

*Killing Rasputin*

by  
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CHARACTER NAME	BRIEF DESCRIPTION	AGE	GENDER
Felix Yusupov	A prince of the Yusupov house who married a princess, the niece of Tsar Nicholas II. Felix comes from a substantially wealthy family (richer than the Romanovs), he became heir to the fortune after the death of his brother. Felix was able to avoid military service due to being an only child, and was likely a closeted bisexual. At one time Felix tried to get close to Grigori Rasputin, but they stopped seeing each other when rumours of Grigori's ill deeds began to spread aggressively. Felix at the point of this play, has conspired to kill Grigori, but for the purposes of this play, hasn't thought everything through.	29	Male
Grigori Rasputin	Born a peasant in Siberia, Grigori traveled to St. Petersburg (the capital of the Russian Empire) after having a vision of the Virgin Mother Mary. Grigori found deep religious conviction in his life from this point out and frequently performed religious healings and made prophetic claims. This charismatic show of religious fervor caught the attention of the Romanov family who subsequently would often invite him to the palace where he made many prophecies about their lives and their children to great joy of the Romanovs. Little can be confirmed of the accuracy of Grigori's spiritual deeds, but this (fictional) portrayal of Grigori Rasputin is one where he has at last analyzed the landscape of the Russian Empire and of the world and sees where his future is in it after the invitation of Felix Yusupov to his home.	47	Male
Vladimir Purishkevich	Well known for hating Grigori Rasputin, Vladimir jumped at the chance to take part in his assassination once approached by Felix Yusupov. Vladimir was well-known for starting and working with various militia in Russia geared towards ending leftist activities. He was often thought of as being somewhat unstable and to have extreme nationalist views, as well as being antisemitic. Vladimir began to believe and publicly criticize the Tsar and Tsarina for the influence Grigori had over them, and even insinuated that he had turned them marionettes.	46	Male
Dmitri Pavlovich	Raised by his aunt and uncle due to his father being banished after marrying a commoner, Grand Duke Dmitri Pavlovich was first cousin to Tsar Nicholas II. Dmitri began his military service at age 9 (though customarily he should've begun at age 7). When World War I broke out Dmitri was awarded the Order of St. George for his service, but as the war progressed he began to blame Grigori Rasputin for policies Tsarina Alexandra was implementing while Tsar Nicholas II was busy with commanding Russia's armies.	25	Male

SETTING DESCRIPTION

LOCATION

TIME

Basement of Moika Palace

St. Petersburg, Russia

December 16, 1916

The entirety of the play takes place in the basement of Felix Yusupov's Moika Palace. This can be somewhat historically accurate or not, but the interior should look somewhat similar to what a 1910's Russian palace design might look like.

ACT I

SCENE ONE

*Scene opens in Felix YUSUPOV's palace basement.*

*There is a nice seating area in the middle of the stage with a table prepared with cakes and tea.*

*There is a bar stage right that is mostly bare but has a bottle of wine on the counter.*

*Various décor covers the rest of the space.*

*YUSUPOV is sitting in the center of the seating area with Dmitri PAVLOVICH and Vladimir PURISHKEVICH.*

PURISHKEVICH

Don't play around; it should be plenty simple enough for you to handle.

PAVLOVICH

You don't want to just poison him? I'd imagine you would like to avoid the risk of combat; you never know how wily peasants can become when pushed.

YUSUPOV

I'm confident Rasputin will not be armed in any way... I can't imagine him having any combat experience. He's been out there convincing the Romanovs he's a holy man, and I don't know any holy men who go around picking fights and arming themselves.

PAVLOVICH

Would you?

YUSUPOV

What?

PAVLOVICH

Would you know? If there had been various "holy men" before who'd been pillaging to spread their ideologies, would you know?

PURISHKEVICH

Pistol will do... just fine.

YUSUPOV

Yeah, I was thinking the same.

