

THE GIRL WITH 35 NAMES

SERIES PILOT - REVIEW DRAFT

Based on the Original Novel by DJ Colbert

Screen Story
by
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&
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Screenplay
by
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FADE IN:

BLACKNESS.

A GUNSHOT.

EXT. FIELD - DAY

A YOUNG WOMAN (20) tears through a snow-covered field, RAGGEDLY GASPING for breath. We follow from behind, never seeing her face.

GUNSHOTS explode behind her. *

Two RED-UNIFORMED SOLDIERS jag into view, giving chase. One slows, hesitant. The other raises his rifle, fires. Reloads, fires again.

The girl dodges through the hail of bullets, racing towards the edge of the field and a large river.

Another gunshot, closer.

The girl stumbles - a bullet grazes her arm.

With a desperate lunge, she makes it to the river's edge.

Stares into the water: the current relentless. Blocks of ice surging downriver.

Another gunshot.

On the girl: an impossible choice. She squeezes her eyes shut. Slows her breathing.

The sounds of the river fade as a soft whispering, of many indistinct voices, rises.

Her eyes slide open, panic replaced by calm. The whispering voices become a clamour as -

She turns and faces the soldiers, who stumble to a halt.

The hesitant soldier's rifle is at his shoulder, pointed at her.

His finger trembles over the trigger.

He takes a deep breath -

The girl jumps.

Plummets into the water, is sucked into blackness.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. ZHITOMIR - NIGHT

Darkness is punctuated by points of light that become a starlit sky.

A COMET streaks across the sky, and vanishes over -

An expanse of fields, glimmering silver in the moonlight. Lights twinkle in the distance: a SMALL TOWN, nestled in the middle of hills and fields.

SUPERIMPOSE: ZHITOMIR, RUSSIA 1892

Snow-kissed cobbled streets. Horses and carts, and huddles of RAGGED PEASANTS scurrying inside to get warm on a biting cold night.

Some of the peasants exchange worried looks as they dodge out of the way of a group of SOLDIERS, dressed in red uniforms as they push into a merry-looking tavern.

This place is poor, but wafts of TRADITIONAL MUSIC and LAUGHTER suggest human warmth. And beyond the town:

The snow-covered countryside.

At the edge of an ancient wood, a small STONE HOUSE. The sound of A BABY, CRYING.

INT. ARI AND MORIAH'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Like Zhitomir, this house is simple, very poor.

Exhausted but happy, MORIAH (30s) lies in a bed holding a NEWBORN BABY. Her relieved husband ARI (30s) sits beside her, arm around her shoulders. He sports a large, old scar on his neck.

ARI
(quietly)
Have you decided on a name, my love?

MORIAH
Yes... "Malkah".

Ari smiles, gazes at the baby: can't believe she's real.

ARI
 "Queen." Like her mother.

Moriah smiles.

MORIAH
 We can call her Molly, for short.

Ari nods. The baby COOS: peace.

Moriah gets a faraway look, as though listening.

MORIAH (CONT'D)
 It's good we have decided. Before the family arrive.

ARI
 (surprised)
 But they can't possibly know, yet -

A KNOCK at the door. Ari looks to Moriah, startled as -

A throng of OLDER RELATIVES surge excitedly into the cottage. UNCLES pump Ari's hand and slap him on the back; AUNTS and COUSINSush forward to Moriah's side, crooning over the baby.

AUNT 1
 Oh, she will be fair, like Dobrisha -

AUNT 2
 Nonsense, she will have red curls, like Raina -

COUSIN 1	COUSIN 2
Moriah, you must call her Lucy -	No, no, no. You must call her Sarah!

COUSIN 3
 Lily!

A RISING BABBLE OF NAMES.

ARI
 (raising his voice)
 Everyone, please! We have already chosen a name.

Moriah looks at him gratefully.

ARI (CONT'D)
 We have decided to call her "Malkah".

Instant protestations from the group.

COUSIN 3

But we have each brought a name, of
someone special -

COUSIN 2

Someone *gifted* -

A COUSIN pushes forward.

COUSIN 1

Ari, Moriah. There are not many of us
left, so these names are... sacred. These
people were blessings to us; let this be
our gift to you, and to the child -

ARI

(firmly)

Our decision is final.

The VOICES of the assembled rise again -

But with a gust of wind, the door flies open in a flurry
of snow. A flash of rainbow light bounce around the room
before settling around a small, hooded figure who stands
regally in the doorway: AUNT PEARL (60s). Her cloak is
midnight blue, shimmering like starlight.

*

A HUSH FALLS upon the group who part, reverentially, as
she moves through the room, using a long branch as a
walking stick.

She is followed by THREE CLOAKED WOMEN - MRS EOS, TERESKY
AND LIEBEN. Varying in size, each carries a small branch
with tender green leaves. They approach Moriah and stand
at the foot of the bed.

Ari tenses, and stands protectively over Moriah and the
baby. But the baby coos and squirms - and when Ari and
Moriah look down, she's... smiling.

One by one, the women place their small branches on the
bed, saying softly as they do:

MRS EOS

Goldenrod.

MRS TERESKY

Yarrow.

MRS LIEBEN

Rosemary.

The twigs shimmer, briefly, with light.

The women bow their heads, and step back almost reverentially as -

Pearl approaches, her face remains shrouded in darkness - but from the shadows, bright eyes sparkle. In the firelight, her dark cloak shimmers, almost changing colour, like a chameleon.

Ari grips the headboard, knuckles whitening. Moriah glances at him: he looks at her with concern, but she shakes her head at him gently.

AUNT PEARL

Moriah.

MORIAH

Aunt Pearl. You honour us with your presence.

AUNT PEARL

It is I who am honored.

She reaches out a weathered hand to the baby, who coos once more.

AUNT PEARL (CONT'D)

"Malkah" is a strong name for the child.
You chose well.

Ari looks uneasily at Moriah: how did she know?

The throng of relatives push forward, eagerly watching, almost holding their breath.

Pearl caresses the child's face: briefly, her fingers sparkle. The baby GIGGLES.

An excited MURMUR goes up from the gathering. Mrs Teresky, Eos and Lieben exchange a knowing look.

Pearl makes a self-satisfied noise, reaches into her cloak, and produces a BOOK. Green leather, with glittering silver filigree. It almost shimmers with light. Briefly, ever so faint, a whispering emerges, almost from within the book - then fades.

Moriah stares at the book, then at Pearl.

MORIAH

(hushed)
You're certain?

Pearl nods.

AUNT PEARL

She has been born under the sign, Moriah.
The first, in many years. As you know.

She places the book in Moriah's hands. As she does, Ari almost steps forward, as if to stop her. Pearl looks up at him: he pauses. Instead he takes Moriah's hand, and she squeezes his, reassuringly.

MORIAH

(to Pearl)

Thank you. We will keep it safe.

As she reaches for the book, Pearl holds onto it for a moment.

AUNT PEARL

(very quietly)

You know the importance of the other names offered to this child today.

(gesturing to the relatives)

And besides - you need not take only one.

In the group, all eyes on Moriah and Ari.

AUNT PEARL (CONT'D)

Think carefully, Moriah. You know our family is in decline, and those of us who remain are... scattered.

(a beat. Delivers the following almost as a whisper, but meaningfully, to both Ari and Moriah)

Darkness is on the horizon... We will need all our remaining power to face what is coming.

Moriah looks to Ari: compromise? He doesn't like it - but he loves his family. A beat. He nods.

The room erupts with suggestions:

COUSIN 1

Hannah!

COUSIN 2

Judith!

AUNT 1

Chaya!

AUNT 2

Dobrisha!

As excited relatives surge forward, Aunt Pearl nods at Moriah, and withdraws, followed by the Three Women. The front door opens, and with a gust of wind they're gone, out into the night.

The NAMING continues: *Elisha, Agnes, Lily, Sarah, Lucy...*

The book pulses gently with light at the mention of each name. On its cover, silver lettering appears: the word "MALKAH", beautifully emblazoned.

On baby Malkah's face, as Ari cups it gently in his hand.

ARI

(whispering to the baby)

They can call you what they like. But to us, you will always be our *Molly*.

He plants a kiss on her forehead.

EXT. KAMENKA STREETS - DAY

Hand in hand, the NOW 7 YEAR OLD MOLLY and Moriah move through the bustling cobbled streets of a small town: Kamenka.

PASSERSBY greet the pair with warm familiarity as they pass.

Down the street, a small group of UNIFORMED SOLDIERS. A group of YOUNG BOYS, including BILLY (9) and IVAN (8) talking to them. The soldiers are showing Billy how to hold a rifle, laughing at the size of it in his hands. Other boys run riot close by, playing war: sticks for rifles, shooting each other.

The soldiers catch sight of Moriah.

