and grabs her chin, pulling her close to his face.

JARO
Shut your fucking mouth, whore! I've a good mind to see to you now, and send you to work behind the bar. You look like you need a good fucking. A couple of times up the arse and you'll be calling me sir!

GOON
Jaro, don't. Remember what your father said!

JARO
(STILL STARING INTO NATASHA"S EYES)
Shut up! He's an old man. One day I'll be the boss around here.

GOON
We know that, Jaro, but you're not yet.

Beat

She's not worth the hassle, kamarat. Your dad will pay us well for this; no sense in fucking it up.

Jaro continues his hold for a short while, then releases Natasha's chin, sending her flinging back on the bed. She rubs it. Jaro nods to his friends, picks up his chair and sits down.

EXT: SVETLANA'S COTTAGE, MORNING

Kelp opens gate and walks through the cleared-snow path to the front door. The Cuvasz approaches, barking; it sees Kelp and then runs off.

INT: SVETLANA'S COTTAGE, MORNING

The plastic wall clock ticks loudly while Svetlana slurps coffee accompanied by vodka. Kelp has coffee.

SVETLANA
So, the bastard has your chicken, eh?

Kelp nods. He looks like he hasn't slept for some time.

SVETLANA (CONT.)
There's a turn up for the books.

Beat

What are you going to do?

KELP
What can I do? I'll give him what he wants and then hopefully Natasha will walk free.

SVETLANA
(Hiding her concern that her plans will be ruined)
And then what? Catch the first plane out of here? Abandon Brezova

and your house?

KELP
What else is there? If I don't, God knows what he'll do to Natasha.

SVETLANA
We've survived in these parts for centuries. We've seen invasions, wars; empires come and go. We're still here. Why?

KELP
(Not in the mood for rehtoric)
Because you're hidden away and of no value to anyone?

SVETLANA
(Smiling)
Not quite, sweetie. Yes, we're a quiet bunch, and happiest left alone, but when times like these arise, be sure we can fight for our land. And have done, on many an occasion.

KELP
Partisans? We're not at war, Svetlana.

SVETLANA
Someone wants to take our land; is that not war? Be assured we'll do whatever it takes…

KELP
That's not going to help Natasha. It'll only make things worse.

SVETLANA
That book you've got. Brother Eustus wrote it and was burned for doing so, just as he told you. Like us, he felt that something was worth the sacrifice.

Suddenly, Kelp remembers Natasha's words. Something was drastically wrong. Svetlana's 'spirit' had lied. She'd lied. He'd been set up. Kelp looks at the grossly overweight woman for a moment, wanting to state his feelings.

SVETLANA
Something wrong, sweetie?

KELP
(Lying)
No. Just tired. Just want to get this over with.

The fat woman nods, and Kelp leaves.

EXT: SMALL ROAD BETWEEN BREZOVA AND HOJNOST, NOON.

Kelp's Gaz crawls along the icy road as it meanders through fields and forest.

INT: KELP'S GAZ, COUNTRY ROAD, NOON.

Kelp sees No Ear walking at the side of the road, armed as ever with his old shotgun. Kelp stops the Russian jeep. Winding down the window lets air in which makes his nostril hair freeze, it's cold.

KELP
Can I give you a lift?

The engine chugs noisily in the background, leaving black smoke on the snow.

NO EAR
Ah! No. I'm on patrol.

KELP
You're a fair way from the village.

NO EAR
They could be hiding anywhere.

KELP
(Sympathetic)
What are you doing for Christmas? Any relations coming?

NO EAR
I've got a son in America. He's married you know.

No Ear pulls out a battered, cardboard wallet and shows a photo taken in the sixties.

NO EAR (CONT.)
He might come; he's been promising for a while.

No Ear looks up at Kelp inquisitively, a sparkle in his old, hard eyes.

NO EAR (CONT.)
You might know him. He's about your age.

KELP
I'm English, not American

NO EAR
Close enough though, eh?

KELP
Why don't you have a dog? It would be good for you.

NO EAR
(Thinking)
Two mouths to feed? Not worth it. Well, see you later then.