*PURISHKEVICH looks directly at  
YUSUPOV.*

PURISHKEVICH

Directly into his brain.

*Slight pause.*

Don't hesitate, don't blink. Just hit him point-blank where you can't miss. Once he falls hit him once more to make sure.

YUSUPOV

Yeah, all right. I'll shoot him in the head.

*PURISHKEVICH looks at YUSUPOV  
intently.*

PURISHKEVICH

I'm serious.

YUSUPOV

I know.

PURISHKEVICH

You have to kill him.

YUSUPOV

I heard you.

PURISHKEVICH

No question of him coming back and being able to tell his version of the story.

YUSUPOV

I'm going to kill him, Vladimir.

*Slight pause.*

PURISHKEVICH

That's good. Just-

YUSUPOV

Do you wanna do it?

PURISHKEVICH

No, no. We don't want him suspicious when he comes to meet me in your home.

PAVLOVICH

The place is huge, I'll bet he won't even wonder where Felix is.

PURISHKEVICH

Nevertheless, Felix should do fine... as long as he keeps a watchful eye on Grigori. Don't let him pull any tricks.

YUSUPOV

Again, I highly doubt he has any tricks up his sleeve. The man is no soldier.

PAVLOVICH

You're no soldier either Felix.

YUSUPOV

That's because I have no other brothers-

PAVLOVICH

Doesn't seem to matter why.

PURISHKEVICH

He's saying be careful... be on guard. Which you should.

YUSUPOV

I don't find Grigori to be so threatening.

PURISHKEVICH

Grigori Rasputin may very well be untrained in combat; no, he's no fighter, but he's a master charmer.

PAVLOVICH

It's true, he's so frequently casting Russians under his spell.

*YUSUPOV looks concerned and slightly guilty.*

*PURISHKEVICH notices.*

PURISHKEVICH

He got you in the beginning, didn't he?

YUSUPOV

He- uh, he's a charmer. That's what he is. You both know that. He's put Alexandra under his spell, he casts clouds of shadow over the eyes of Nicholas, he is the blemish on the backside of the Russian Empire... I'm not to blame for his tricks.

PAVLOVICH

No one said you were.

*Beat.*

PURISHKEVICH

Are you?

YUSUPOV

What?

PURISHKEVICH

To blame.

YUSUPOV

Excuse me?

PURISHKEVICH

What happened in the beginning?

YUSUPOV

What are you asking me, Vladimir?

PURISHKEVICH

What is there to tell Felix?

*Very serious.*

YUSUPOV

What are you asking me?

PURISHKEVICH

Nothing Felix, I was just asking.

*Slight pause.*

YUSUPOV

What?

*PURISHKEVICH smiles a little.*

PURISHKEVICH

Nothing.

YUSUPOV

No, you don't get to just leave it there; if you're making accusations, make them.

PURISHKEVICH

Why are you doing this Felix? Feel guilty or something? Trying to force us to bring you to justice because you helped him out in the past? Feel some familial loyalty to him?

YUSUPOV

I'm here now, aren't I?

PAVLOVICH

Exactly; what are you doing Vlad?

PURISHKEVICH

Nothing.

PAVLOVICH

Then let's drop it.

*PURISHKEVICH has a small smile again.*

PURISHKEVICH

All right.



PAVLOVICH

Great.

YUSUPOV

Why do you think I did something, Vladimir?

PURISHKEVICH

I don't.

YUSUPOV

Then why would you accuse me?

PURISHKEVICH

Because why not?

YUSUPOV

Why not what? You just wanted to jerk me around?

PURISHKEVICH

No, it's worth asking, why not suspect you? Who knows what that sorcerer is capable of?

YUSUPOV

I don't... what are you saying he's capable of?

*Slight pause.*

Mind control?

*PURISHKEVICH shrugs.*

You've got to be kidding me?

PAVLOVICH

I've heard that.

*Abruptly.*

YUSUPOV

I've heard he's Satan, but I find that pretty damn unlikely.

