

ON A *SEPIA* SCREEN: CONDADO DE SALDANA - SPAIN - 768

INT. A SMALL CHAPEL - DAY

COUNT SANCHE DIAZ looks lovingly at his bride PRINCESS XIMENA. The PRIEST makes the sign of the cross over them as they kneel before him.

PRIEST
Go in peace and love one
another...

The blessing is interrupted by the abrupt SLAMMING open of the chapel's wooden door as armed SOLDIERS enter, swords drawn.

The CAPTAIN runs towards the horrified defenceless couple. The priest and pulls a parchment from his cuirass as the armed soldiers surround them menacingly.

CAPTAIN
Count Sancho Diaz, you are under
arrest by order of his most
gracious majesty King Alfonso...

PRINCESS XIMENA
By orders... of my brother? On
what count?

CAPTAIN
That you did both conspire to
marry against the express wishes
of his majesty.

PRINCESS XIMENA
But...

CAPTAIN
Take her away, lock her up in the
Saint John Bautista convent.

PRINCESS XIMENA
(Struggling)
But, what of my husband?

CAPTAIN
(Sneering)
I'll take him in chains to the
Castile de Luna in the mountains
of Leon where his eyes will be
gauged out so that he may never
again aspire to something his
eyes have no right to look upon.
Take him away.

Ximena breaks free and hugs her husband. He whispers in her ear.

COUNT SANCHO DIAZ
 Don't let them know you are with
 child!

As Ximena cries hysterically her husband is dragged away
 from her, she is man-handled outside to a waiting wagon.

FADE IN

EXT. A PRISON YARD - NIGHT

OCCUPIED POLAND - OCTOBER 1938

The last stragglers of drab-green battered army trucks stop
 alongside twenty others outside a dilapidated large
 building. Each truck is crammed with a hundred saturated,
 tired, ill-clothed freezing, MEN, and WOMEN of all ages.

VLADIMIR a Russian soldier slams his rifle butt at a piece
 of wood jammed in the tailgate. The heavy tailgate drops
 with a dull thud.

BARANOVICHI PRISON

A crumbling, derelict prison slum. Chilling rain adds to
 the depressing scene.

An Army sergeant, KOSKOF, advances, shouting.

KOSKOF
 Out you bastard scum. Out, or
 I'll set the dogs on you.

Standing at the truck rear, a scruffy, strong 25 year-old
 bearded man stares down at the soldiers. He murmurs in
 Polish.

KAZIMIERZ OSZURKO
 They're not the only ones.

He is KAZIMIERZ OSZURKO.

Kazimierz slides down, and starts helping the others out.

The women's heads are draped in dripping, hand-made shawls,
 which sag around their heads and shoulders. A cloud of
 exhaled breath hangs above them.

The din, as two battered massive steel gates slam shut,
 ricochets off the crumbling 20-foot high granite walls.

Fat rain drops bounce off the uneven pot-holed, cobbled
 yard, puddling in depressions. Roaring thunder claps drown
 Russian soldiers orders.

Shoving, rifle butting, the soldiers brutally separate the men from the women. More soldiers are whipping growling, snarling German Shepherd dogs into a frenzy.

A long snaking column of men three abreast, curls around the yard. An old terrified MAN stumbles, falls heavily, bangs his bare head on the cobbles. Blood spurts from a head gash.

A SOLDIER lets his DOG tear a chunk of cold flesh from the fallen man's leg. He screams in agony. Kazimierz tries kicking the leashed dog off, then lifts the man up in his arms. Blood runs off their long hair and beards, mingling with the puddles. *

A naive soldier tries frightening Kazimierz, who stares straight back. Kazimierz collects a mouthful of phlegm and spits down at the soldier's feet. The soldier slinks away. *

The prisoners stare, hatred on their faces. *

In the dimly lit yard, a skinny 20-year old woman BEATA KARP frantically searches the group of men for her husband, Kazimierz. *

Beata brushes aside her thick, wavy black hair as her drenched face lights up, seeing him briefly she waves. As Kazimierz carries the wounded man he tries to look for Beata. He is jostled and shoved forward by other prisoners. *

A rifle butt slams between Kazimierz's shoulder blades, he grimaces.

KOSKOF

You'll be on your knees begging
for mercy before long, Polish
pig.

