

"FANIA KAPLAN"

by

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translated by

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(1.12.07)

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FADE IN FROM BLACK:

INT. BLACK VOID - AUGUST 30, 1918, PRESENT

A rough, dark MALE VOICE can be heard:

MALE VOICE:

I suppose even you are a bit
confused by this, eh?

A short hacking COUGH and a muffled SNICKER can be heard.

MALE VOICE: (CONT'D)

How you wound up here?

A light goes on, revealing:

INT. DARK GRITTY MACHINE SHOP -PRESENT

A black hooded figure sits tied to a chair. The hood is briskly pulled off by a hand.

FANIA KAPLAN, a woman in her late twenties with dark hair and hooded eyes stares straight ahead without blinking as the hood comes off of her face. She appears steadfast and barely hints at a seed of fright. She seems tired despite her steadiness and sweats from her matted brow.

Sitting and standing amongst the tools and metal paraphernalia before her is a small team of MEN IN SUITS. Their faces are concealed by shadow, always. Decapitated, they smoke and appear uninterested in Fania save one: a CHEKA OFFICER, the speaker of before. He is overbearing and his armpits sweat through his shirt, not from pressure.

A man in the background, SUIT #1 strikes matches and lights them rhythmically. The sound of this continues throughout the interrogation.

CHEKA OFFICER:

(congenial)

Especially when we both know of
more deserving parties...

Fania doesn't respond, she seems to be reminiscing. After a breath:

FANIA:

(rehearsed)

My name is Fania Kaplan. Today-

The group of men scoff and shift about, frustrated.

A sharp but relaxed laugh from the Cheka Officer interrupts Fania.

CHEKA OFFICER:

(chiding but frustrated)

Again, we do *not* need to know *your* name for you are already here with us.

Another snicker comes from one of the Suited Men.

CHEKA OFFICER: (CONT'D)

Now... who's names we'd really like to hear?

He smiles politely. Fania's eyes still do not move.

Suit #1 lights a new cigarette from his match case.

Fania turns her head towards him.

INT. MOSCOW APARTMENT -DAYS BEFORE

The only light leaks in from the mesh of a curtained window.

A smoking cigarette rests in a bouncing hand. It moves to a pair of waiting lips. MIKHAIL is smoking, he appears nervous. He is young, maybe 20, and is dressed well but very simply. He drums with his fingers along the crease of his pants.

Seated next to him in the squalid apartment is YURI. Yuri is visibly older, but not by much. He appears mildly concerned but also as if nothing is happening out of the routine. A pocket watch hangs by his side. Yuri pulls it out and eyes it. He glances briefly at Mikhail.

Mikhail is watching Yuri apprehensively while also trying to look at Yuri's watch.

Yuri peers down at his watch again and sighs.

MIKHAIL:

She's late?

Before Mikhail can even finish Yuri speaks over him.

YURI:
Of course she's late...

Mikhail shifts in his seat uncomfortably, he has a small facial tic.

Mikhail frowns at Yuri's comment. Yuri closes his watch and addresses Mikhail:

YURI: (CONT'D)
(half joking)
We spend our lives waiting on
women, eh?

After an uncomfortable pause, Mikhail rises and walks to the window, ignoring the question.

Mikhail peeks out through the curtain. He smiles.

MIKHAIL:
(with a hint of
optimistic eagerness)
She's coming!

He turns slightly giddy to Yuri who has opened his watch again. He looks at it with a frown.

EXT. STREET ALLEY -MOMENTS LATER

It is cold and gray at the very beginning of day. Mikhail and Yuri are talking with Fania in hushed tones. Fania looks not much less disheveled than our first introduction to her. They are bundled against the cold and their breaths can be seen in the soft morning light.

Fania's look is far off, as ever. It doesn't ever feel like she's looking directly at anyone.

FANIA:
(very serious, but also
excited)
It is going to have to be today.

The other two do not seem prepared for this. Yuri is the one to be vocal about it.

YURI:
Where have you been?

FANIA:
(ignoring him, she is
fervent)
He's going to be speaking at the
Michelson factory.