Moriah's grip tightens on Molly's hand. Molly gazes at the soldiers with curiosity - but Moriah pulls her into a run-down tailor shop, casting a worried glance over her shoulder.

INT. TAILOR SHOP - KAMENKA - DAY

MRS IVANOV (70s) sits by a grimy window, struggling to knit with hands twisted by arthritis. Her granddaughter MILA(7) sits beside her, winding yarn into a ball.

At the TINKLE of the shop bell, they look up, and smile broadly at Moriah and Molly.

MILA

Molly!

She rises, grabs Molly and steers her into the shop as Moriah and Mrs Ivanov exchange greetings, Moriah removing several jars of healing salve from her basket.

MRS IVANOV (O.S.)

I always look forward to your visits,
Moriah. Your remedies work like magic...

Mila and Molly drift through the shop, exploring. Molly trails her hand along shelves, through spools of thread and coloured yarn.

The doorbell tinkles again.

HAROLD (O.S.)

Sam, here boy - help me with this fabric.

MRS IVANOV (O.S.)

Ah Harold Gold, as I live and breathe!
You're a sight for sore eyes!

HAROLD (O.S.)

I'm here for the thread, and the cotton -
Stella loves the quality, and she won't
make lace with anything else!

Molly peeks out from between shelves of twine and yarn,
and sees:

HAROLD GOLD (30s) and his son, SAM (8), carrying a roll
of fabric. Sam is too small for the roll, but determined
to help: he hefts it up onto a table.

Mila tugs on Molly's sleeve. Molly turns to her. *

MILA

(twinkling with dark
mischief) *

Molly, is it true that you have *thirty*
five names? *

MOLLY

(sighing: this isn't the
first time she's heard this) *

Yes. *

MILA

I only have three! Why do you need so
many? It's very strange. *

(a beat) *

But then... my mother says your family *is*
very strange. *

Molly, brow furrowed, starts to tear up. She turns away
from Mila and looks back through the crack in the
shelves. *

Sam glances up and catches sight of Molly's inquisitive eyes, peering at him through the shelves. They gaze at one another. He smiles, shyly, and gives her a wave.

*
*
*

His father opens the door, the bell tinkling.

*

HAROLD

Come on, Sam. Time to go.

*
*

Sam casts another glance back at Molly, and follows his father.

*
*

Molly looks at Moriah, thinking.

Moriah gently rubs ointment into Mrs Ivanov's arthritic hands. The old woman flexes her fingers, ease returning.

MRS IVANOV

Perhaps you could see the Saltzmans while you're here. Andrei hasn't been able to work, not since he injured his back.

Moriah looks up at Molly, and smiles. In the sunlight from the window, she almost glows.

EXT. SALTZMAN HOUSE - KAMENKA - DAY

A door to a humble house opens and Moriah and Molly emerge. Moriah bids an older couple, THE SALTZMANS (70s) farewell, pressing jars from her basket into their hands.

Mrs Saltzman tries to pay her; Moriah gently refuses.

Molly glances up as a cluster of children run past, including the two boys from earlier - Billy and Ivan. Mila now with them. At the sight of Molly, she whispers to Billy, who grins maliciously.

BILLY

(to Molly)

Hey, you! Thirty five names? Your parents couldn't pick just one, eh? I've got another one, for you - "Crazy"! Crazy Molly, with too many names!

The kids laugh and run off - except Ivan, who frowns.

BILLY (O.S.) (CONT'D)

(to Ivan)

Come on, Ivan! What are you waiting for?

Ivan looks at Molly, sorry. Follows the others.

Molly brims with tears as Moriah pulls her away.

EXT. FIELDS - EVENING

The sun is setting across the fields as Moriah and a downcast Molly approach their house, hand in hand.

MOLLY

Why do I have so many names, Mama? None of my friends have so many.

(getting upset)

I don't want them.

MORIAH

Oh, Molly. Don't listen to that boy. You have something that he doesn't have -

Ari appears from the garden, sees them, waves.

ARI

There are my girls!

Molly looks up, brightening. Moriah smiles, relieved.

EXT. WHEAT FIELD - DAY

We push through the golden expanse of a rippling wheat field, chasing a BUTTERFLY. The sound of GIGGLING. The butterfly flits away through the wheat.

ARI (O.S.)

MOLLY! It's late, where are you? I need your help!

Molly bursts out of the wheat, and runs out of the field, and into -

EXT. ARI AND MORIAH'S GARDEN - DAY

A huge vegetable garden. Well-tended. Ari stands, rake in hand, sun-beaten, surveying his work. Smiles at Molly and sets his rake aside.

ARI

Come on.

She eagerly follows him as he strides off through the lush garden, into -

EXT. FIELD - DAY

A large field, where he leads oxen before a large plough. Molly follows along behind, sprinkling seeds and placing small plants in the newly-tilled soil: a routine she's familiar with. *

As she does, the butterfly from earlier lands on her wrist. Molly admires its rainbow colours as it flits off.

Ahead of her, Ari pauses and stops. He bends down, and picks something out of the soil. His expression darkens and he flings the small object in his hand away from him, hard.

He moves on, steering the oxen. But Molly sees the object he has just cast away twinkling in the sun. She runs over to where it lies, and picks it up: a small, cracked metal cylinder.

Its jagged edge cuts her finger, deep. Blood surges from the cut and she cries out. In an instant, Ari is at her side.

ARI

Molly?

MOLLY

(tearfully, upset)

I... I thought it was treasure.

Ari takes the object from her, almost angrily - and we see it clearly: a bullet casing.

ARI

It's not a toy, Molly -

He sees her hand, and takes it in his, concerned at the blood. He wraps it quickly in handkerchief he pulls out of his pocket.

ARI (CONT'D)

What have you done?

Abruptly the world around him darkens. The field fills with smoke, echoing with DISTANT CRIES -

And suddenly we are in a BATTLEFIELD, surging with filthy soldiers, ringing with the sound of SCREAMING. Ari ducks and flinches as men crash past him, shouting, waving guns. Ari whips around, panicked -

And sees Molly, standing in the middle of the battlefield - but totally unaware, and not seeing any of it - staring at her father with concern.

MOLLY

Papa?

A GUNSHOT RINGS OUT. Molly flinches and -

- the battlefield DISAPPEARS. Replaced instantly by the peace of the current field, and the gentle snorting of oxen. Molly stands stock still, looking around, terrified: the sound of the gunshot echoes briefly around the field, and is gone.

MOLLY (CONT'D)

Papa - what... what was that?

Ari doesn't know what's just happened - but flings the bullet casing away, and snatches Molly up into his arms, carrying her swiftly away from the field.

ARI

(gruffly)

Come on. Let's let your mother take a look at that cut.

INT. ARI AND MORIAH'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

The kitchen is a world of natural alchemy. Herbs hang drying; soups and ointments simmer on the hearth; coloured glass bottles and jars line every surface, some full of dried mushrooms. Motes of flour glitter in the light from a small window.

*
*

A small pot with bubbling salve sits on the hearth.

On one wall, a very old framed photograph: an older woman wearing a pair of round spectacles. In flowery, cursive script, a name is written beneath the image: ETHEL.

Moriah is hunkering before Molly, singing, applying the salve to her cut finger.

Ari stands by the hearth, watching anxiously. He clasps the bloodied handkerchief tightly in one hand.

MORIAH

My grandmother's secret recipe.

She smiles reassuringly at Molly.

Molly stares at her finger: a brief shimmer of golden light and -

The cut heals over instantly. *

MOLLY

(awed)

Mama, how did you do that? Is it...
magic?

Moriah glances up at Ari, who looks at her uneasily: he shakes his head.

Moriah winks at Molly, kisses the healed finger.

MORIAH

Love is always magic, my sweet.

She rises and moves to the hearth.

As Molly examines her newly-healed finger with amazement, Ari crosses to her, hunkers down to her level, and takes her hand in his. *

MOLLY *

Look, Papa! Mama fixed my finger! *

She sees the large scar on his neck, puts her small hand over it. *

MOLLY (CONT'D) *

Did Mama fix you, too? *

Ari hesitates; kisses her hand, rises, exchanges a final, dark look with Moriah, and exits. *

Moriah turns back to the hearth, and begins to hum a beautiful tune: Molly's Naming Song.

Moriah opens an large old leatherbound recipe book with brass hinges. The title: "REMEDIES AND RESTORATIVES". Inky text and diagrams of plants sprawl across the pages.

She flicks to a blank page, and casts a glance at Molly, who's now admiring a coloured glass bottle as it catches the light, casting rainbow colours across her face.

Moriah discreetly drifts her hand over the blank page. The book glows gently, her fingers sparkling -

- text appears on the page, revealing itself.

Moriah reads the text, adds herbs into a pot on the stove. The salve in the pot shimmers, briefly.