Kazimierz stumbles, another MAN supports him. Kazimierz manages to lower the man to his feet, as a German Shepherd snaps at Kazimierz thighs. Kazimierz grits his teeth. *

The band of men shuffle toward a stark prison building. Above the open door, a bare-light bulb steams in the rain, hisses then blows.

12 year-old URSULA, a pretty peasant girl clings frantically to Beata's waist. Beata wipes the rain from her innocent face.

The last man disappears, the freezing shivering women follow. Many sob uncontrollably. *

INT. ZLOTS' OFFICE - NIGHT

Watching the courtyard activity, puffing on a cigarette is 54 year-old Colonel VLADIMIR ZLOT. With him his dog's body Captain ULRI BOGDANOV. *

ZLOT
Pigs and bastards.

INT. PRISON CORRIDOR - NIGHT

It's narrow, long and dark. Mid-way, separating men and women, a tatty sheet hangs from the dripping, cracked ceiling. Everyone's sloshing through two inches of stagnant, cold.

A prisoner stares at RATS swimming, stopping to gnaw at something floating. It's human excrement.

INT. SMALL PRISON ROOM - NIGHT

Formalities, photographs, finger prints, name, status, family details are laboriously taken.

Captain Bogdanov shouts in Russian. The women shrug their shoulders. Beata translates in Polish. *

BEATA.
Everyone undress. We've clean dry clothes for all of you. So hurry. *

Bogdanov stops in his tracks. Stares hard at Beata. Yells out in Russian.

BOGDANOV
So we have a pig who speaks Russian.

Beata reacts quickly.

BEATA
I know little Russian.

Bogdanov barks another order for translation. *

BOGDANOV
Anyone who speaks will be shot.

Naked and shivering the women cover their breasts as Bogdanov ambles between them. Snatching watches, jewelry, belts from discarded clothing. *

Bogdanov stands staring in front of Beata. She avoids eye contact. He puts his cold hands around her neck. Beata grits her teeth, smothering a scream. The soldier un-clips her necklace.

BOGDANOV

You won't need this Christ
anymore. The Parasha's your God. *

He pockets the solid gold Crucifix.

BOGDANOV

Dress in those. From her heart,
Russia has loaned them to you. *

He points to a pile of dirty clothing.

BEATA

(Translating)

That's our clothing? It's still
wet. *

The women sniff the rags, pass them around, until something
fits, laughing and joking. *

The soldier shouts at Beata. *

BEATA

Pick everything up, out to the
corridor. *

INT. THE CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Lining both corridor sides are cell doors, above each a
number. At each one the soldiers open the door, order some
women in. At number 27 Beata stops. As the rusty door
squeaks open, she and Ursula are shoved inside. *

INT. WOMEN'S PRISON CELL - NIGHT

Beata squints in the dim light, she's horrified. She
covers her nostrils, and coughs. The small cell is packed
with older women. *

Two racks of three-tier bunks line each side. A cold
draught whistles through the small partially closed, rusty,
barred window. *

Beata starts counting. She counts at least thirty standing
women. Unable to determine how many women lay on the six
bunks. Beata hugs Ursula, they stand huddled together. *

The stench is overpowering Beata heaves. Women cough their
lungs rumble with phlegm. *

Ursula's falling asleep leaning on Beata. Throughout the
night, shifting position regularly, leaning on the cold,
dripping, fretting walls, alternating their positions from
their shoulders to their backs. *

Moments of light sleep are interrupted by rumbling
bronchial tubes. From somewhere a soft voice calls. *

Beata jumps as a hand touches her shoulder. She looks up into the kindly eyes of YAGA, a tall handsome woman. *

YAGA

Here my child. A place near me. *

Beata cannot see a face. She shuffles with Ursula toward the friendly woman. 33 year-old YAGA DOMANSKA. Yaga moves Beata to her right. Ursula snuggles at her right thigh and starts sobbing. Women continue coughing. *

YAGA

There my child, try as best you can to get some sleep.

INT. MEN'S CELL - NIGHT

Kazimierz nudges the bearded older man next to him in the cramped cell.

KAZIMIERZ

Now long have you been here friend?

The man can barely open his eyes. He snorts snot from his congested nostrils and spits at the wall above the three tiered bunks on each side. He smiles.