YURI:
This is very short notice,
Fania...

FANIA:
(confident)
He will have minimum escort. He
wants to seem of the people.

Yuri seems eager as well but he is thinking to himself.

YURI:
No... No... We need to wait. Have
you spoken with Savinkov?

FANIA:
(as if reciting protocol,
very certain and
assertive)
We do not need to speak to
leadership and we do not need to
wait. Today we must act, for our
party, and the nation depend upon
us.

The other two are regarding her with silence. What now?

FANIA: (CONT'D)
Lenin is going to be at Michelson
today. And we will meet him
there.

Mikhail seems convinced.

MIKHAIL:
(nodding fervently)
This day will be a great one. We
shall have the assembly again!

They await Yuri's approval. Mikhail's smile fades as he sees Yuri's demeanor.

YURI:
Where have you been?

Fania stares back at him uneasily.

INT. DARK GRITTY MACHINE SHOP -PRESENT

The Cheka Officer's interrogation is becoming pushier.

CHEKA OFFICER:
Tell us where you've been and who
you've spoken with.

Fania is still unblinking.

FANIA:
(without missing a beat,
a rehearsed speech)
My name is Fania Kaplan. Today, I
shot at Lenin. I did it on my
own. I will not say from whom I
obtained my revolver. I will give
no details.

Fania stares back resolutely, but pained.

INT. ABANDONED FLAT -DAYS BEFORE

Fania is aiming down the barrel of her snub nosed revolver. In the corner, Yuri is sitting on the floor cleaning his rifle. Mikhail is sitting with him and focusing binoculars.

Yuri notices what Fania is doing. He speaks to her, scolding.

YURI:
What are you doing?

Fania is smiling down the barrel of her pistol as she pulls back the hammer.

FANIA:
(jokingly)
Practicing, in case you miss Yuri.

Mikhail laughs gently. Yuri is not amused. He stands up from his work.

YURI:
(goadingly)
So you could shoot Lenin if he
were standing right here?

Fania smiles. She does not answer, but pulls the trigger and lets the hammer click down on an empty chamber. Mikhail is still amused.

Yuri pulls up Mikhail from the floor and pulls him to the other side of the room. They both face the blank wall. Yuri is proving a point.

YURI: (CONT'D)
(still sardonic)
Now. I am Lenin. He is your good
friend Mikhail.

Yuri switches positions with Mikhail, and then back again, and then back again. It is comical but there is a strong sense of antagonism. Fania's smile is fading.

YURI: (CONT'D)
(still facing the wall)
Now, shoot Lenin.

He turns around and begins to walk towards her, herding Mikhail with him.

Fania looks extremely disconcerted. She points the revolver at them and shifts uncomfortably as they come closer and closer.

FANIA:
(not at all appreciating
this test)
I- I cannot.

The two are upon her and the pistol is in Mikhail's face. Yuri pushes Fania's arm down. There is silence.

FANIA: (CONT'D)
(angry at this revealing
of her weakness)

Well then let us hope that you do not miss, Yuri.

She puts her pistol in her pants.

FANIA: (CONT'D)
You will shoot him as he leaves,
before he passes me in the crowd.

Beginning to sermonize slightly:

FANIA: (CONT'D)
Yuri, you must remember that we are making him pay for his suppression of our voices. You must remember that he signed his death warrant when he dissolved the people's assembly.

Yuri is silenced, he is listening to his leader.

She turns, leaving the two men alone in the room.

FANIA: (CONT'D)
(almost to herself)
And you must not miss.

Now that she has gone, a flash of anger returns to his eyes, Yuri turns to talk to Mikhail very seriously.

YURI:
Who does this *woman* think she owns? Do you know how I mean?

MIKHAIL:
(very taken aback)
What?

YURI:
I knew women like this in the war. Never owning up to their own actions, but always owning you.

Mikhail seems very confused, he's silent. Yuri smiles knowingly, sadly.

Mikhail is shocked.

MIKHAIL:

What are you saying?