Kelp shakes his head as he watches the old man, in army fatigues, wander off the road and into the snowy forest. He then drives off.

EXT: HOJNOST MAIN STREET, AFTERNOON

Kelp walks through the fur-clad shoppers carrying plastic bags, and under the vague attempt at Christmas decorations that the town has strung from the streetlamps. Old Skodas and Ladas drive slowly along the snowy road, intermingled with snowploughs. Kelp stops outside the only travel agents, windows full of hot beaches and blue skies, and enters.

INT: JARO'S NIGHTCLUB, NATASHA'S ROOM, NIGHT

The music now thuds techno beats through the walls. Natasha struggles to free herself from her hand restraints. Her hair is disheveled. She is alone in the room.

Jaro enters, letting the music come with him, flooding everything until he shuts the door and reduces it to a muffled thudding again. He spies Natasha and grins.

JARO
(Slovak. subtitled)
So, my little chicken. Still here?

The thug grins at his own joke and locks the door, leaving the key in the latch. Natasha's eyes widen at the implications - this is something he hasn't done before.

JARO (CONT.)
I thought we should have some time alone…

NATASHA
(Slovak. subtitled)
Jaro. Your father…

JARO
What about my father? You really think he's going to let you walk free after all this? You speak and it ruins his image.

NATASHA
(Trying to be calm)
Jaro, please don't.

JARO
(Advancing)
Come, my little chicken, let's play…

Natasha loosens the ties on her hands. She's half the size of Jaro, and her beauty contrasts greatly to his own features. Her eyes dart around the room, looking for a weapon. She sees the ashtray on the table.

Natasha, jumps sideways as the man grabs at her, then bolts for the table.

JARO
Why you little…

Natasha picks up the heavy glass ashtray and, as Jaro turns around, she swings it into his temple, sending him spinning to the floor.

She drops it and runs for the door, leaving her coat behind on the bed. The handle won't turn. She remembers it's locked. She fumbles with the key. It's stuck. Behind her, she can here the young gangster grunt and rise. She keeps trying the lock

JARO
You fucking bitch…

Natasha looks behind her. Jaro's standing, unsteady on his feet, blood trickling down the side of his face. She turns back as the key turns. She pulls open the door and the music envelops her.

JARO
Get back here, now!

Natasha feels the heat of the club. She runs down a corridor, past many office and storeroom doors, until she reaches the door to the club itself. Behind her, she can hear Jaro pursuing, calling out.

She enters the club, her heart pounding. The dance floor is packed. The music is overwhelming. There are people everywhere, many drunks. She dashes towards a large crowd, heading for the stairs that lead to the exit.

Shit! Bouncers!

She recognizes the two, leather coated, goons at the top of the stairs as being Jaro's friends – the ones who'd sat in her room at the table. What now? If they see her…

She sees a group of overly drunk young soldiers on leave; they're all young and flirtatious. They're getting their coats to leave, staggering en masse for the stairs. She lunges for one, not caring who or what he is, and places a kiss on his lips.

The young soldier is staggered. His eyes widen. He stops, and then tries to kiss her. Natasha, loops her arm in his, burying her head into his heavy woolen army greatcoat.

NATASHA
(Whispering loudly over the music)
Not here! Outside…

Young Soldier nods, grinning at his mates who slap his back. The group walks easily past the bouncers and descend the stairs.

Natasha hears Jaro approach the bouncers, asking them to look out for her. They tell him they haven't seen her.

The soldiers walk past the cloakroom and towards the entrance doors.

EXT: JARO'S NIGHTCLUB, NIGHT

As the cold air hits them, Natasha unloops her arm and turns to the young soldier.

NATASHA
Thanks.

She kisses the boy on the cheek and runs off down the street, leaving him standing, bewildered.

YOUNG SOLDEIR
Wait! Please!

With the music fading behind her, and the laughing of the poor boy's friends, Natasha runs through the falling snow to the taxi rank.

She opens the door of the Skoda and enters.

INT: TAXI, HOJNOST, NIGHT

Inside it's warm, but she's freezing, frantically looking to see if Jaro's following her.

TAXI DRIVER
Where to?