Moriah hovers her hand over the page again -

Molly appears at her elbow, peering curiously at the book, enthralled by the text appearing on the page. Moriah pauses, caught out.

MOLLY (CONT'D)

Is that a special book, mama?

MORIAH

...Yes.

MOLLY

And what you just did... with my finger. Can... *I* do that? Am I... *like you*?

MORIAH

I don't know. But... you might be. All the women in my family have... talents.

Moriah points up to the framed photograph on the wall.

MORIAH (CONT'D)

Like your great grandmother, Ethel.

Molly studies the portrait for a long beat: Ethel gazes down at her, kindly, through her glasses. Molly turns her gaze to Moriah's book, suddenly determined. She looks up to Moriah, hopefully.

MOLLY

(eagerly, indicating the book)

Can I try?

A beat. Moriah nods.

Molly extends a hand, hovers her fingers over the pages.

Moriah watches her expectantly. Holding her breath.

Nothing.

Molly looks up at Moriah, disappointed. Moriah smiles.

MOLLY (CONT'D)

Why won't it work for me?

MORIAH

Some books only reveal their secrets to those who need them, my love. Here - you can help me with this.

She lifts Molly onto a stool, hands her a pestle and mortar, shows her how to use them.

On Molly's tiny hands, working beside Moriah's.

INT. MOLLY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Molly, clad in a nightdress, playing with a couple of simple wooden toys. Her room is spartan, poor - but a lot of books for a child her age.

Voices, urgent but hushed, from downstairs.

Molly drops to her belly, puts an ear to a large gap in the floorboards:

ARI (O.S.)

Was it wise letting her see you use your powers?

MORIAH (O.S.)

It had to be done, my love.

ARI (O.S.)

(sighing)

I know. But we're only safe as long as nobody knows *who we are*. What you do.

MORIAH (O.S.)

We are safe. And my powers are part of who I am -

ARI (O.S.)

Your grandmother's powers are what made her a target... I don't want history to repeat, Moriah.

MORIAH (O.S.)

I know. But changes are afoot, around us: I know you feel it to. It may be better that Molly start to understand more about who she is.

Molly squints through the crack in the floorboards, sees her parents embrace, tenderly. Moriah pulls back, and caresses Ari's face. He sighs.

ARI (O.S.)

I just want to keep us safe.

MORIAH (O.S.)

You always have.

Molly shifts her position - the floorboards CREAK. Moriah glances up - as she does, Molly scuttles into bed, pulls up the covers, considers what she's just heard. Stares at the ceiling. The light of the moon through tree branches casts a shining pattern around the room.

As she drifts off to sleep, a faint WHISPERING rises, like the rustling of leaves in the wind. Words are indistinct. We follow the sound out into the darkened hall, to Moriah and Ari's bedroom, to a large WOODEN TRUNK. It lies open: the source of the whispering is revealed to be -

Molly's book. Lying in the trunk. The whispering surges briefly and is gone.

INT. DREAMSCAPE - NIGHT

Molly dreams.

She stands, swirled in mist, in her parents' lush garden. It's unnaturally quiet. She looks around, moves a hand through the mist, marvelling at how it twines around her fingers, almost playfully.

MOLLY

Mama? Papa?

The mist begins to take on faint colours, and swirls more intensely as a whispering emerges from all around Molly, many voices, some calling her name.

MOLLY (CONT'D)

Who's there?

From within the mist, shapes begin to emerge. Faint outlines - people. They approach, but remain indistinct. Molly strains to see them clearly. Determined and unafraid, she walks towards the figures, following the sound of the voices, and is instantly swallowed up by the mist as the whispering grows, and carries over into -

INT. MOLLY'S BEDROOM - DAY

A rooster CROWS.

The NOW 17 YEAR OLD MOLLY rolls over in bed, and her eyes snap open. The whispering ceases instantly. Molly stretches, rises, and washes her face, glancing at herself in a small mirror on the wall. She's beautiful.

INT. ARI AND MORIAH'S KITCHEN - DAY

On Molly and Moriah's hands, working side by side as Molly hums her Naming Song and works with assurance, grinding herbs.

Moriah points to some plants hanging over the hearth.

MOLLY

Goldenrod: eases pain, helps find lost objects... Yarrow: stops bleeding, fights illness...

MORIAH

...and?

MOLLY

Rosemary. Good for... pain?

MORIAH

Almost. It also improves the memory!

They laugh. Moriah smiles; Molly's good at this. Moriah hands Molly a pestle and mortar, and she starts grinding herbs. After a long beat:

MOLLY

I had the dream again, Mama.

MORIAH

The same one?

MOLLY

Always the same one.

Moriah clouds over slightly. Looks at Molly, considering.

MORIAH

And you still can't see who they are?

Molly shakes her head, sighs.

Moriah pats her hand reassuringly.

MORIAH (CONT'D)

I know that you will understand what it means, someday. When the time is right.

Molly glances at Moriah, not so sure. As she does, she stops: a faint whispering.

MOLLY

Do you hear that?

Moriah looks at her quizzically.

MORIAH

Hear what, Molly?

Molly moves slowly around the kitchen, following the sound of whispering.

Moriah stops what she's doing, and watches her with great interest. Almost in a trance, Molly follows the sound, out of the kitchen, and up the small flight of stairs, followed by Moriah. *

The whispering intensifies. Molly enters Moriah and Ari's simple bedroom, and kneels before a large old wooden trunk. *

Moriah pauses in the doorway behind her, watching intently as Molly throws open the trunk. The whispering is an insistent roar, like the ocean, as Molly reaches in and pulls out -

Her book.

The whispering stops.

Molly gazes at the book with wide eyes. She traces the silver filigree title on the cover: "MALKAH".

MOLLY

"Malkah"? But that's... me. What is this?

MORIAH

It was a... gift. The night you were born.

Molly runs her hands over the book, almost reverently. Sensing its power.

MOLLY

Why did you... hide it?

MORIAH

I didn't hide it... I've been keeping it safe. I was going to give it to you at the right time - but you discovered it yourself. Which is as it should be.

Molly opens the book. Moriah watches Molly carefully, almost expecting something to *happen*...

A beat. But the book is just that: a book. No shimmering light, no glow, not like Moriah's. Moriah looks, for a moment, disappointed.

The first page is a list of thirty five names. Molly reads:

MOLLY

Dobrisha. Lily. Agnes... All of my names!

As Molly traces the names with her hand, each name shines brightly for a moment, almost teasing her, and then... vanishes. Molly stares at the book in shock.

MOLLY (CONT'D)

Mama?

Moriah watches intently as Molly flicks eagerly through the rest of the book, but then pauses, confused: the pages are empty.

MOLLY (CONT'D)

But... I don't understand. It's blank. Why?

MORIAH

This is a very special book, Molly. Don't let the empty pages fool you: it is full of secrets... And they will reveal themselves to you *at the right time*.

Molly considers this. A long beat.

MOLLY

You said it was a gift - from who?

MORIAH

From your Aunt Pearl -

Ari appears in the doorway, freezes at the mention of Pearl's name. Sees Molly, the book: is uneasy. Moriah glances up at him, and her smile dims. A long beat.

MOLLY

Pearl? You've never mentioned her. Where does she live? Can I meet her?

As Ari enters the room, Moriah takes the book from Molly, places it on the table.

MORIAH

We'll talk more later, Molly.

ARI

Come on, Molly - I need your help loading the wagon. We can't be late for market. Especially today.

(darkly)

(MORE)

ARI (CONT'D)

The army are demanding more of everything, for their supplies. There'll be hell to pay if we don't give them what they want. They're squeezing all of the farmers dry - if we're not careful they'll leave us nothing for the winter. They'll take it all, just like they did the last time -

Moriah pats him on the chest, calming him.

MORIAH

It won't be like the last time. It can't be.

Ari looks at her doubtfully - but he wants to believe.

Molly is about to ask more questions, but Moriah shakes her head at her, cautioning: *Later.*

EXT. ZHITOMIR MARKETPLACE - DAY

Ari, Moriah and Molly arrive on their wagon, piled high with fruit and vegetables, at a bustling marketplace in the town square. ANIMALS and SELLERS throng the market; stalls sag under the weight of wares while CHILDREN tear back and forth.

Across the square: chatting with a group of red-uniformed MILITARY OFFICIALS, stand well-dressed aristocrats ALEXEI AND ELIZABETA BILCO (50s), and their son - the NOW 18 YEAR-OLD IVAN, impeccably groomed. Tall, standing proudly in a red coat but, unlike some of the other young men present, not in uniform.

Mr Bilco is talking animatedly with a portly older man dressed in a uniform that glitters with medals and stars: GENERAL VASILY BORGOV (50s). He is looking with some interest at Ivan. Mr Bilco smiles proudly at his son.