ZIBBY

See that? All the time I can hit that height, I'm Okay. When I can only reach that sleeping man's head, I'm in trouble. So's he! It's my lung test. Without them I'm dead. You understand? *

Kazimierz stares at the thick green phlegm a foot above the sleeping man's head.

KAZIMIERZ

So how long, my friend?

ZIBBY

I'm not your friend. No-one in this hell hole's got friends. Where the wall meets the ceiling. I could hit that spot day after day. That was four months ago... Eat the crap they call food, and shit once a day, in the rust buckets if you can. If not, it's down your legs. What you need to survive is a sense of humor. Without it you'll die for sure. Unless a guard fancies you and you decline. Then you're dead. So keep your mouth shut and pray. *

Kazimierz looks around the cell. *

KAZIMIERZ
I'll keep that in mind friend.

ZIBBY
I'm not, remember you've got
none, you hear? None! *

The cell door burst open and sergeant Koskof ambles in,
smirks and points at Kazimierz.

KOSKOF
You! Let's see what you're made
of.

The door bursts open. A soldier shouts. *

SOLDIER
Out, Out, you pigs. *

INT. CORRIDOR - DAWN. *

Slowly the women stumble into the dark corridor. *

URSULA
Do we get a bath and some food? *

SOLDIER
Shut up or be shot. *

Everyone tumbles out dragging themselves along the corridor
to the 'Parasha' - six open cubicles each with a metal
bucket. *

As young Soldiers look on the women relieve themselves.

YAGA
Dirty old men! But they've
probably never seen such
fashions, the latest from Paris,
you know!

PROSTITUTE BELLA
If you want some, come and see me
later, it'll cost you a packet of
fags, but you might catch more
than you bargained for.

The young Soldiers slink away, the Women laugh, make the
'thumbs up' sign to one another. *

Then ushered back into the cell. *

INT. CELL - SAME TIME. *

Floating on top of a steaming metal bucket of water are rotten cabbage. Plus 'Payka' a 4x2x2 inch heavy, chunk of dough, crumbed with rotten black potatoes and chaff. *

YAGA

Eat, it's all you get until this time tomorrow. It isn't so bad! *

As SOMEONE hands around the hot mugs of liquid she says

SOMEONE

What would madam like today?
Soup of the day is fresh vegetable, followed by: lamb, venison or beef. All fresh, succulent and cooked to perfection. *

Most laugh and nibble on their small portion. Some trade their portion for a 30 minute rest on the boarded bunk bed 'owned' by the first six women incarcerated in the cell. *

Women crowd around, some scratching, some try to delouse themselves.

Yaga approaches Beata.

YAGA

What is your name and what were you in the real world? *

BEATA

Beata Karp Oszurko and I was a student at Warsaw University. You? *

YAGA

What else? I was a great actress, arrested for walking across the street, not for any bad performance. Here, they think I'm mad. Trying to scare me, but I look them in the eye, hard to do since I'm taller than most of them... *

BEATA

You speak Lithuanian? *

YAGA

Jadwiga Braun from Vilnius, Call me Yaga. *

BEATA

Pleased to meet you Yaga. *

YAGA
You Polish?

*

BEATA
No, From Rekiow. My...my husband
is Polish.

*

Night falls.

Sleep is interrupted by Soldiers BANGING on the door and SLAMMING it open, displacing those sleeping behind it. Soldiers laugh at their discomfort. Yaga laughs back at them. They point their rifles at her but she lambasts them in Polish which they don't understand.

*

YAGA
Get out you bastards!

SOLDIERS
(In Russian
Kalmuk!

They exit slamming the door.

YAGA
What did I tell you, they don't
understand Polish, I called them
bastards and they say the same
back to me in Russian. Ignorant
fools!

They sleep.

Morning comes and Beata is being told to empty the cell's small bucket.

YAGA
The last one to use it always
empties it.

*

Everyone looks at Beata's horrified face and laughs, two Women hand her tiny scraps of paper.

*

*

BEATA
What?

YAGA
Messages. Place them near the
broken sewer, you will find a
lose stone, bring back any you
find. Got it?

*

*

Beata nods, picks up the bucket leaves the cell.

*

SOLDIER #1
Get rid of it, be quick about it!