NATASHA
Brezova

TAXI DRIVER
That'll cost you. It's after midnight. Missed the last bus?

NATASHA
(Impatient)
Something like that.

She roots in her pockets and produces not much money. She shows it to the driver.

TAXI DRIVER
Sorry, Slechna. That'll get you to the turn off, but not the whole way.

NATASHA
(Without choice)
Okay. Just go.

The taxi's wheels spin in the snow as it pulls onto the road. As they pass the nightclub, Natasha sees Jaro and two of his men run out and look around. She ducks her head to below the window. Hopefully, they didn't see her.

EXT: ROAD FROM HOJNOST TO BREZOVA. NIGHT

It's freezing cold and very dark. Wolves howl in the distance. Natasha, arms clutched about her vainly trying to stop frostbite, pushes on through the falling snow. She's scared, cold and tired. She has to make it to Kelp's.

A white streak flits past her, startling her. She gasps. Suddenly, she hears a gun shot. The noise is startling in the silence. She thinks it's Jaro…

A figure shuffles out of the forest and towards her. She wants to run, but doesn't have the energy. She's exhausted. She drops her head, resigned.

NO EAR
Did you see that Nazi bastard?

NATASHA
(Looking up)
What?

NO EAR
That Nazi. Alpine Division. Wearing white.

Natasha looks at the aged, armed man. The last thing she needs now is a lunatic in the middle of nowhere.

NATASHA
I saw something white. It was probably an owl.

NO EAR
(Knowingly)
They're good like that…

As he looks at the shivering woman, he regains some of his faculties.

NO EAR (CONT)
My God. Child. You're freezing! Here…

No Ear takes off his thick duffel coat and puts it around Natasha's shoulders.

NO EAR (CONT.)
Let's get you back to mine. You look like you need some soup.

Natasha nods, too tired and cold to argue.

INT: JARO'S NIGHTCLUB, JARO'S OFFICE, VERY EARLY MORNING

Jaro is seated on his desk, speaking into a telephone. He has a Band-Aid on his temple. His friends wait nervously around the room

JARO
We'll find her… I've said I was sorry. All right. I'll call you tomorrow… today.

Jaro puts down the phone. His face is white.

GOON 1
How did he take it?

Jaro's look answers the question

INT: NO EAR'S COTTAGE, PRE-DAWN

Natasha is seated at old wooden table, slurping soup. No Ear sits in hard, wooden chair. The room looks like a memorial to 19th century peasant cottages. The stove crackles. Beside it is an old grandmother bed. A large carving knife lies next to a hacked loaf of bread on the table.

NO EAR
Did you see any Nazi's then?

Natasha looks up from her soup. He's a kindly old man but batty.

NATASHA
(Humouring Him)
I was kidnapped by Nazi's.

NO EAR
(Interested)
Really? What were they wearing?

NATASHA
Black. Leather jackets, shaven hair.

NO EAR
(Nodding)
Waffen SS. Bastards, them.

NATASHA
Their boss wears a suit.

NO EAR
He'll be Gestapo. Political wing. Don't you worry, my girl. You escaped and I'll not let them take you again. They show up here and I'll fill them with lead.

Beat

When you've finished your soup, you can sleep on the bed here. It'll be warmer than the one in my room. I'm used to the cold.

NATASHA
Do you know Kelp? Matthew Kelp? He's an Englishman. I'm looking for him.

NO EAR
(Smiling)
That I do. Good man, but not quite right up here (TAPS HEAD); he believes in ghosts… I'll take you to him tomorrow.

EXT: SVETLANA'S COTTAGE SEEN THROUGH BINOCULARS, MORNING

A group of tiny figures can be seen standing around the barn. The observer is apparently a long way off, and uphill.

EXT: SVETLANA'S COTTAGE, ANIMAL BARN, MORNING

The barn is at the end of the cottage – part of it. The fat woman, dressed the same as always, even despite the cold, is milking a cow. The small room is visibly disgusting and smelly. One large pig sits in its stall; the second is empty. Two cows and some chickens coming in and out. No Teeth, Bar Man, Marek and a few others are outside the door.