MR BILCO

Our Ivan has excelled at the military academy, this last year. Clear officer material, they all agree!

Ivan holds himself proudly, and nods. General Borgov looks at him approvingly.

GENERAL BORGOV

Following in your father's footsteps, eh lad?

IVAN
(proudly)
Yes, sir!

Mr Bilco beams at him, satisfied.

GENERAL BORGOV
(to Ivan)
I have no doubt you will make an excellent addition to the imperial army, my boy! And the Tsar is a close personal friend, so play your cards right and you might even get a personal introduction!

Mrs Bilco nods vigorously as General Borgov guffaws.

GENERAL BORGOV (CONT'D)
Lord knows we need all the good men we can get, right now. The peasants have been getting restless. Especially in this area: Zhitomir in particular has been getting... difficult.

MR BILCO
Peasants. What do you expect?

As Mr Bilco and the General talk, Ivan glances into the crowd, sees Molly. Is instantly struck by her beauty. He's briefly spell-bound -

Until General Borgov slaps him on the arm, laughing loudly, and snaps him out of it. Ivan smiles politely at the General, and when he turns back to look for Molly, she's gone.

Across the market, Ari halts the wagon and himself, Molly and Moriah climb down, begin to set up their stall.

Moriah is rapidly surrounded by a group of WOMEN: NATALIA (20s), GALINA (30s) and RUTH (30s), holding a BABY.

NATALIA	GALINA
Moriah, that youth mixture did wonders for my skin!	Did you bring any of your digestive remedy, today?

Ruth leans in to Moriah. Quietly:

RUTH
Moriah - how can I ever repay you?
Without your remedy, I would never have had my little one.

Moriah smiles at her and her baby, who COOS up at her.
Moriah strokes the baby's cheek.

*
*

MORIAH

It worked for me, too.

*
*

She smiles affectionately at Molly, who is lifting baskets of vegetables onto the stall -

*

MIRANDA (O.S.)

There she is! Molly!

Two enthusiastic girls - the beaming MIRANDA and GRACE (both 17) - burst through the crowd, and glue themselves to Molly, who grins at them.

MOLLY

Grace! Miranda!

GRACE

Come with us, Molly - you have to see the silk that Mr Dovnik has at his stall!

MOLLY

I've to help my parents first.

She turns back to her parents to find the Bilco family advancing imperiously towards Moriah and the stall.

MRS BILCO (O.S.)

Moriah, I do hope you have more of that wonderful ointment for my Alexei!

MORIAH

Of course, Mrs Bilco.

MRS BILCO

You know it's the only thing that seems to work. Even our own doctor can't explain it! Isn't that true, Alexei?

(to Moriah, lowering her voice)

He suffers terribly with his leg, you know. Old war wound.

Mr Bilco looks slightly uncomfortable, but laughs it off.

Ari sees Mr Bilco, and, instantly tense, moves swiftly away from their stall, pulling down his wide-brimmed hat and tugging up the collar of his coat, covering the scar on his neck.

Molly notices: Ari catches her eye, and shakes his head at her. Unseen by the Bilcos, he watches their interaction with Molly and Moriah intently.

Molly is confused, but busies herself with wrapping several jars of ointment for Mrs Bilco.

As Mrs Bilco counts coins out, she notices Molly. Looks her up and down, pointedly lingering on her hands - clearly used to gardening.

Off her look, Molly clasps her hands.

MRS BILCO (CONT'D)

(to Moriah)

What a pretty girl. Your daughter?

MORIAH

Yes, this is our Molly.

Moriah glances at Ivan, who is standing beside his parents, studying Molly carefully.

MORIAH (CONT'D)

(smiling at Ivan)

And this is - ?

IVAN

Ivan. Ivan Bilco, ma'am.

Molly glances up at him, and they lock eyes. Molly is shy, but doesn't look away. Slowly, Ivan smiles at her. He reaches out his hand.

Molly is surprised - behind her, Miranda and Grace giggle. Molly reaches out and takes Ivan's hand, but notices Ari -

Who stands at a remove, stock still, clenching his fist, glowering at the Bilcos.

On Molly and Ivan for a long beat, as he holds her hand gently in his.

IVAN (CONT'D)

(quietly)

We've met before - in Kamenka. Do you remember?

MOLLY

Kamenka... But that was years ago!

Miranda and Grace grin behind Molly. Ari tenses. *

IVAN

Yes... But I remember you. Very well. *

Molly blushes, but smiles.

IVAN (CONT'D)

And I'm... sorry. For how they treated you. The others.

Molly softens, warming towards him.

MOLLY

It wasn't you. But... thank you.

Impulsively, Ivan kisses her hand.

Mrs Bilco shoots a look at Mr Bilco, unpleasantly surprised.

Ari looks like he might break Ivan in two with his bare hands.

MRS BILCO

(flustered)

We really mustn't keep you, Moriah. You have so many customers to attend to.

She grips Mr Bilco's elbow, steers him away.

MRS BILCO (O.S.) (CONT'D)

(sharply)

Ivan!

Ivan shoots his mother an irritated glance, but pauses, still lost in Molly, who smiles at him sympathetically.

IVAN

(to Molly)

I have to go. But I -

Abruptly, several BOYS emerge from the crowd - including the NOW 19 YEAR-OLD BILLY.

A few paces behind them, discreetly observing and following Billy and the other boys, are three, distinctively-cloaked figures: the Three Women, from the night of her birth.

BILLY

Hey, Ivan!

(sees Molly)

Why, the skinny peasant with all the names! How many was it, again? Fifty? Which one is it today, girl?

He and the other boys laugh.

The Three Women exchange glances, and watch Billy and Ivan closely. As does Ari, still keeping his distance from the stall.

Ivan turns to Molly but she pulls away, wary.

Grace scowls at the boys.

GRACE

Come on, Molly.

Molly looks at Ivan, hurt and confused, as he is pulled away by his friends, and Molly allows herself to be led away into the market by Grace and Miranda.

Billy steers Ivan through the crowd, laughing.

BILLY (O.S.)

Come on, Ivan. Can't have you dallying with *peasants!*

Billy shoulders roughly past the Three Women, one of whom reaches out a dainty foot - and Billy trips and stumbles, nearly careening into the crowd. He rounds on the women, glowering.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Watch where you're going, hags!

The Women regard him calmly as he pulls Ivan away. The other boys laugh. Ivan looks at Billy with open irritation.

IVAN

You can be such an idiot, Billy.

He pulls away from a surprised Billy, and moves off into the crowd. Billy shrugs, and barges off into the crowd.

The Three Women exchange a knowing look and an unspoken communication - *follow him*. They follow Billy, at a safe distance, but watching his every move.

Ivan fights his way through the crowd to Molly's side at a stall where she's feigning interest in silks, while Grace and Miranda chat away to one another.

IVAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Molly?

Molly looks up in surprise as Grace and Miranda pull her away from the stall, protectively.

IVAN (CONT'D)

Please wait.

Molly stops. Regards him cautiously.

IVAN (CONT'D)

Once again... I must apologize.

*

He gestures at Billy and the gang, across the market.

IVAN (CONT'D)

Don't listen to them. They're just...
jealous.

He stares at her. Very sincere. She thaws.

IVAN (CONT'D)

I'd like to see you, again. If I may.

Molly flushes slightly. Nods.

Ivan beams at her, bows, and moves off into the crowd.

Molly is lost in the moment, smiling to herself as -

Ari pulls up beside her with the wagon, Moriah seated beside him. Molly glances up with some surprise.

MOLLY

Papa? Are we leaving already? But -

ARI

It's time for us to go.

Moriah gives Molly a "don't protest" look, and Molly clambers up onto the wagon. Ari flicks the reins angrily, and the wagon moves off.

Molly studies him, picking up on his upset.

MOLLY

Papa, what's wrong?

ARI

(gruffly)

Nothing. But I want you to stay away from that Bilco boy.

MOLLY

Ivan? Why?

ARI

Please, Molly. Just do as I ask. And stay away from the soldiers.

(MORE)

ARI (CONT'D)

(darkly)

You don't know what they're capable of.

MOLLY

What do you mean? Papa?

Ari exchanges a look with Moriah, who looks concerned and... afraid. Molly feels their fear; doesn't push for more.

But as the wagon clears the market limits, she glances over her shoulder, and meets the gaze of Ivan, now standing with a group of young men in uniform. He waves. She smiles.

The wagon trundles off, past:

MILITARY POSTERS fluttering in the breeze, nailed to walls and posts. Bold headlines proclaiming slogans:

"WEAR THE UNIFORM: THE ARMY NEEDS YOU!"

"JOIN US TODAY, BECOME AN OFFICER!"