YURI:

She's doing this without Central Committee approval. She is putting us in danger. She attempted to kill a Tsarist before the revolution, you know?

News to him.

MIKHAIL:

Yes?

YURI:

Attempted. Failed. That's why she's practically blind. She was sent to Akatuy for eleven years.

This is slowly starting to sink in for Mikhail.

YURI: (CONT'D)

She can't shoot, so we make our hands dirty for her and follow her right back Akatuy!

Mikhail is thinking about this deeply, but after a moment he appears angered and resolute.

MIKHAIL:

I'll see you at the factory, Yuri.

He turns to leave.

YURI:

(didactic)

Think. Think and see. She cannot.

Mikhail leaves in a hurry but he was listening. Yuri looks down at the floor. He seems disappointed in everything. He returns to his rifle.

INT. DARK GRITTY MACHINE SHOP -PRESENT

Fania is still tied to her chair. The Cheka Officer is still pleading. He appears to be at his last rope.

CHEKA OFFICER:

(insistent)
Tell me the names of the other
Social Revolutionaries. They are
the traitors.

Beat.

FANIA:
You know the traitor's name and I
delivered his justice.

EXT. MICHELSON FACTORY -DAYS BEFORE

Fania is approaching a crowd. She steps into it. She is wearing mens clothing and a man's hat. A speech in Russian is being given over loudspeakers. Small cheers and applaud can be heard. The crowd is milling about, Fania glances up at an empty window on a building across the street.

INT. DARK GRITTY MACHINE SHOP -PRESENT

The Cheka Officer is angered by Fania's last statement.

CHEKA OFFICER:
(stern)
You do not know what you do...

INT. BUILDING ACROSS FROM MICHELSON FACTORY -DAYS BEFORE

In a small, darkened but open window, Mikhail is looking through binoculars at the crowd below.

MIKHAIL:
There she is! She's in the crowd.

INSERT- BINOCULAR VIEW OF FANIA PUSHING THROUGH CROWD

-BACK TO BUILDING ACROSS FROM MICHELSON FACTORY

Yuri is sitting behind the simple scope of his rifle. He presses his eye to it.

The speech is finishing. The natural cheers follow it.

EXT. OUTSIDE MICHELSON FACTORY -SIMULTANEOUSLY

Fania's pushing to the front of the crowd.

INT. DARK GRITTY MACHINE SHOP -PRESENT

The Cheka Officer is now earnestly trying to help Fania. As he speaks to her the other suits are approaching.

CHEKA OFFICER:
Why are you protecting them? They
have left you to do their dirty
work!

FANIA:
I favored the Constituent Assembly
and am still for it.

EXT. OUTSIDE MICHELSON FACTORY -DAYS BEFORE

Lenin is walking through the crowd which is cheering him fervently. He walks alone in the crowd. Fania sees him from a distance. She glances at the window again.

INT. BUILDING ACROSS FROM MICHELSON FACTORY-SIMULTANEOUSLY

Mikhail is still at his post on binoculars.

MIKHAIL:
He's coming. Ninety-three yards.

Yuri slowly charges his weapon.

EXT. OUTSIDE MICHELSON FACTORY -SIMULTANEOUSLY

Fania is standing in the second row as Lenin approaches.

-BACK TO BUILDING ACROSS FROM MICHELSON FACTORY

Mikhail is growing impatient.

MIKHAIL:
Quickly! You must shoot him
before he passes her.

Yuri is ignoring him.

YURI:
Shhh...

Mikhail is growing tense. He looks back through his binoculars at Lenin who is just approaching Fania's position.

YURI: (CONT'D)

(quietly)
I don't have to shoot.

Mikhail is jolted.

MIKHAIL:
What?!

Beat.

YURI:
(pulling away from the
window quickly, matter
of factly)
I don't have a shot.

He quickly withdraws his rifle and begins to pack his things away. Mikhail is frantic.

MIKHAIL:
What are you doing?!

YURI:
We have to go. Come.

INT. DARK GRITTY MACHINE SHOP -PRESENT

Fania is standing, the Suited Men have brought her face to face with the Cheka Officer for the last time.