SVETLANA
My daughter called this morning to say things have taken a turn.

Beat

The Mayor's son has lost Kelp's girl.

ALL
(MUMBLING)

SVETLANA
Besides, I reckon he's rumbled us.

MAREK
He's not daft, that boy…

NO TEETH
I bet I know who told him.

SVETLANA
No. He couldn't have. Daft bugger's tracking Nazis. You think I'd have let him in on it? He doesn't even know what year it is.

BARMAN
Where's our hero now?

Everyone shrugs or shakes their heads.

NO TEETH
He's not at home. I passed by on the way here.

SVETLANA
No matter. The fat bastard losing the girl is in our favour. Kelp won't need to hand over the axe and book now.

NO TEETH
Why doesn't Kelp just give us the money?

MAREK
(Shaking head)
I'm starting to believe the boy – he told his mate he spent it all on the house. Maybe he wasn't lying. He doesn't exactly live rich…

SVETLANA
Look, if worse comes to worse, he doesn't really have a choice does he? It's not how I wanted to play it, but…

BARMAN
Not if he wants to keep his kamarat's body hidden…

SVETLANA
Besides, I've got a backup plan.

Everyone is attentive. The fat woman's scheming never ceases to amaze

ALL
What?

SVETLANA
(Grinning)
Not what, who. My daughter. She's heard everything the fat bastard has said so far. With her we can blackmail him into backing off…

NO TEETH
Just in case, though, I reckon we better keep a close eye on our friend. We don't want him getting cold feet and running off.

EXT: KELP'S COTTAGE, GARDEN, LATE MORNING.

The snow has been heavily trampled and muddied in places. The flowerbed has been dug up, and then refilled. Snow has been shoveled back into place.

INT: NO EAR'S COTTAGE, NOON

The room is quiet, save for a freshly made fire crackling in the stove. Natasha drags herself from her bed and stretches. Her eyes are puffy, but she still looks beautiful. She glances at her watch.

NATASHA
God! I've overslept.

Beat
Hello? Anyone at home?

The girl gets up and goes to relieve herself. She looks around but there's no bathroom. Finally, she sees a wooden privy in the garden. He face displays what she thinks about using it in the cold. She has no choice.

EXT: NO EAR'S GARDEN, NOON

Natasha exits privy with a look of absolute disgust on her face. No Ear is entering the garden via a small wooden gate. Over his shoulder is a hare.

NO EAR
Ah! You're up. I brought us some lunch.

INT: KELP'S JEEP, AFTERNOON

View through windscreen is of the whole valley. Kelp is on road in forest. Brezova is down below. Still on the passenger seat are axe and book. Apparent in rearview is a pickaxe and shovel. Mobile rings.

KELP
Yes?

MAYOR (V.O)
Good afternoon Mr. Kelp. Hope you're ready for this evening. No second thoughts.

KELP
(Observing tools in rearview)
No. No second thoughts.

Beat
And Natasha?

MAYOR

Beat
She's well.

Beat
I want to be starting at eleven, so shall we say ten for the handover?

KELP
Where?

MAYOR
Brezova's a good a place as any. A good enough place for the ritual. He lived near there, you know… Ah, but of course you know.

KELP
No tricks…

MAYOR
No tricks, Mr. Kelp.

Beat

MAYOR (CONT.)
I suggest you set your affairs in order. You'll be wanting to leave fairly quickly.

Kelp sighs and looks out of the window. He's going to miss the view…

MAYOR (CONT.)
At ten, Mr Kelp. At the church.

INT: MAYOR'S OFFICE, AFTERNOON.

Mayor is seated behind desk, replacing receiver. Jaro and three goons wait standing. The door is slightly open and we can see, slightly, Secretary behind it.

MAYOR (CONT.)
(RE: Jaro)(Threatening look)
If you've fucked this up…

JARO
Don't blame me. It was a dumb idea in the first place. Why didn't you just kill him and take the stuff yourself? Why play these cat and mouse games?

Mayor stands, his broad face blazing with anger. He storms up to his son and slaps him hard around the face with a massive hand. Jaro's head jolts to the side. He sucks in breath. The goons look at the floor, avoiding the scene.