On one poster, a stark picture of a RED-CLAD SOLDIER, RIFLE AT HIS SIDE. Beneath him, ANOTHER RED SOLDIER, locked in battle with a huge WHITE SERPENT.

INT. MOLLY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Molly readies herself for bed. From downstairs, the raised voices of her parents. Molly pauses, listens.

ARI (O.S.)

I don't want it in the house, either! But you know what's coming - or have you forgotten what it was like before? And you see the attention she gets from the Bilco boy.

MORIAH

Maybe it's time to tell her -

ARI

I know you want her to learn about your family. But I am not ready to share *my* past. It would be much too dangerous for her - and us - if she ever found out what I... had to do.

*
*
*
*

MORIAH

She's showing *signs*, Ari. You must have noticed -

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Molly creaks the door open to the kitchen, and enters.
Ari and Moriah fall silent as she does.

MOLLY

Mama? Papa? What's going on?

Molly's eyes flit to what Ari is holding: A RIFLE.

MOLLY (CONT'D)

Papa? Why do you have a gun?

Ari crosses the room, places the rifle in a wooden trunk.

ARI

It's nothing to concern yourself with.

MOLLY

Nothing? It can't be nothing. A gun can only hurt people - why would we need that kind of protection?

ARI

Please, Molly - I just want to protect you -

MOLLY

From what? What do I need protecting from?
That's your answer for everything!

MORIAH

(taken aback)

Molly -

MOLLY

And Ivan - why don't you want me to see him?

ARI

NO!

(a beat, calming down)

You don't understand, Molly -

MOLLY

Then *tell* me! Stop treating me like a child!

Ari looks at her with dismay as she strides out of the room. Moriah tries to take her hand - but Molly brushes past. Ari looks at Moriah, exasperated.

INT. MOLLY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

She slams into her room, and paces back and forth, pent up and confused. She pauses, and sees her book on the table.

She picks it up, sits, and takes a deep breath.

MOLLY

Maybe you can tell me what they won't.

She opens the book, and stares into its pages, expectantly: nothing. They're still blank.

Molly sighs, defeated. Slumps back in her chair.

MOLLY (CONT'D)

I don't understand.

A long beat. Molly stares at the book.

Outside, the wind rustles the leaves in the trees, a sound very like whispering.

INT. DREAMSCAPE - NIGHT

Molly dreams.

Molly stands in a cavernous space in near-total darkness. From the shadows, the FAINT WHISPERING of many voices.

The darkness becomes a swirling cloud, inky stains that swirl around Molly as she whirls around, disorientated.

MOLLY

Hello? Who's there?

The darkness thickens, swirling faster.

MOLLY (CONT'D)

Show yourselves to me! I know you're there! Please!

The swirling slows, and gradually, a dim point of light emerges.

It expands and expands into a whirling kaleidoscope of colours, encompassing Molly completely, until she floats in the heart of what could be an aurora borealis.

The whispering becomes many voices, murmuring her names. For the first time, we can make out the words.

The voices are speaking simultaneously, but we can clearly make out the following words:

VOICE 1	VOICE 2	
Is she ready?	She's ready.	*
VOICE 3	VOICE 4	
It's time...	She needs to know what she is, and what is coming...	*
	VOICE 5	
	Where is the gift? We need to help her find it...	

From within the colours, FIGURES emerge: MOLLY'S NAMESAKES, shimmering out of the past. But they're no longer vague shapes: they're women, some old, some young, different shapes and sizes, each one a different colour.

Molly watches enthralled as figures emerge, faster and faster, and dissipate like smoke.

Abruptly the cavern vanishes --

-- and Molly stands in her parents' field. As we saw it before, freshly tilled. But now, storm clouds race across the sky Molly's hair is whipped by a strong wind. *

SHOUTING erupts in the distance, like echoes from the past. Molly stares across the field, and sees:

A woman - GREAT GRANDMOTHER ETHEL - standing in the middle of it, stock still. Staring at Molly. When she finally speaks, her voice is unnaturally close, almost as though she's standing right beside Molly -

ETHEL

Molly.

Ethel reaches out her hand - and suddenly is right beside her. Molly stares at her with dawning recognition.

MOLLY

I... know you... Great grandmother?

Ethel takes Molly's hand, and leads her into the field, guiding her forward.

DREAM SEQUENCE ENDS.

INT. MOLLY'S BEDROOM - DAY

Molly wakes with a jolt - her hand still outstretched. Outside, A ROOSTER CROWS: it's pre-dawn. Molly tears herself out of bed, and hastily pulls on her clothes.

EXT. ARI AND MORIAH'S FIELD - DAY

Molly walks through the pre-dawn silence of her parents' mist-covered field.

As she does, we hear again the voices of the women from her dream, a clamour that grows louder as Molly strides through the field, until she reaches the spot where Ethel had stood - and the voices stop.

Molly gazes around the field, as the sun rises and the mist dissipates -

And, almost at her feet, something catches the sun, and glints up her from the soil.

Molly digs the object out. Brushes it off, revealing -

A pair of silver-framed spectacles.

Molly stares at them with surprise.

The lenses still intact. She wipes them off. A long moment. She puts them on.

And the world around her changes.

MOLLY POV:

The voices of her parents RECEDE. The WIND in the trees becomes WHISPERING VOICES; water in a brook tinkles like CHIMES; the buzz of honey bees are an almost musical HUM.

Molly looks around:

Ari and Moriah are approaching her, driving two patient oxen before them, tilling the field. Molly stares as COLOURS EXPLODE OUT OF THEM - swirling, evanescent greens for Ari, verdant and lush like his garden; scintillating hues of blue, interspersed with clouds, for Moriah.

Molly looks down, gasps:

Rainbow colours swirl around her hands and feet - emanating from her. The colours shimmer.

Startled, Molly tears the glasses off -

The world snaps back to normality. Sounds lose their musicality. The colours vanish.

MORIAH (O.S.)

Molly? Didn't you hear us calling? What are you doing up so early?

Molly looks up. Moriah and Ari are close now, standing, watching her with curiosity.

MOLLY

I'm... not really sure.

ARI

What do you have there?

Molly holds out the glasses and Ari takes them, turning them over in his hands. His expression hardens.

ARI (CONT'D)

Moriah.

Moriah takes the glasses, examines them. A long moment.

MORIAH

Ethel's glasses. After all this time...

MOLLY

Ethel. Your grandmother? They were hers?

MORIAH

(quietly)

I never thought I'd see them again.

Exchanges a look with Ari. She puts the glasses on, glances around.

MOLLY

(intently)

What do you see?

Off Molly's tone, Moriah looks at her, curious.

MORIAH

Why, just you, of course.

She removes the glasses.

MORIAH (CONT'D)

They were so much a part of her -

Ari shakes his head: don't.

MORIAH (CONT'D)
 (slightly defiantly)
 I think this could be a sign, Ari.

MOLLY
 A sign? Of what?

But Ari moves off, beckoning Moriah to follow.

Moriah hands Molly the glasses, looks at her closely.

MORIAH
 Keep them safe. It's a miracle that you
 found them at all.

She follows after Ari, glancing back at Molly.

Cautiously, Molly slides the glasses back on.

HER POV:

Sounds recede again. She looks down at her hands: the swirling rainbow colours are back. Looking up, she sees Ari, and stares:

Earthen greens, the colours of the forest, surge out of him, swirling gently as he moves. He turns and sees her: his colours brighten, sparkling -

But as he regards the glasses, a brief, flicker of darkness stains his emerald hue.

Molly removes the glasses, stares at them, confused.

INT. AUNT PEARL'S INNER SANCTUM - DAY

Darkness. A WHISPERING, like the RUSTLE of wind through leaves. The darkness is dispelled by a silver glow that illuminates a dirt chamber, clearly underground.

A woman sits, silhouetted in the ethereal light. Her cloak shimmers and almost changes colour. We can't make out features, but we recognise the voice when she speaks.

AUNT PEARL
 (gravelly, old)
 Tell me.

The light surges, brighter. The whispering insistent, calling to Pearl who rises, stiffly. We see what she was sitting in: an old beautifully carved wooden wheelchair.

Pearl steps forward, into the light, so we can see her lined face more clearly.

Pulling back, we see that she is standing before a huge, ancient OAK TREE. It radiates silver light, its huge boughs swaying slowly, almost circling Pearl.

Pearl holds her hand out towards the light of the tree's branches: something floats through the air, and lands in her palm.

AN OAK LEAF.

AUNT PEARL(O.S.) (CONT'D)

I feel it, too.

(a beat)

Soon.

The leaf shines intensely - and turns to silver ash. Pearl blows the ash away, revealing what lies in its place:

AN ACORN. It shines gently. Perfect.