*

EXT. PRISON REAR - SAME TIME

Beata closes her mouth and covers her nose. At the broken pipe, she quickly lifts the stone, removes two small grubby pieces of paper, puts more down, plonks stone back, empties the bucket, curls her fingers.

Two soldiers puffing cigarettes take no notice. Another takes her back.

INT. CELL - SAME TIME

YAGA

Well tell us, any messages?

BEATA

Two. One for Maida one for Sophia.

Beata hands them their messages. Maida begins crying because her eager fingers destroyed the message, Sophia screams in despair.

SOPHIA

My husband is dead.

MAIDA

Maybe mine is too, I can't read my note!

Beata looking defeated, scratches her tangled mass of hair finding a stray hair pin. Laughing she holds it up and begins piercing the squirming lice and fleas from her dress hems and neckline. She then works on Ursula, then hands it to Yaga.

One Women, OLGA, who 'owns' the cell calls out.

OLGA

Give me a turn!

BEATA

We rest on the bunk for 30 minutes.

MAIDA

How do I find out if my husband is dead or alive? How?

BEATA

(Lying down with Ursula)
Which cell is he in?

MAIDA

31.

BEATA

(Sleepily
I'll find out when I'm rested.

The Women look at her sniggering in disbelief. *

TIME ELAPSES

Olga tugs Beata off the bunk and hands her the hair pin. *

OLGA

Time's up. Off. *

Maida shakes Beata's sleeve. *

MAIDA

You find out about my husband? *

BEATA

When my father was at the Riga
University, his great friend
Vladislav Anders was from a
military family taught my father
Morse code, he taught me. *

The Women stare amazed. Beata kneels on the wet cold hard
floor, then begins banging the crumbling damp brick wall
with her shoe heel. Then, puts her ear to the wall. *

MAIDA

What use is it if no-one else
knows your code?

BEATA

Shsh! a man will. *

The cell is quite, several minutes later there's a slight
muffled noise. *

BEATA

(Rises smiling)
Your husband Alexandre and Kaz
are two cells away, and alive. *

The Women look at Beata in disbelief some begin to cry
while others ply her with requests. *

Further tapping is stopped abruptly as Guards charge in.
IRENE distracts them, SCREAMING hysterically. Women shuffle
about, shielding Beata who gets up. *

OLD LADY

What have you done with my son?

The Soldiers quickly hustle Irene out, slamming shut the
door. *

THREE DAYS LATER

Irene is thrown into the cell. She is black and blue, shivering uncontrollably. *

YAGA

Lord God what did the animals do? *

IRENE

Animals are treated better. I was thrown, naked into a pitch black cell below ground, with a foot of near freezing, slimy water covering the floor. Dead bodies floating in it. Others scarcely breathing, leaning, coughing or sank into the water, unable to help themselves. *

YAGA

That's not good.

DISSOLVE

YAGA

No payka or soup for three days now. What happens next? *

The door suddenly bursts open two soldiers smile, one holds a sheet of paper. *

SOLDIER #1

Maida, Olga, Sophia, Ursula and Beata, on your feet, come.

INT. CORRIDOR - SAME TIME *

The frightened Women stagger out along the corridor, through a steel door. *

EXT. HIGH-WALLED COURTYARD - SAME TIME *

It's freezing. They clutch their flimsy clothing tight, vainly, trying to keep warm. The smoking engine from a battered black van makes them cough. The noisy clunking engine makes talk impossible. *

Beata is last in and the door bangs shut. Each stands in a small wired box. A soldier shouts, gears crunch and it jerks forward. *

It stops abruptly brakes squeaking. Ordered out and lined up, then marched across a gravel drive, up some wide steps and through the large double doorway of an imposing building. *

INT. WIDE CORRIDOR - SAME TIME *

They are quickly separated and shoved into different rooms off the corridor. *

INT. ROOM - MINUTES LATER *

Beata is in a stark room, with the customary dim bare light bulb. An unseen SOLDIER pushes a stool towards her, she sits down. *

Beata rubs her dark-rimmed eyes making out a desk in front of her. On it some sheets of paper, one plain pencil. *

She realizes a man sits facing her, dressed in civilian clothes. He leans forward resting on his elbows, his face hidden in the shadow though his broad barrel chest is evident. *

COL. ZLOT *

What is your name, age, who is your father, your occupation, why were you on the street when arrested?