MAYOR
Who the fuck do you think you're talking to? Hmm?

Mayor raises his hand again and Jaro flinches. Mayor strokes his son's cheek.

MAYOR (CONT.)
Impetuous boy. When you've been in this world as long as I have, then you can raise your voice to me. You won't remain standing, but you can try.

Mayor retakes his seat. Gestures to Goon to get them a drink. Goon readily obliges through fear. Soon, they are drinking whisky.

MAYOR (CONT)
Tonight, when Kelp comes for the handover, I want you four waiting. I don't want to be disturbed.

JARO
What about the girl?

MAYOR
(Considering)
It'll be dark. Use some tart – I know you've got plenty. Put a bag on her head and sit her in the car. Tell her to keep her mouth shut.

Beat

Once Kelp has given you the book and the axe, waste him. And the whore as well. You don't want witnesses.

JARO
Where will you be?

MAYOR
(Smiling)
Drawing circles in the snow. Waiting to become rich. Bring me the book and the axe, and then dispose of the bodies.

Beat

Any questions?

Jaro and the goons shake their heads and start to leave. Secretary's head slips back behind the door. She waits until they've gone, Mayor's door is shut and he's using the phone again before calling her mother.

EXT: BREZOVA CHURCHYARD, NIGHT.

The onion-domed church stands eerily white against the blackness. Gravestones peek through the snow. Kelp's jeep is parked at the end of a narrow track leading down to the church.

INT: KELP'S JEEP, NIGHT.

Without the motor running, kelp's shadowed face breathes mist. In his hand he's holding an AIRLINE TICKET. He taps the steering wheel with his other one, occasionally glancing at his watch. It reads 2100.

INT: NO EAR'S COTTAGE, NIGHT. KITCHEN

Natasha is pacing up and down the uneven wooden floor. No Ear is dressing himself for another patrol

NATASHA
Please, you really have to help me find Mat.

NO EAR
He wasn't at home, miss. He wasn't in the bar.

NATASHA
I should have come with you.

NO EAR
(Shaking head)
Too dangerous with them Nazi's about.

Beat

I'll keep an eye out for him tonight. You stay here and get some rest. He'll turn up some time or other.

Natasha sighs in frustration as No Ear takes his gun and walks out the door. She watches the old man through the kitchen window as he leaves the garden.

She waits, and then picks up one of his spare coats on the pegs. It's massive, but it'll keep her warm. Her eyes catch the carving knife. She smiles, thinly, then slips it into an inner pocket. She leaves, bracing herself for the cold.

INT: BREZOVA BAR. NIGHT.

The bar is packed with all the familiar faces. Every table is filled with people and bottles of alcohol. The air is thick with cigarette and wood smoke. All eyes are on the plastic wall clock as the second hand slowly ticks its way around. Intermittent coughing can be heard – mostly from NO TEETH; chairs creak, the fire cackles, no one speaks.

SVETLANA
Five more minutes and we'll go.

ALL
(MUMBLING AND NODDING)

Barman doesn't look happy about closing up.

BARMAN
Perhaps some of us should stay here in case Kelp comes this way.

SVETLANA
(Unamused)
You'll get your customers after we're finished… not before.

INT: JARO'S BMW, HOJNOST TO BREZOVA ROAD, NIGHT

The car is packed. Techno music blares out. The Goon Driver is going very fast. A pretty young girl sits in the back seat. The two Goons are plying her with vodka. She's giggling.

A white streak passes the window and the driver swerves. He slams on his brakes but they don't work in the snow. He belatedly knocks down the gears, and the car slides into a snowdrift. They all pile out.

EXT: HOJNOST TO BREZOVA ROAD, OUTSIDE BMW

The air is freezing and Jaro is particularly annoyed. The girl starts giggling again so he slaps her

JARO (RE GIRL)
Go wait in the car.

The girl, shocked, obliges. The driver, used to Slovak winters, clicks the boot and hands out shovels. Jaro refuses to take one with a look of contempt. The goons set to work digging the front out of the drift.

JARO
(Lighting cigarette)
What the fuck happened?