EXT. KAMENKA - DAY

MONTAGE BEGINS:

Molly makes deliveries around the familiar streets of Kamenka. As she goes, she slides the glasses on and off, intrigued by what she sees. We see what she sees:

- Molly puts her glasses on as a MOTHER WITH SEVERAL CHILDREN walks by: the children's colours erupt like a window of sweets and cotton candy, multi-coloured and intermingling.

Molly smiles to herself, enjoying the colours that bounce and leap like the energy of the children.

As the children pass, one drops a doll on the ground. Molly bends to pick it up, and gazes at it thoughtfully as she does: the doll has NO COLOURS.

Molly hands it to a big-eyed little girl, who grins up at her and runs off to join her mother and siblings, circled by swirling orange and pinks that intertwine briefly with Molly's own, rainbow hues;

- Molly watches as an OLD GOATHERD, leading a goat with a rope, wanders down the street. The man's colours are mild purples, hovering around him like a comforting haze.

The man stops to light his pipe, and the goat nuzzles his leg experimentally, then nips him on the shin. The Goatherd yelps, and jumps - as he does, Molly stares: his colours darken and swirl, almost... *angry*.

But a beat: the man calms, gives out to the goat, then pats it on the head: his colours calm, and return to their former, pastel mauve.

Molly pulls the glasses off, and looks at them, considering what she's just seen.

MOLLY

(murmuring to herself)

The colours you show me... Are they more than that? It's like they're... *feelings*.

Molly is shaken out of her reverie by the sound of ARGUING from down the street. She looks up, sees RED SOLDIERS in angry conversation with an irritated shop-keeper.

Molly quickly pockets her glasses, and continues on her way, in the opposite direction to the soldiers.

MONTAGE ENDS.

INT./EXT. ARI AND MORIAH'S BARN - DAY

Molly is wheeling a wheelbarrow past her parents' barn, lost in thought. She stops, and takes a breather. Reaches into her pocket, and pulls out the spectacles. She turns them over in her hands, contemplating them. From within the barn:

ARI (O.S.)

Molly!

Molly pockets the glasses, and enters the barn.

Ari is standing in the barn, looking at their cows. Molly crosses to him. As he talks to Molly, Ari places a leather tether around the neck of one.

ARI (CONT'D)

I've just sold the milk cow to Igor Popovich. His farm isn't far from here - I think you know it?

MOLLY

Yes, of course - I have been there with mama when she brings medicine to his son. Do you need me to bring the cow to him?

Ari looks at her gratefully.

ARI

Thank you. And make sure you get the five
kopecs he owes me! Don't let the old
skinflint tell you he doesn't have it!

Molly laughs, and he hands her the cow's leash.

ARI (CONT'D)

And Molly... Be careful...

MOLLY

Of the soldiers. I know, Papa. I'll be
careful.

She leads the cow out of the barn. Ari watches her leave.

EXT. ROAD TO POPPVICH FARM - DAY

Molly, wearing a head scarf, crests a hill, leading the
cow down a long, winding dirt road. She's pulling hard
on the leash, the cow not as compliant as might be
desired.

MOLLY

Come on!

Abruptly, the sound of thundering horse's hooves - Molly
barely has time to get herself out of the way before a
sleek BLACK STALLION charges past her, kicking up dust
and clumps of earth. Molly is temporarily blinded by
dust, but hears -

IVAN (O.C.)

GIVE WAY! GIVE WAY!

As the dust clears, Molly looks up at the rider as he
reigns in his horse. For a moment, against the sun, he is
a silhouette. She sees a red uniform and instantly
shrinks back, afraid and uncertain -

But finally gets a clear view of the rider, and sags with
relief: it's IVAN. He squints at her, before realising
who it is. He dismounts, and approaches Molly, smiling
broadly.

IVAN (CONT'D)

My apologies, fair lady!

He removes his military cap and bows with mock formality.
Molly laughs.

MOLLY

Ivan!

IVAN

I'm sorry - I didn't mean to scare you.

MOLLY

You did, a bit. What are you doing here?

IVAN

I'm on my way to meet my regiment for training exercises.

He pats the side of the snorting, black stallion.

IVAN (CONT'D)

And Mir here needs a good excuse to stretch her legs whenever she can!

He looks at Molly closely, as though drinking her in.

IVAN (CONT'D)

I certainly didn't expect to meet... you, on the way. What a happy surprise.

A beat. Molly flushes slightly. Ivan glances at the tethered cow.

IVAN (CONT'D)

Is she giving you trouble? Perhaps I can help.

MOLLY

I'm to bring her to the Popovich farm - do you know it?

IVAN

I do. Here -

He takes the tether, and ties it to Mir's saddle strings. He extends his hand to Molly, and nods up at the stallion.

IVAN (CONT'D)

Why don't I give you a ride? It'll be faster! I know the Popovich farm, and would be pleased to... escort you there.

Molly hesitates, looks at the cow, then nods.

Ivan mounts the horse, and pulls Molly up behind him. For a moment, she hesitates about how to hold on - and Ivan looks over his shoulder, and smiles. For a moment, his face is very close to hers.

IVAN (CONT'D)

(murmuring)

What is it about you?

Molly is taken aback, but before she can respond, Mir moves off, and she wraps her arms tightly about Ivan's waist. He smiles to himself, and leans against her. Mir trots forward, the reluctant cow forced to follow.

EXT. RIVERSIDE - DAY

Molly holds fast to Ivan as, still on horseback, they pass a river. Sun reflects off the river, and all that can be heard is the water gently lapping on the sandy shore.

IVAN

I've never really come this way, before.
But now that I've enlisted, I have to
travel this road almost every day.

MOLLY

It's a beautiful spot. I sometimes come
and read here, when it's warm.

Ivan digests this. He's clearly enjoying the feel of Molly wrapped around him, and they lapse into companionable silence.

MOLLY (CONT'D)

If you please - this is the farm, just up
here. If you'll help me down, I can go on
from here.

Ivan brings Mir to a full stop and dismounts, helping Molly down. He swings her down easily, and she barely notices that her headscarf has slid off: she's suddenly distracted by how close she's standing to Ivan, and how handsome he is.

He untethers the cow, and hands her the leash. As she takes it from him, their hands meet. He holds hers, gently, in his for a long moment.

MOLLY (CONT'D)

I... Thank you, so much. For the ride.

She smiles at him, slightly awkwardly, and turns to leave.

IVAN

A moment - you like to read?

MOLLY

Yes, very much. Since I was little.

IVAN

A peasant who reads! You continue to surprise me, Molly.

(a beat)

I have had tutors and teachers tell me what to read, all my life... mathematics, latin. Always so dull. Now, I choose what I want to read...

(a beat, he reaches into his saddle bag, and pulls out a small, red-covered book)

Here. You might enjoy this.

Molly smiles, and takes the book, studying the cover.

MOLLY

Thank you - I haven't read this one.

(looks at him uncertainly)

But - I can't take this.

Ivan smiles.

IVAN

You can return it to me. Next time I see you. Saturday is market day, isn't it? I'm sure you'll have to... come this way? And besides - I'd love to have someone to talk to about the books I like.

He grins. Molly smiles back at him, shyly.

She turns, and leads the cow away, glancing over her shoulder as she goes.

Ivan, delighted with his good fortune, turns to mount his horse - notices Molly's head scarf on the ground. He picks it up, turns to call after her - but she's too far down the road to the farm. He pockets the scarf, and effortlessly swings himself back up onto the horse, and gallops off down the road. *

INT. MOLLY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Molly lies in bed by candlelight. She picks up Ivan's book, and begins to read.

On her bedside table, Malkah lies beside her spectacles. They shine briefly in reflected candlelight.

INT. BILCO MANSION - NIGHT

The Bilco house is a vast, aristocratic mansion. Bedecked with the finery of generations of nobility: oil portraits of men in uniform hang from the walls; silver candelabras, statues, a grand piano.

On one huge wall is a coat of arms, and several ceremonial swords - relics of the Imperial Army.

INT. IVAN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ivan's bedroom is equally fine, but also full of books. On a stand is his impeccably clean red uniform.

Ivan sits by a huge window, staring out across the moonlit fields. In his hands is Molly's scarf.

He caresses it gently, and smiles to himself.

Somewhere in the house, distantly, a GONG RINGS OUT: dinnertime.

Ivan reluctantly sets down Molly's headscarf, and rises.

INT. DINING ROOM - THE BILCO HOUSE - NIGHT

A lavish, ornate dining room. A long table is set with impeccable finery, and a dinner - more like a banquet - is underway.

Mr and Mrs Bilco sit, along with Ivan, and General Borgov, regaling them with stories from the head of the table. Mrs Bilco is decked out in silk and taffeta, as if she's at the opera. *

GENERAL BORGOV

Peasants are peasants. This dissent must not stand - it is our imperial duty to stamp out insurgent activity wherever it erupts!