PURISHKEVICH

Why?

YUSUPOV

Are you interrogating me about whether Grigori Rasputin is the Devil or not?

PAVLOVICH

What is he?

YUSUPOV

I don't know, I'm not his mother!

PURISHKEVICH

Who is? Does he have a mother?

YUSUPOV

Yes, Grigori has a mother. Have I met her? No, but he wasn't born of the Virgin Mary.

PURISHKEVICH

Probably not.

YUSUPOV

Can we calm down?

PURISHKEVICH

Of course.

YUSUPOV

I need a drink. Would you two like anything?

PURISHKEVICH

Brandy.

YUSUPOV

Really?

*No response.*

I'm fresh out of Brandy, how about a nice Sherry?

PURISHKEVICH

You're the host.

YUSUPOV

Vodka it is.

PAVLOVICH

What are you having?

YUSUPOV

Red wine.

PAVLOVICH

I'll have some of that if you don't mind.

YUSUPOV

Gladly.

*YUSUPOV walks out to get away from  
PURISHKEVICH and PAVLOVICH for a  
minute.*

PAVLOVICH

You really think he has some real connection to Rasputin?

PURISHKEVICH

What do you think?

*PURISHKEVICH and PAVLOVICH look at  
each other seriously but then break into a  
light laughter.*

PAVLOVICH

You think he can handle this?

PURISHKEVICH

No.

PAVLOVICH

Really?

PURISHKEVICH

That's why I'm giving him a hard time. I don't know that he has the stones to put a bullet in his brain. That's why I think he's more likely to go through with it if he's mad; cloud his mind enough so there's no space for doubt.

*Slight pause.*

That's also why we're gonna be here in case something goes wrong.

PAVLOVICH

How long you think this'll take?

PURISHKEVICH

It'll take as long as it takes.

*In disbelief.*

PAVLOVICH

You don't think it'll take all night?

*PURISHKEVICH looks at PAVLOVICH.*

PURISHKEVICH

You have somewhere to be?

PAVLOVICH

No more than you or Felix I suppose.

PURISHKEVICH

What would you do?

PAVLOVICH

What?

PURISHKEVICH

If it was you carrying it out instead of Felix.

PAVLOVICH

What? You mean like how would I do it?

PURISHKEVICH

Sure, whatever that means to you.

PAVLOVICH

I'd shoot him in the face.

PURISHKEVICH

Whoa, brutal. What'd he do to your family?

PAVLOVICH

Is that supposed to be funny?

PURISHKEVICH

Yes.

*PAVLOVICH almost laughs, but not quite.*

PAVLOVICH

I think you should kill Rasputin.

PURISHKEVICH

Well, well, well, what do we have here?

PAVLOVICH

Come on Vlad-

PURISHKEVICH

You gonna take it there?

*YUSUPOV beigns to walk back in with a tray of drinks.*

PAVLOVICH

Can you really say you disagree?

YUSUPOV

Disagree about what?

PAVLOVICH

Nothing.

PURISHKEVICH

Dmitri wants me to kill Grigori.

YUSUPOV

Oh.

PAVLOVICH

Yeah.

YUSUPOV

Is that what you think?

PURISHKEVICH

It is not.

YUSUPOV

Really?

PURISHKEVICH

That is correct.

YUSUPOV

Don't want blood on your hands?

PURISHKEVICH

I've no qualms with blood.

YUSUPOV

You have faith in my ability to kill him myself?

PURISHKEVICH

Well, I don't know if I said that.

YUSUPOV

Then why don't you kill the man yourself?

*YUSUPOV takes PURISHKEVICH's drink  
off the tray and gives it to him.*

Go ahead and prepare yourself to take a man's life; I'm gonna get the hell out of here.

PAVLOVICH

Oh, come on Felix...

YUSUPOV

What is this?