CHEKA OFFICER:
We don't need some little girl
dead! Tell us the names!

Beat.

FANIA:
(nail in the coffin and
she knows it)
I favored the Constituent Assembly
and am still for it.

The Cheka Officer is in disbelief.

EXT. OUTSIDE MICHELSON FACTORY -DAYS BEFORE

Fania is watching the window tensely but, of course, in vain. She looks quickly at her pocket watch and back at the window. It is now that Lenin passes in front of her.

She feels for her pistol.

INT. BUILDING ACROSS FROM MICHELSON FACTORY -SIMULTANEOUSLY

Yuri is moving quickly and methodically down a stairwell. Yuri follows him but keeps looking behind him, from whence they came.

YURI:
Come on, Misha.

Mikhail is following silently but uneasily, his gear weighs him down.

EXT. OUTSIDE MICHELSON FACTORY-SIMULTANEOUSLY

Fania watches Lenin pass. She is absolutely distraught. Before he can get to far from her she makes a drastic move. She pushes past the two men in front of her.

Wildly she calls to Lenin:

FANIA:
(as she pulls out her
gun)
Comrade Lenin! Why did you
dissolve the Assembly?!

The crowd are turns towards her shriek.

FANIA: (CONT'D)
Comrade!

Lenin begins to turn.

Fania closes her eyes.

EXT. EMPTY STREET -SIMULTANEOUSLY

The two accomplices are running away from the scene. Mikhail is still trying to look back towards the factory.

Three shots ring out loudly.

The world grows silent and slow. Both men turn towards the factory.

INSERT -OUTSIDE THE MICHELSON FACTORY: THE CROWD COLLAPSES
ON FANIA

-BACK TO EMPTY STREET

After a pause, Yuri continues to run backwards. He calls to Mikhail, unheard. Mikhail turns back and slowly begins to follow him, looking back over his shoulder as he flees.

-FADE TO

BLACK

EXT. BRICK WALL -PRESENT

The wall is blank. We hear the sounds of a firing squad preparing. Slow and methodical.

INT. MOSCOW APARTMENT -SIMULTANEOUSLY

Yuri is hurriedly packing his meager belongings into a valise.

-BACK TO BRICK WALL

Fania is thrown against the wall.

-BACK TO MOSCOW APARTMENT

Yuri's still packing.

Mikhail comes in through the front door.

Frightened, Yuri draws his pistol.

YURI:
(realizing his mistake
but no less tense)
Christ, Misha!

-BACK TO BRICK WALL

A blindfold is wrapped around Fania's eyes. Her hands are tied but she stands proudly against the wall. The sounds of the firing squad continue.

-BACK TO MOSCOW APARTMENT

Yuri continues about his packing. Mikhail drops a newspaper on the table.

MIKHAIL: (CONT'D)
Lenin's alive.

YURI:
Of course! And he will be
extremely upset when he realizes
it!

MIKHAIL:
(disdainfully)
Where are you going?

-BACK TO BRICK WALL

More of the same, quiet, tense, unbearable.

-BACK TO MOSCOW APARTMENT

YURI:
(not pausing from his
packing)
We're next, you fool. She'll talk
to save her life.

Mikhail looks disappointed in Yuri.

YURI: (CONT'D)
(wiser than thou)
I'm getting out, and you should
too.

He closes his cases.

YURI: (CONT'D)
She's spoken already. In their
minds we're guilty.

Mikhail looks at the floor, then nods his head sadly. He
looks up at Yuri.

-BACK TO BRICK WALL

After an unbearably long series of sounds and silence...

The order is called to "FIRE!"

We hear the beginning of the gunshots.

CUT TO BLACK

FADE IN FROM BLACK-

INT. MOSCOW APARTMENT -LATER

Yuri is all packed, with his gear he exits out the front door. He leaves it open.

Mikhail steps to the door, his belongings are in tow as well. He glances around the apartment, sadly, ashamed, he follows Yuri and closes the door behind him

-FADE TO BLACK

TITLES