He tears the flesh off a chicken leg, and tucks in, chewing noisily.

Mrs Bilco nods in vigorous agreement.

MR BILCO

I couldn't agree more. Zhitomir has always been a hotbed for dissidents.

He looks proudly at Ivan.

MR BILCO (CONT'D)

Which is why we're proud to support the
Tsar at this time... Isn't that right,
Ivan?

A long beat. Ivan is somewhere else, toying with a wine
glass: Molly on his mind. All eyes on Ivan: he looks up,
shakes himself out of his reverie.

IVAN

Yes, absolutely.

GENERAL BORGOV

The uniform suits you, my boy. God knows
the army needs more men like you - proud
patriots, not afraid to stand up for king
and country!

(to the Bilcos)

A better career for Ivan than a life of
study and *books!*

He roars laughing, as if this is a great joke. Ivan looks
at him with a flicker of what might be irritation,
quickly repressed.

Mrs Bilco gives Ivan a stern look.

IVAN

I have... completed my studies at the
university, yes.

GENERAL BORGOV

You'll be a fine addition to our forces.
You should be proud. Your father tells me
you've been assigned a regiment?

*

IVAN

Yes, based in Zhitomir.

The General takes a long slug of his wine, almost
draining the glass, which he holds up to a servant
hovering nearby. It is instantly refilled.

GENERAL BORGOV

Well keep your ear to the ground, my
boy...

(lowering his voice
conspiratorially)

Few know this - but one of the reasons
that we're stationed here is to...
investigate some rumours. You'll have
heard the stories, I'm sure, of "the Lion
of Zhitomir", in the last war.

Mr Bilco shifts uneasily in his seat, stretching one leg stiffly. As if the General's words are bothering his old wound.

IVAN

Yes - since I was a child, I've heard stories about him. He was a sniper?

GENERAL BORGOV

A sniper, and a turn-coat! A lethal shot. Took out some of our most noted officers - put you permanently out of action, isn't that right, Alexei?

Mr Bilco bristles slightly, and grits his jaw.

MR BILCO

That's right.

(a long beat: unpleasant memories stirring)

But my men took him down. A dirty fight, that one.

GENERAL BORGOV

Well. Word on the street has it, they didn't get him when they think they did. In fact, there's a possibility that he never even left Zhitomir.

Mr Bilco stiffens in his chair.

MR BILCO

Impossible.

GENERAL BORGOV

Maybe so, maybe so. But if that's the case, it's essential that we track him down, and make an example of him. You know what these ignorant, uneducated peasants are like: give them a hero, and they'll be rising up from the dirt like they did the last time -

He tears another chicken leg apart, and gnaws at it.

IVAN

(interest piqued)

Do you think you'll find him?

GENERAL BORGOV

Shouldn't be hard to miss, frankly. Has a distinctive scar, about the size of a man's hand, on his neck. Isn't that right, Alexi?

MR BILCO

I... don't know. I never got a good look at him.

Mrs Bilco shifts in her chair, slightly bored at the conversation.

MRS BILCO

General, can I interest you in more? And don't forget the caviar -

She flutters her hand imperiously at a servant and there is a brief flurry of activity as more silver dishes, laden with luxury foods, are set down on the table. The General's eyes light up.

GENERAL BORGOV

Why Elizabeta, you know the way to my heart! You remembered my fondness for caviar!

Mrs Bilco smiles indulgently.

As the conversation changes direction, Ivan glances down at his wine, the still surface reflecting the candle-light. For a split second, Molly's face appears on its surface, looking up at him - and he's lost, once more, in her smile.

INT. MOLLY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Moriah knocks on the door, and enters. Sees the book in Molly's hands, and sits on the edge of her bed.

MORIAH

What book is that? I don't recognise it. *

MOLLY *

A... friend gave it to me. *

Molly sets it aside quickly. Moriah sees the spectacles, picks them up, and looks at them with a combination of curiosity, and sadness. *

MOLLY (CONT'D)

Are they really your grandmother's?

Moriah nods. A long beat.

MORIAH

(quietly)

Ethel was very dear to me. I think she would be glad you found her glasses.

MOLLY

I wish I had been able to meet her.
There's so much I could have asked her.

MORIAH

(indicating the glasses)
Maybe these can be your connection to
her. She is, after all, one of your
namesakes.

Molly gestures to her book, "Malkah" lying on her bedside
table.

MOLLY

There's so little about them here. When
I was little you told me that they were
all special... How?

A long beat. Moriah hesitant.

MOLLY (CONT'D)

Mama?

MORIAH

Ethel... could see right into the heart
of things, and people.

Molly contemplates the glasses.

MOLLY

When I wear her glasses I... see things.

MORIAH

Things? What things?

MOLLY

Colours. So many. Swirling around people
as if they come from *inside them*. But...
just people: it doesn't happen with...
objects. And it's more than colours: I
get a sense of the person... as if the
colours show me *their feelings*.

Moriah glances up at the open door.

MORIAH

Does it frighten you?

MOLLY

I don't know.

MORIAH

Ethel wore these glasses almost every day
of her life.

(MORE)

MORIAH (CONT'D)

I think they are her gift to you - and I know that she wouldn't want you to be afraid.

MOLLY

If the glasses were so important to her, how did she lose them? Why didn't she take better care of them?

MORIAH

It wasn't that she didn't take care of them.

The sound of a DOOR OPENING, downstairs.

ARI (O.S.)

Moriah! I'm finished in the barn.

MORIAH

(to Ari)

I'll be right down.

Moriah looks at Molly with disquiet, forces a smile.

MORIAH (CONT'D)

All the women in our family are talented, Molly. And your talents will be different to mine - they will reveal themselves to you, in time: I feel you're ready. But you need to find your own way.

Moriah rises, moves to leave.

MOLLY

"Find my own way"? But how? Where do I start?

MORIAH

There are limits to what I am... permitted to tell you, Molly.

(pleadingly)

You have to trust me -

MOLLY

(pushing)

You mentioned Aunt Pearl - could she help me? Where can I find her?

MORIAH

It has been years since I last saw her.

(a long beat)

She isn't far away but... she can only be found by those who really need to find her.

Molly stares at her, confused.

MORIAH (CONT'D)

But I have no doubt that your spectacles,
and your book, will help you find her -
when the time is right.

She leans over, and kisses Molly on the top of the head.

MORIAH (CONT'D)

Sleep, my love.

Molly, full of questions, stares after her as she leaves.

She sits up in bed, and picks up her book, "Malkah".

She opens it: still blank.

MOLLY

(frustrated, flicking through
empty pages)

I need to use you. I know I do. But how?

(a beat)

Please... help me.

INT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

A small, cozy cottage. The Three Ladies from the market
are seated around a blazing fire in a stone hearth. *

The only light is that of the fire, and a small oil lamp
on a low wooden table. A large leather-bound book - very
like Moriah's - lies open on it. *

A large black iron cauldron hangs on a hook over the
fire. In it, a swirling colourful liquid. *

Mrs Teresky rises, and stirs the pot. *

MRS TERESKY

It has begun. You feel it, too? *

Mrs Lieben also rises, and sprinkles dried herbs into the
cauldron: as she does, there's a dense puff of rainbow-
coloured smoke. It rises from the cauldron, and shimmers. *

And within its haze, an image briefly takes form: Molly,
in her bedroom, flicking through her book. The image
dissipates, as does the colourful smoke. *

MRS EOS

She's starting to use the book. Good.

MRS LIEBEN

She needs more than the book. She needs
Pearl.

The women nod and murmur in agreement.

MRS EOS

She may need our help.

EXT. ARI AND MORIAH'S HOUSE - DAY

Ari and Moriah climb up onto the wagon packed with wares.

Molly leaves the house, and looks up at them.

MOLLY

I'm going to walk, today - I have to
return my book. And it's a lovely day for
walking; I'll see you in the market.

*
*
*

Ari and Moriah exchange a perplexed look.

ARI

Alright - but remember what I said. Be
careful.

MOLLY

I will, papa.

EXT. RIVERSIDE - DAY

Molly walks along the riverbank, wearing her spectacles.

HER POV:

Her swirling colours entwine around her as she walks.
Molly seems to enjoy them.

A TWIG SNAPS behind her. Startled, she turns - softens:
Ivan is standing by Mir, grinning at her. He approaches,
and as he does, Molly takes in his colours: deep, dark
blues, like a bottomless lake - almost black. And from
within, a brilliant white light.

It's beautiful, but in a cold way.

IVAN

I was hoping I'd find you here.

Molly smiles at him.

MOLLY
(teasingly)
Have you been following me?

Ivan grins.

IVAN
Maybe! This meeting might very well be
the highlight of my week, if you must
know!