*Pause.*

Is this a fucking game Vladimir? Am I a pawn in a chess game? I've been playing this game as best I know. Trying not to cheat, trying not to lose myself, and what are you

doing here, but trying to undermine me when I'm the one stepping out there and risking my neck.

PAVLOVICH

He's poisoned Russia-

YUSUPOV

I know that, but we're not at war, he hasn't murdered anybody, and at the end of the day, I'm going to be the one who will have to deal with his killing for the rest of my life, and I want to try to feel good about killing a man.

PURISHKEVICH

So I suppose I was right to imply you're not up to the task.

*YUSUPOV looks intensely at  
PURISHKEVICH.*

YUSUPOV

I'm killing Rasputin.

PURISHKEVICH

I think, perhaps, it is better if I kill him myself; you said it yourself, you can't come up with a reason to kill Rasputin.

YUSUPOV

That's not what I said.

PURISHKEVICH

I might as well just do it for you, go on, give me the gun.

*Long pause.*

*YUSUPOV walks over to the bar, takes a gun out of the bag, and walks back over to the area they're sitting at, but doesn't sit down.*

*PURISHKEVICH is not really paying attention to YUSUPOV.*

*PAVLOVICH is looking at YUSUPOV when he sees YUSUPOV point the gun at PURISHKEVICH and his eyes widen.*

*PURISHKEVICH sees PAVLOVICH's eyes widen as he hears the gun cock.*

*PURISHKEVICH slowly turns his head to look at YUSUPOV and then begins to laugh.*

*YUSUPOV puts the gun against PURISHKEVICH's neck.*

YUSUPOV

What's so funny?

PURISHKEVICH

We're out here discussing the morality of killing the biggest traitor in the history of Russia, and instead, you've lost all qualms about killing me. It's quite funny.

YUSUPOV

I'm not intending to kill you, Vlad. I just want you to feel this.

PURISHKEVICH

Feel what?

YUSUPOV

A threat on your life.

*PURISHKEVICH grins.*

PURISHKEVICH

That's rich.

YUSUPOV

You need to have some understanding of what it's like to have a gun to your face before you hound me into doing it to another man.

*Short pause.*

And I need to know what it feels like to make this decision.



PAVLOVICH

What decision?

YUSUPOV

Whether to kill him or not.

*Pause.*

PURISHKEVICH

Well if you're done playing pretend....

*Clocks are heard chiming.*

YUSUPOV

It's midnight. He'll be here soon.

*Pause.*

You two wait in the parlor.

PAVLOVICH

Are you sure you're ready to handle this?

YUSUPOV

Yeah, I'm fine Dmitri.

PURISHKEVICH

You-

YUSUPOV

I'm going to kill him, Vladimir. Just leave it now, all right?

*Slightly condescendingly.*

PURISHKEVICH

Sounds like you know what to do. Good luck.

*PAVLOVICH, PURISHKEVICH, then  
YUSUPOV all make their way to the  
stairwell and leave the basement.*

*Blackout.*

*Their footsteps can be heard as they go up the stairs.*

## SCENE TWO

*Scene opens in the dark.*

*Long pause.*

*One set of footsteps can be heard coming down the stairs.*

*It stops and briefly can be heard going up the stairs.*

*Two sets of footsteps can be heard going down the stairs now. The first quickly, but the second one descends the stairs slowly until both seem to be at the bottom of the stairs.*

*One set of footsteps is then heard walking to the middle of the room.*

*Lights come up and RASPUTIN is standing in the middle of the room while YUSUPOV is back turning on the lights.*

*RASPUTIN has a strange smile on his face. He inhales strongly before he speaks.*

RASPUTIN

I have a feeling only one of us is leaving here alive tonight.

YUSUPOV

What?

RASPUTIN

Yeah, that's what I thought.

YUSUPOV

Grigori...

RASPUTIN

Don't worry about it. How were you thinking?

*Slight pause.*

The cakes? Tea? You bringing down some wine or opium later?

YUSUPOV

I don't know what you...