DRIVER GOON
(Digging)
Fuck knows. Some owl or something almost hit the windscreen

JARO
(Observing his watch - 2135)
Humph. Get a move on

Jaro turns revealing his leather coat unbuttoned. Clearly visible is a shoulder holster beneath. We now notice that all the Goons have guns.

EXT: BREZOVA CHURCHYARD, NIGHT.

A large Mercedes pulls up into the small car park, round lights on full beam. Two silhouettes can be seen within. The car remains stationary, with engine running and lights on.

INT: KELP'S JEEP, NIGHT.

Kelp's POV. He can see the Merc - obviously the Mayor's. He can see the two silhouettes.

KELP
(Whispering to self)
Natasha!

Kelp slides the door open. It creaks and he cringes. Leaving the book and the axe, he exits the vehicle.

EXT: BREZOVA CHURCHYARD, NIGHT

Kelp's POV. He walks through the crispy snow. It's freezing. He heads towards the Merc. The lights are almost blinding. He stops some distance away.

The Merc's driver side opens. The large shape of the Mayor gets out. Kelp's never met him but can guess who it is.

KELP
Natasha?

MAYOR
Coming… And my stuff?

The Merc's passenger door opens and out steps a woman. Kelp is confused. Is it Natasha?

The Mayor steps to the front of the car, enabling Kelp to see him better. He's wearing a heavy cashmere coat and a leather hat. The woman steps forward and it's the Professor.

KELP
You're in on this too?

The Professor shrugs.

MAYOR
And my stuff?

KELP
Coming…

Mayor is visibly annoyed by Kelp's retort.

MAYOR
We have time. We can wait.

Both men look at their watches. The night is silent, save for the purring of the Merc's engine.

Suddenly, voices can be heard in the village, moving along the road. All three turn to see the villagers – like in some Frankenstein movie, but with battery powered flashlights, not blazing torches, moving toward them.

MAYOR
What the fuck?

KELP
(Shrugging)
Nothing to do with me.

The Mayor urges the Professor to begin making the circle for the ritual. It takes a while as she's visibly scared by the approaching masse, but she complies. The villagers near.

Soon, Svetlana can be seen at their head as they pass under a streetlamp. Kelp shakes his head at the woman's gall.

Time passes slowly. The villagers enter the church gate and form a semi circle some distance from the Merc.

Svetlana steps forward, shining a flashlight first at Mayor, then at Kelp. She's wearing an old rabbit fur coat and hat.

SVETLANA
(To Kelp)
Sweetie, we've been so worried about you.

KELP
(Smiling)
Really.

SVETLANA
Where's the book and axe? You haven't given them to this fat bastard have you?

MAYOR
(Snorting)
You're calling ME fat?

SVETLANA
(Ignoring Mayor)
Sweetie, give me the book and the axe. We'll be able to save the village. You'll be okay.

Kelp considers the woman's words, and watches the bristling villagers behind her. A threat lies veiled beneath her smarmy exterior. He'll be okay?

KELP
I don't understand. What do you mean, okay?

SVETLANA
This is a village, sweetie. Everyone knows everything about everybody. Your secret will be safe with us.

MAYOR
(Puzzled)
What's she talking about? What secret?

KELP
(Sighing)
You set me up, didn't you, Svetlana? You and the rest of them.

SVETLANA
(Smiling)
We needed a hero in our hour of need. Give me the book and the axe, and what's buried will stay buried.

KELP
I've got nothing to hide.

SVETLANA
(Confused, glances at Marek)
But what about…

KELP
Kwik? You won't find him where you think. If you're counting on blackmailing me, then think again.

Svetlana turns back to her rabble, who begin whispering together. Things aren't going as planned. Time for last resorts…

Just then, Jaro's BMW swings into view, techno music blasting into the quiet village night. The crowd parts to let him through.

The BMW stops and Jaro and the goons pile out, forming a barrier around the Mayor. They draw their guns, but are unsure who to aim them at – Kelp or the villagers.

The girl remains seated in the back of the car. Kelp notices her.

KELP
Natasha!

JARO
I've got her. Give my dad what he wants and the girl goes free.