Beata realized his Russian voice was harsh, clipped, course with poor pronunciation. *

BEATA

Beata Karp Oszurko, twenty, Felicijan Karp, student, walking.

She answered without wavering. He stared at his notes. *

COL. ZLOT *

How does your father earn a living?

BEATA

He owns large estates in Lithuania and a smaller one in Poland.

COL. ZLOT *

((Shouting)
Owns?! No-one owns land. He stole it.

Beata wrings her hands but remains silent.

COL. ZLOT *

You speak Russian... German... Polish and Lithuanian. Four languages. Why?

BEATA

Many Lithuanians speak Polish...

COL. ZLOT

No! I have met none that can.
 (He thumps the desk angrily) You
 have money, twelve-hundred Zlots.
 Your parents are rich.

He leans forward into the light Beata sees, in horror, a
 big skull topped with a mop of badly cropped hair above a
 pock-marked face. He is dressed in a badly fitting
 crumpled brown suit, and a shirt with a twisted collar.

COL. ZLOT

The truth is only a spy needs
 four languages. You are a spy
 against the mother country. Your
 father is a thief.

Beata begins to faint, wobbles on the stool, Bogdanov
 behind prods her back with his rifle. Both men stare at her
 and wait.

BEATA

Please, we haven't had anything
 to eat or drink in three days.

COL. ZLOT pushes his face up in front of hers.

COL. ZLOT

YOU'RE a filthy spy!

BEATA

A spy for whom?

COL. ZLOT

For who? It matters not. A SPY
 IS a SPY and your FATHER IS A
 THIEF.

As dawn breaks Beata is lifted off her stool and pushed
 outside. to where the black van waits, its engine throbbing
 noisily. She falls down the steps, in the cold morning
 air, and is slow to rise her chest obstructed by wheezing.

INT. CELL - MINUTES LATER

URSULA

I'm charged with trespassing.

Ursula's legs buckle, she collapses.

BEATA

She hasn't eaten in days and
 won't drink. She won't help
 herself. What am I to do?

YAGA

You need the will to survive.
Sadly she's lost it. Nothing can
save her now.

*
*

Beata weeps softly looking down at Ursula then slowly
closes her eyes. As Beata continues cradling Ursula, the
cell door opens and a parcel is thrown in.

*
*

BEATA

If only Ursula could have held on
a little bit longer...

YAGA

(Reading the label)
Irena it's for you.

The parcel is open, a salty un-cooked hind of bacon, two-
packets of cigarettes rest on the damp floor.

*
*

Irena strips pieces of meat, and hands them around and a
cigarette each.

*
*

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - NIGHT

Beata lies exhausted against the desk. Blood trickles down
her legs.

COL. ZLOT

Sign this confession. You are a
spy, we both know it. SIGN.

*

Beata falls off the stool in a dead faint as COL. ZLOT
leans over and spits on her.

*

INT. CELL - LATER THAT NIGHT

*

Beata wakes, Yaga leaning over her offering payka.

*

Suddenly Soldiers fill their cell and names are read off.

*

SOLDIER

The Women named, three years in a
Labor Camp.

*
*

Beata is once more dragged from the cell as Yaga tries to
protest. A soldier jabs his rifle butt on her shoulder. She
winces.

*
*

DISSOLVE

INT. LARGE BUILDING INTERROGATION ROOM - PRE DAWN

As Beata sits down her COL. ZLOT stands up waving a sheet
of paper.

*

COL. ZLOT *
 You are a SPY. Sign this and you *
 will live, fail, you will be *
 shot.

She feels a cold rifle at her neck.

BEATA
 NO!

In a rage the COL. ZLOT stands, towering menacingly over *
 her. Surprising him she grabs the pencil and scribbles on *
 the paper.

The COL. ZLOT signals to the Soldiers, who pick her up and *
 carry her outside -- to the wall again.

Again six loud cracks ECHO on the freezing night air, blue *
 flashes and sparks fly off the gravel inches away from her *
 feet.

BEATA
 (Sobbing
 Crippled, I'll be crippled.