RASPUTIN

You're not planning on using a blade or gun, are you? Doesn't seem like you.

YUSUPOV

I'm afraid you...

RASPUTIN

Oh, come on Felix. Stop this. I'm not going to fight you on this, okay? You will leave here alive, and I'll be the one to die tonight.

YUSUPOV

Uh.

*Pause.*

RASPUTIN

I'm not leaving here alive. I knew that coming in.

*YUSUPOV sighs.*

YUSUPOV

I don't trust you.

RASPUTIN

Ha! That's honest.

YUSUPOV

You're turning the-

RASPUTIN

Don't say that. Don't be like them... you don't really believe that. You can't; you're not like them. You have a base level of intelligence, I know. I've seen it.

*Pause.*

YUSUPOV

How did you know?

RASPUTIN

How do you think?

YUSUPOV

Did you overhear...?

*Very serious.*

RASPUTIN

I'm the Devil Felix.

YUSUPOV

What?

RASPUTIN

Only joking.

YUSUPOV

Why would you not fight back? I don't know how to take that.

RASPUTIN

How do you mean?

YUSUPOV

How could I trust a man who, when faced with his own death, grimaces?

*RASPUTIN smiles.*

RASPUTIN

Fair question. What do you believe to be worth fighting for?

YUSUPOV

Russia.

RASPUTIN

Simple, great. What do you believe to be worth dying for?

Russ- YUSUPOV

Can't say Russia. RASPUTIN

What am I supposed to say then? YUSUPOV

I'm looking for some truth. Come on, indulge me. I'm about to die, you can play along with me for my last night on earth, can't you? RASPUTIN

I'm not lying Grigori. YUSUPOV

You're not lying, but you're not giving me the truth. There's a truth behind the answer of Russia that I'm looking for. RASPUTIN

*Beat.*  
Let me ask you, purely for my own curiosity, nothing to do with my death; I just want to know.

Okay. YUSUPOV

What's harder for you to do... for Russia, to die or to kill? RASPUTIN

*Long pause.*

Die. YUSUPOV

That's absurd. RASPUTIN

That's the truth. YUSUPOV

RASPUTIN

Oh no Felix, I'm not accusing you of lying, that's just absurd, and I think you're a horrible human being for saying it.

YUSUPOV

Killing you is a righteous act.

RASPUTIN

That's fine. You can believe that; I really don't care. I'm sure in many ways, that makes sense, but taking someone's life, you think that's righteousness?

YUSUPOV

Of course, I do. When there are so many damnable actions that life has been taking, someone has to step in and end that life.

RASPUTIN

Okay, Felix; even if it's your duty, and remember, this is not about me, you don't have to try to excuse your killing me, we're past that; it's done. I'm done, morality about that, pff, who cares? Not me, I'm dead. But regardless of any actions you've done, give me an explanation for how killing someone is a purely righteous act, and not, at the very least, tainted with sin.

*Pause.*

YUSUPOV

Tainted with sin?

RASPUTIN

Yes.

YUSUPOV

I guess I hadn't thought about that.

RASPUTIN

Wow.

*Awkward pause.*

That's probably the most honest thing you've said tonight. I've never heard you say so many honest things in a year, and we're just knocking them all out tonight!

*Slight pause.*

I think that's great.

YUSUPOV

What?

RASPUTIN

I think it's great that you can kill someone purely based on a conviction you haven't thought through enough to understand or to consider all of the elements behind the action. I think it's really fantastic that that level of ignorance on a subject doesn't bother you when murdering a man.

YUSUPOV

I-

*Correcting his earlier statement.*

RASPUTIN

Killing a man, sorry. COMPLETELY RIGHTEOUSLY killing a man, and trust me, I want you to do it, you don't have to worry about that; I just think it's very telling.

YUSUPOV

Telling of what?

RASPUTIN

All of you. Who is that by the way? Who's conspiring with you on this?

*Awkward pause.*

It's okay, I don't already know. I'm legitimately asking.