He sits on the riverbank. Starts picking up small
skipping stones, and starts skipping them off the surface
of the water. He looks up to Molly, pats a patch of
riverbank beside him. Molly sits. She pulls out his book
and hands it to him.

MOLLY
I... I wanted to return this.
I loved it. Thank you.

He takes the book, and Molly smiles, suddenly shy. Ivan
takes her in, and looks quizzically at her glasses.

IVAN
I didn't know you wore glasses.

MOLLY
I... don't. Not really!

She pulls off the spectacles, and pockets them. Ivan
skips another stone off the surface of the river, and
hands her one, showing her how to do it. She laughs.

They run out of stones, and sit in sunlit silence for a
beat.

MOLLY (CONT'D)
This is a beautiful spot.

IVAN
Not as beautiful as you.

Molly looks at him, flattered. Suddenly self-conscious -

MOLLY
I... should be going.

She moves to rise. But Ivan catches her hand in his, and
pulls her in to him -

They kiss. Molly, nervous at first, leans into it. Ivan
becomes more passionate and pulls her into him - abruptly
she withdraws, clouded.

*
*
*

IVAN

What is it?

Molly, shaking the feelings off, forces another smile. *

MOLLY

I... I'm not sure. But I have to go: I
have to help my parents - I'll be late. *

She rises, and Ivan follows her. *

IVAN

I can give you a ride - *

She glances at his uniform. *

MOLLY

I... can't. Papa... he wouldn't like it.

Ivan takes this in, hurt. *

IVAN

(curt)

I understand.

He swings himself up onto Mir.

IVAN (CONT'D)

Goodbye, my lady.

He rides off. Molly looks at him galloping away, and sighs.

EXT. ZHITOMIR MARKETPLACE - DAY

Ari, Moriah and Molly arrive on their wagon at a bustling marketplace in the town square. ANIMALS and SELLERS throng the market; stalls sag under the weight of wares while CHILDREN tear back and forth.

Lost in the energy of the market, Molly puts her spectacles on and is enthralled by what she sees -

The market explodes into a dazzling array of colours. Almost every person has a different swirling hue, a sensory tidal wave that threatens to overwhelm her -

Molly gasps: it's more people in one place than she's seen thus far, and the effect is staggering.

Ari looks at her and the glasses, warily. He halts the wagon and they climb down, begin to set up their stall.

Across the square, a CRY goes up. A big scraggy dog, JASPER, has knocked over a stall. An irate SELLER YELLS and the dog scurries off.

Molly smiles to herself, enjoying the familiar chaos of the scene as she sets jars and bottles out on the stall.

Suddenly Jasper, the rangy dog, appears at Molly's side and nuzzles her hand. Molly looks down at him, surprised.

MOLLY

Why, hello there!

He nuzzles her again, and scampers off, drawing her gaze to -

HER POV:

A trail of gold, like stardust, leading through the crowd. Even amidst the other colours of the market, it stands out dramatically. *

MOLLY (CONT'D) *

Gold? Why, I've never seen *gold*, before... *

Jasper stops on the path of gold and looks back over his shoulder at Molly, wagging his tail. Molly can't resist: she follows him on the glittering trail, pushing through busy shoppers and sellers as she does. *

Her own rainbow hues surge out from her, reaching for the gold, intertwining with it. The playfulness of the colours makes Molly laugh out loud with delight - *

And she stops, and stares: the golden hues end at a horse-drawn wagon making its way through the crowd. *

The shining light emanates from a young man, seated on the wagon: THE NOW 17 YEAR OLD SAM GOLD (17). Molly strains to see his face, but can only see him from behind. *

But, almost sensing her eyes on him, Sam turns, and looks over his shoulder - *

- just as Molly is sucked back into the crowd, and hidden from his view. *

Perplexed, Sam shrugs, and turns his attention back to his horse. *

Molly stares at the retreating wagon and the vanishing trail of gold, disappointed. *

But abruptly, a CRY goes up from somewhere in the crowd. Molly looks around - sees Ari's distinctive green hues in the crowd, and then Ari, locked in hushed conversation with other SELLERS. Their colours whip back and forth, nervously, recoiling from something they're all staring at. *

Ari doesn't see Molly as she stares at him, disconcerted: he's afraid. Of what? *

Molly pushes through some sellers to get a better view: in a small clearing in the crowd, a group of RED SOLDIERS are having an argument with an angry FARMER. *

An OLDER OFFICER is pushing the farmer roughly, yelling and pointing at a broken crate lying on the ground, vegetables strewn everywhere. The farmer gestures at him angrily, while the soldiers jeer and taunt him. *

The assembled market sellers watch with a combination of fear and rising outrage. *

Abruptly, Molly sees a plume of dense black surge out of one soldier in particular, as he raises his rifle, and hits the farmer, hard, in the stomach with the butt. *

The farmer crumples to the ground, groaning. The peasants start shouting and booing, and throwing vegetables - *

Molly shrinks back from the darkness enveloping the soldier as he turns -

It's IVAN.

Molly gasps, totally horrified. She tears her glasses off: the darkness disappears.

Ivan doesn't see her, and turns back to the other soldiers as they laugh at the Farmer who rises, and staggers off into the crowd.

With trembling hands, Molly fumbles her glasses back on, and forces herself to look once more at Ivan:

Again shrouded in blackness, like a dreadful ink stain, consuming him.

Billy steps up to him and gives him a mock punch on the shoulder, laughing. Ivan turns, and sees Molly. *

For a split second, his blackness stutters. A flash of something, a struggling, white light, from deep within the shadows as he and Molly lock eyes - *

He takes a step towards her - but Molly turns, and runs, *
desperately, through the crowd.

She makes it back to Ari and Moriah's stall, and stops, *
gasping, beside Moriah, who looks at her with concern. *

MORIAH

Molly - are you alright? You're pale -

MOLLY

I... I feel unwell. I'm going home.

MORIAH

Molly -

But Molly pulls away from her, and rushes off into the crowd. As she does, she tears her glasses off, crying confused, frustrated tears.

She clears the market, and breaks into a run.

At the edge of the market: on the steps of a town hall sits the Three Women. They're watching the market square - and Molly's retreating form - with great interest.

Jasper the dogs trots up the steps, sits at their feet, and licks Mrs Eos' hand. Cackling softly, she ruffles his head.

MRS EOS

Good boy, Jasper. Sometimes destiny needs a little help, eh?

The Women exchange knowing looks, rise, and leave, almost as one - followed by Jasper.

EXT. ARI AND MORIAH'S HOUSE - DAY

Breathless, Molly runs up to the front door of the house, throws it open and stumbles inside.

INT. MOLLY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Molly enters her room, closes the door sharply, dashing tears from her face.

She pulls her spectacles from her pocket and throws them onto her table, looks at them warily.

She pulls "Malkah" down from a shelf, sits, opens it.

MOLLY
(desperately)
Why do I see what I see?

She flicks through the blank pages, getting more and more frustrated.

MOLLY (CONT'D)
One second it's the purest gold, the next...

She shudders at the memory of Ivan's blackness.

MOLLY (CONT'D)
What does it *mean*?

She sits back, defeated. She stares at the book.

MOLLY (CONT'D)
(pleadingly)
Please. Please... help me to understand.

As her breathing slows, the room settles into an almost unnatural quiet. And then, from within the silence, a whispering rises - emanating from the book.

The voices become one -

*

ETHEL (V.O.)
Use your glasses, Molly. Don't be afraid.

And then another -

*

AUNT PEARL (V.O.)
Read your book.

Molly whirls around, almost expecting the owners of the voices to be right behind her: nothing. But when they speak, their voices are crystal clear.

*

*

ETHEL
You're ready.

A long beat. Molly stares down at the spectacles, and the book, realisation dawning.

Slowly, she picks the spectacles up, and slides them on.

She takes a deep breath, and gazes at the book.

*

A long beat. Molly gasps:

The book begins to sparkle with ethereal light. Her own colours surge out of her, intensify and engulf her and the book -

Molly hovers her hand over the book. Stares intently - *

Its pages start turning of their own accord, flicking back and forth until they settle.

And words start writing themselves on the page, shining iridescent silver until becoming black text that looks like it's always been there: *

"PEARL"

Molly cranes over the page, as -

A silver oak tree appears in its pages, and rises out of the book, the image translucent, growing, suspended over the pages, until its branches surround Molly. Transfixed, she passes a hand through its ethereal form, marvelling. *

The tree roots grow long, and trail down onto the pages of the book, and become... a map, sprawling out across an entire page. *

A map of a small town, and a single word: GORKY. *

Text appears under the map: *

Come to me, Molly. Your path will become clear.

Molly sits back, stunned.

MOLLY
(whispering)
Pearl...

Stares at the words on the page, determination forming.

MOLLY (CONT'D)
Pearl. *

END EPISODE ONE *