Blood trickles down her battered bruised legs. She is *
 grabbed and dragged back into the interrogation room.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - SAME TIME *

COL. ZLOT *
 You write Russian, you speak *
 Russian, what's this? *

He waves the piece of paper in her face as she passes out.

INT. CELL 27 - HOURS LATER *

The huge soldier fills the open door. As he leaves he drops *
 a sheet of paper on the floor. Irene picks it up and hands *
 to Beata. *

BEATA *
 It gives names with sentences. *
 Three years in a labour camp. *

IRENE *
 You didn't say Yaga's and yours. *

BEATA *
 They are not listed. *

Some time later. *

Another soldier opens the door. Drops a sheet of paper. *

SOLDIER

Kalmuk.

Chuckling he slams the door.

Yaga picks up the sheet of paper, hands it to Beata.

YAGA

Our fates my child?

Beata stares at the faded words. Shakes her head.

BEATA

Beata Oszurko and Jadwiga Braun.
Guilty of spying on the mother
country. Sentence: Ten years in
Labour camp.

IRENE

That means life.

The women gather around Beata and Yaga.

SUZ

This is the last one I fear.

Suz starts rolling a single cigarette in old ragged brown newspaper.

SUZ

And this is the last match.

Displaying it like a gold medal, indicating no one breath.
Suz rubs the door hinge edge to dry it.... Satisfied she
places the match on the cold metal and pulls down.

The match buzzes, flickers then dies. No one
volunteers to try. She stares at the reduced head.
Failure's surely the only result. Forty-one women pray as
never before.

Suz places the head remnants against the metal. Slightly
cupping her right hand she pulls again-but not as strong or
quick.

The match head smokes, her nostrils twitch, she sniffs the
fumes. Her timing is not precise. She lifts the match too
soon not wanting to snap it. It dims, she quickly cups the
other hand around the glow. Gently blows the tiny flame up
along the match.

Quickly puts her crude Sobranie to the sparks. Draws long
and hard on the stiff lumpy brown newsprint. Then with two
following quick puffs it takes as the match expires.

Forty-one women pull on their first puffs in three cold days. Each careful not to pull more than their routine share before becoming a soggy stump. *

After, Suz carefully un-rolls it. She places the damp tobacco placed on the high window sill. *

BEATA
It seems we were all in the right place at the wrong time. *

YAGA
We're spies. Ten years. *

Beata breaks down - sobs as Yaga cradles her. *

BEATA
At least we won't have any more rides to Hell in the Black Raven. I could not have survived another interrogation. *

YAGA
Hush. You must eat, keep up your strength, who knows where we are going to end up and what will be expected of us in a labor camp. *

BEATA
I have to let Kaz know. Maybe, maybe he'll be with us, do you think?

YAGA
Maybe.

Suddenly energized Beata crawls to the wall and begins tapping Morse code. Waits then leans against the wall listening. *

She suddenly screams and crumples to the dirty floor. *

BEATA
Kaz, is dead, Tortured to death Ximena, help me, please. *

YAGA
Ximena, where are you? *

FADE OUT

ON SCREEN: NOVEMBER, 1940

EXT. ICE COVERED COBBLED PRISON COURTYARD - DAWN

Snow laden clouds fill the skies as 700 thin Men and 300 skinny Women stand lined up in rows, ten abreast. *

Men and Women look for loved ones but in the poor light, with hostile Soldiers holding German Shepherds straining at their leashes, it is impossible to get close or make out anyone's features.

The order to march is given and the columns move out through the large open gates as snow flakes begin to fall wetting tangled hair and clothing and sticking to eyelashes.

As they pass through a small village unseen VOICES call out, out of range of hearing of the accompanying Soldiers.

VOICE #1

What have you done?

VOICE #2

Where are you going?

The Women try peering through their tangled, matted, snow covered hair, but their expressionless dark-rimmed eyes, over pronounced cheek bones, can see nothing and no-one. *

BEATA

They sounded sympathetic.

YAGA

That's all they can do... or end up with us!

An hour later, at a dimly lit railway siding, a long line of rusty, filthy cattle trucks, open to the elements, stand waiting. *

Men and Women are pushed down onto their knees. *

Nine hours later, by the clock on the station wall. *

SOLDIER

Up pigs. *

Light from the well spaced wooden lamp posts dimly illuminates Men and Women helping each other, painfully, to stand. *

BEATA

(Clinging to Yaga)

We'll be separated, they are sending us in alphabetical order.