KELP
How can I trust you?

SVETLANA
No, sweetie! Don't do it! Remember where you live! Who your friends are!

KELP
(Ignoring Svetlana)
Wait here…

Kelp walks off to his car, leaving the two groups facing each other.

He returns a few minutes later carrying a heavy old bag. He drops it in the snow.

KELP
Now release Natasha

JARO
(Smirking)
Fuck you. She's in the car. Give me the bag and then I'll let her go.

MAYOR
(Nodding admiringly at his son)
Listen to the boy, Mr. Kelp. Do the right thing. They're armed and you're not.

SVETLANA
No! Don't do it! He doesn't have Natasha!

Everything goes quiet. All faces turn to the fat woman. Jaro snarls and lifts his pistol. He fires, shooting the woman down. A gasp rushes through the villagers. They start to back away. Jaro turns on Kelp

JARO
Throw me the fucking bag!

KELP
Where's Natasha?

JARO
Throw me the fucking bag!

The villagers, recovering from their initial fear, rush to aid the fallen woman. Svetlna's injured, but not seriously – she's too well padded. The men, hard faced from a harsh life, glare at the goons and begin moving towards them.

MAYOR
Shoot them! Don't let them close!

The goons are unsure what to do, but the ever-nearing rabble looms. They begin firing. Most shots miss, but its stops the villagers. Silence falls again, with the occasional echo of a gunshot in the valley.

JARO
This is your last time. Give me the fucking…

NATASHA
No Mat! Don't do it!

Everyone stops and stares as the translator runs into the churchyard, the greatcoat hanging beneath her knees.

KELP
Natasha!

The beautiful blonde runs up to him and flings her arms around his neck. They hug for a moment, staring into each other's eyes.

MAYOR
Well, you solved one problem at least. Now we don't have to go looking for her.

Mayor glares at his son who looks away embarrassed.

MAYOR (CONT.)
Throw us the bag, Mr. Kelp. The game's up.

Beat
No. On second thoughts, don't bother. Jaro, you men, shoot them where they stand!

Kelp's POV. Jaro and the Goons swing their guns in his direction. He vainly tries to shield Natasha's body with his own. Pistols are lifted and aims taken. The villagers watch in silence.

Kelp blinks, flinching at the sound of a gunshot as it rips through the night air. He waits to feel the pain which he knows is coming. He waits and there's another shot. He opens his eyes.

One of the goons lies dead on the floor, blood darkening the snow. Another goon is writhing in pain from a stomach wound. He hears the clicking sound of a barrel being cocked.

NO EAR
Fucking Nazis!

Kelp and Natasha watch as the old man walks calmly toward them firing his ancient shotgun at the remaining men near to the Mercedes. They look back and see Mayor desperately trying to get back into his car, ordering his son to shoot the man.

No Ear walks passed the hugging pair, grinning and nodding his head.

NO EAR
Get out of here while you can. I'll see to these fucking Germans.

Kelp and Natasha are too shocked to move. The villagers watch in amazement as the old partisan walks ever forwards, loosening both barrels.

And then, there's a click. And another click.

It takes a while to understand. He's run out of ammunition.

All watch as No Ear stands, limply holding his shotgun, shaking his head. Before him is Jaro, pistol pointing. The Mayor's in the Merc, trying to escape, but the wheels are spinning in the snow. Jaro fires a shot. It misses.

No Ear calmly extracts two cartridges from his pocket and begins to load. Jaro fires another shot. It hits the old man in the arm. His body swings around with the force, but he recovers.

NO EAR
(Cocking shotgun)
Hah! Had more than one of them in my time, let me tell you…

No Ear raises his shotgun to waist level and fires. Jaro fires simultaneously.

Kelp's POV. The back of No Ear's head splits open. Jaro zooms backwards onto the Merc's bonnet, sliding down and leaving bloody streaks on the shiny paintwork.

Natasha screams and runs to No Ear. Kelp grabs her and pulls her back. The Merc's wheels spin and then get a grip; the large car begins to reverse.

The villagers watch as the Mayor drives back down the hill and onto the main road, leaving the Professor standing alone.