YAGA

Don't worry they're too dumb to check, come with me. And if that doesn't work I'll go with you! *

The wind shrill increases, a blizzard's building drowning noise. *

Slowly the wagons are filled. Yaga and Beata stick together and get on the same wagon. *

INT. CATTLE WAGON - LATER. *

One hundred freezing, jittering Women are handed a mug and fork. *

CLOSE: crude hacked out hole in middle of wagon. *

The wagons creak as a whistle sounds, everyone is jolted as chains between the wagons take up slack. Wheels skid, sparks fly, the engine pulls forward, *

Standing room only helps keep some Women warm as they huddle together. Gradually fall sleep induced by the rhythm and wagon sway together with the monotonous regularity of the track joints' clicks. *

BUFFETED by howling wind, the massive long train with three engine huge engines continue through snow-laden fields, through dark snow covered forests. *

WOMAN #1

Anyone know where we are going? *

WOMAN #2

To the Gates of Hell, Siberia. *

Where the Devil says goodnight. *

Everyone stares at one another fatalistically. A pack of wolves run alongside the wagons, howling. *

WOMAN #2

Siberian wolves know no boundaries.

WOMAN #1

At this rate there will soon be plenty of food for them.

Everyone looks at one another in despair as the wagons lumber on.

Just before the grey dawn the wagons jolt to a stop. Nearly everyone wakes. Their bodies, the whole train covered with hoar frost. *

A pure white, featureless, landscape stretches, endlessly, in every direction. *

Soldiers carry large cans of hot water, loaves of hard bread to each wagon, hacking at ice encrusted doors to partially open them to pass in the sustenance. *

Beata peers out. In the distance a mountain range. *

Everyone waits their turn Beata and Yaga realize that four hapless Women are standing frozen to death against the wooden slatted sides.

*
*
*

WOMAN #2
(Horrorified)
What do we do?

WOMAN #1
Throw them out, the wolves will soon make short shrift of them.

*

As Women rush to comply Yaga shouts out.

YAGA
No! Take their clothing, we can use extra warmth.

*

WOMAN #2
But that's desecrating the dead!

YAGA
You'd rather more die than live. Use the dead's clothing... it's of no further use to them! God doesn't care how they dress when they come to him.

*
*

After much discussion it is agreed and those nearest to the dead strip them of their outer clothing which they hand to people that can fit them over their own clothing, and then the bodies are thrown over the side of the wagon away from the Soldiers' side.

YAGA
And we don't let on that four have died, that way we get their rations too.

WOMAN #1
You're a hard bitch.

*

YAGA
Thank you!

The next moment everyone is tossed about as the wagons move. A GALE FORCE SNOW STORM envelops everyone and the landscape. Only the click of the rails' track joints can occasionally be heard above the storm.

*
*

BEATA
(Shouting to be heard)
How much longer, do you think? I don't think I can last long. My skin scurvy is driving me mad with it's itching.

Beat stares at her scurvy exposed skin. *

YAGA

At this speed, we've many days
before we reach hell. *

Moans and groans emanate from all present, many of whom,
also suffering from scurvy, cannot help but scratch
themselves. *

CUT TO:

INT. WAGON - DARK FREEZING NIGHT

Beata WHIMPERS as Yaga pulls at her.

YAGA

You're frozen to the slats! *

BEATA

They propped me, my legs no
longer would. *

YAGA

You're truly stuck. *

She tugs and pulls at Beata. Amid heart wrenching screams
finally Beata's pulled free, without her coat and part of
her dress, they're stuck on the slats. *

BEATA

(Shivering
uncontrollably)

Dear God, my kidneys are killing
me. *

Beata leans in a dead faint. Yaga pulls a dress and a coat
off yet another stiff dead Woman. *

YAGA

At least you live!

Beata does not stir.

YAGA

Someone help me get these clothes
on her before she freezes to
death.

Against Beata's side Yaga oohs and aahs are heard from
those standing looking at the frost blanketed wagon. *

YAGA

We must almost be at our
destination, deep inside Siberia. *

BEATA

At our last stop, I saw the Urial
mountains. That was five days
ago. We've been in Siberia four
days.

*
*
*
*
*

Outside the Aurora Borealis lights up the sky.

*

BEATA

We're near the Arctic Circle.

*

WOMAN

How do you know so much?

WOMAN #1

She's an aristocrat, went to
university!

The train TRUNDLES on until it stops with a jarring JOLT at
a scarce discerned STATION. Dangling from a pole is a hand
painted sign. YAYA.

*
*

WOMAN #1

(Fatalistically

The Gates of Hell, lovingly known
as 'Where the Devil says
Goodnight'! It's even too cold
for him!

*

YAGA

We'll soon find out.

*

BEATA

Inside, in the warmth. Maybe we
can have a bath, a cup of tea...

*

WOMAN #2

(Laughing

Dream on. Think you are still
back home do you?

WOMAN #1

Remember we get to spend 10 years
here...

*

BEATA

Yaga, promise me you'll remember
all I told you about my family,
if I should die.

YAGA

You are not going to die, while
I'm around.

BEATA

Promise me!

YAGA

Alright, I promise. But you are not going to die.

BEATA

I don't know. Princess Ximena, no one knows what happened to her. And on our family tree there is a large gap between the years 832 and 1522. Maybe there will be another gap after I am gone.

YAGA

Don't carry on so, you'll make yourself sick with worry.

BEATA

Sick!

Everyone around her laughs.

*

YAGA

Oh why aren't they letting us out, if we've arrived?

SUZ

Maybe all the doors are frozen solid and it is taking them time to open them.

*

BEATA

Today is my 21st birthday...

YAGA

Welcome to emancipation!

The doors are finally hacked open.

*

EXT. RUSSIAN STATION - NIGHT - SAME TIME.

*

Everyone TUMBLES down into the deep snow and scoops up handfuls. Women scream as the snow causes pain.

*

*

BEATA

Best drink I've had in four months!

YAGA

Don't overdue it.

Women stand up wearily, Soldiers, with well fed SNARLING German shepherds, usher the Women past the steaming train, under the overcast skies. The Aurora Borealis is faint.

*

*

Yaga supports Beata who is weak from her kidney disease.

*

They trudge through waist deep snow.

*

Beata coughs, a tooth is dislodged she spits. Her spittle
solidifies around the tooth before her eyes and before it
hits the snow. *

She laughs hysterically.

YAGA
Shsh... do you want to single us
out! Don't breathe deeply, the
cold air will choke you to death
if you inhale through your mouth. *

IRENE
Look at that moon, it's all hazy.
What does that mean? *

BEATE
The Chukchi Tribesmen say when
the moon looks like that 'he's
putting on his furs'. *

Ahead excited VOICES are heard. *

BEATA
What's going on? Are we there
yet?

ZUS
Not yet, but someone has sighted
the camp's lights. It won't be
long now... *

BEATA
Do you think we'll get a bath,
fresh clothes and hot food and
drink? Do you?

YAGA
It won't be the Ritz but
something like that yes. Come,
the quicker we move the quicker
we get there. *

PAN line of Women trudging towards the lights of the camp,
those in the lead slipping and falling in the thick waist
deep snow those coming behind finding it easier going.

Act 3

CREDITS ROLL :

BEATA KARP, married and lived in Australia where she died
in 1982.

BENITA, Beata's older sister, died in a German
Concentration Camp in 1945.

ROMAN, Beata's nephew lives in Australia.

GENERAL VLADISLAW ANDERS died in London in 1970. At his request he is buried with his soldiers at Monte Cassino, Italy.

YAGA was living in Ontario, Canada in 1992, and would have been in her seventies.

The Karp family estates and beautiful home still exist. The mansion has been badly 'renovated' by the Russians. It is small and looks like a single storey slum. *

Only Marek Karp lived on the estate determined to restore the mansion to its former glory. He died on the estate when a mysterious truck slammed into his car. He was to give evidence of the corruption and theft of his estates by the Russians. *

Roman's family have been given only a few acres. *

In the Spanish October Revolution a bomb exploded at Oviedo Cathedral. Among the ruins, parts of the old Monastery were discovered and an inscription found. It referred to a Benedictine Nun named Ximena, put there on orders from her brother King Alfonso. Of Ximena's husband, Count Sancho Diaz, there is no mention.