KELP
(Pulling Natasha)

Come on. Let's get the hell out of here.

NATASHA
What about the bag?

KELP
Fuck the bag. Come on…

Natasha takes a last look at the fallen No Ear, then at the bag, before running with Kelp to his jeep.

INT: KELP'S JEEP

Inside, it's freezing. Kelp's fumbling with the ignition, but his fingers are too cold to turn the key. He keeps missing the hole. In the rearview, Natasha watches as the villages, along with the wounded Svetlana, slowly swarm towards them. The Professor, realizing she's been dumped, makes for the bag.

The villagers are enclosing. Natasha's panicking. Kelp's speaking words of encouragement to his ancient vehicle.

There's a bump on the boot. The villagers are now level with the car. Natasha's eyes are wide with fear.

The engine starts, Kelp knocks the gear into second, toys with the clutch, and shoots off leaving the villagers spitting out churned snow.

In the rearview, Natasha watches as the villagers shout and rave, then turn their attention on the Professor.

The woman opens the bag and screams in anguish, as the villagers encircle her. Natasha loses sight of what's happening.

The jeep keeps going up the small track.

NATASHA
What was in the bag?

KELP
(Concentrating on
the dangerous road)
Some rocks from my garden

NATASHA
Where's the book and axe?

KELP
Under your seat; along with two
plane tickets.

NATASHA
(Smiling)
Wow, you really outfoxed everyone.

KELP
(Nodding)
Yep. Just me and you now. We can
sell the stuff and have one hell of
a life together.

NATASHA
We could…

Natasha slips her hand into the large overcoat and reaches inside one of the pockets. She slowly withdraws her hand, revealing the long, glittering blade of the kitchen knife.

NATASHA (CONT.)
Yes, that is ONE option…

EXT: BREZOVA TO HOJNOST ROAD, NIGHT

Mayor's Merc hurtles along the icy road, screeching around bends

INT: MAYOR'S MERC

Mayor's eyes constantly flash in the rear view mirror, to see if he's being pursued. Tomorrow he'll have to send in the cleaners. Shame about Jaro, but…

A white flash streaks across the windscreen, remaining there. Mayor tries his wipers, thinking it to be snow, but it's no use.

Unable to see the road, the car misses a bend and goes shooting off into the valley below. Even as the car is falling, and the Mayor is screaming, the white shape continues to cling.

EXT: VALLEY, BREZOVA TO HOJNOST ROAD

The Merc spins into the night, slamming into a riverbed below and exploding. A white streaks coils about above, as if avoiding the smoke, then shoots towards the audience POV. It's a ghost. Janosik's ghost. It disappears.

EXT: BAHNHOF STRASSE SIDESTREET, ZURICH, SWITZERLAND, MORNING.

Christmas shoppers, dressed expensively, fill the streets, peering into decorated windows at the luxury items. Trams pull up and drive off. Everywhere are Christmas decorations. Snow - Christmassy snow, not the harsh Slovak stuff - lies all around.

A small shop with icons and rare books in the window.

INT: ICON DEALER'S SHOP

Several grandfather clocks tick loudly. The room is small but comfortable and well-furnished. A small man sits behind a desk stacked with books. He's examining a large ancient tome. Natasha sits, patiently opposite him. She looks radiant.

BOOKMAN
(Looking up)
It's genuine.

NATASHA
And the axe?

BOOKMAN
Old, but I doubt if I can verify it was owned by who you said it was.

NATASHA
(Shrugging)
The value…

BOOKMAN
Usually, with such items, I contact a private collector. Or offer it at auction. Cheaper items are sold in the shop window.

NATSASHA
A private collector? That sounds the best way.

BOOKMAN
(Nodding)
Of course… if you would kindly wait in the shop for a moment. I'd like to call privately.

NATASHA
(Standing and smiling)
Of course.

INT: ICON SHOP, MORNING.

Natasha stands, waiting. A saleswoman smiles, briefly, and then returns to her work. Natasha extracts a color Holiday Brochure form her bag. She flicks through the pages of idyllic tropical beaches. She smiles.

THE END