YUSUPOV

Why do you want to know?

RASPUTIN

Oh come on, I know you don't trust me, but I thought we were indulging Grigori on his last night on earth a little bit. Can't you just tell me without us having to have this back and forth every time I ask you a question?

*Slight pause.*

YUSUPOV

Pavlovich and Purishkevich.

RASPUTIN

Huh. I guess that makes sense. That all?

YUSUPOV

Pretty much, yeah.

RASPUTIN

Damn, Dmitri hurts a little. I truly don't care if Vlad wants me dead. He can sit on his own bayonet for all I care. In fact, I'd love to see that....

*Beat.*

YUSUPOV

I'm going to kill you Grigori... does that not matter to you?

RASPUTIN

What do you mean?

*Slight pause.*

That's everything in the world to me. It's all I have left.

YUSUPOV

Then why in God's name do you not care?

RASPUTIN

I care Felix. That's why I'm here.

YUSUPOV

You're here to die?

RASPUTIN

Precisely.

YUSUPOV

I don't understand that at all.

RASPUTIN

Just kill me then. You don't need to understand.

YUSUPOV

What sense is that? What kind of a man walks willingly to his own death?



RASPUTIN

A carpenter who might rise again three days later.

YUSUPOV

You think yourself the Christ?

RASPUTIN

Christ no! I'm Grigori Rasputinovi.

YUSUPOV

Why the comparison?

RASPUTIN

I wasn't comparing; I was answering.

YUSUPOV

Must you talk in riddles?

RASPUTIN

I'm not talking in riddles Felix, I'm talking in rhyme?

YUSUPOV

What?

RASPUTIN

Or rhythm?

YUSUPOV

What on earth are you talking about?

RASPUTIN

Why don't you just get it over with already; I've had my fun; you've thoroughly indulged me.

YUSUPOV

Why are you so anxious to die?

RASPUTIN

You never did tell me the plan though... I'm curious to know the civility of the count who'll murder a peasant.

YUSUPOV

A killing is not murder when it's righteous.

*Pause.*

RASPUTIN

Dear Felix... I thought we were past this. How can you call something righteous when you haven't thought it all the way through? Did you not understand the light mocking before?

YUSUPOV

I know in my heart it's right.

RASPUTIN

Wrong Felix, wrong. That's ridiculous! You can have a conviction this it's right; that's not the same thing.

YUSUPOV

I disagree.

RASPUTIN

You don't know the meaning of the word.

YUSUPOV

What?

RASPUTIN

You believe that you know something in your heart, but, in truth, there is no matter of logic or morality that is decided by the heart. All your heart is good for it telling you your own desires, and in that regard, yes, I believe you feel it in your heart that it's righteous to murder me because you want to believe that it's right, but that's not how you overcome ignorance. It's with discernment and understanding.

YUSUPOV

I can feel the evil you do our Empire.

RASPUTIN

It's all evil Felix. There's not much I can do about that... other than die.

*YUSUPOV is surprised.*

YUSUPOV

Well, I think there we agree.

RASPUTIN

Not at all.

YUSUPOV

You're talking in nonsense Grigori. I believe the statement you just made; that puts us in agreement.

RASPUTIN

For very different reasons.

YUSUPOV

But the same conclusion.

RASPUTIN

Doesn't matter.

YUSUPOV

Of course, it does. Conclusions matter more than reasons!

RASPUTIN

A conclusion without reason is just a conviction, Felix.

YUSUPOV

What's wrong with a conviction? Do you not spend your days trying to convince Alexandra and Nicholas of your own convictions? Your own conclusions??

*Sharply.*

RASPUTIN

They wanted me here. Can you say the same? Can anyone in St. Petersburg say the same? No, you're all leeches, you're all spineless children born into darkness then conditioned on how to take away the light from anyone who's found some!

YUSUPOV

You belong in Siberia with your own kind.

*This cuts RASPUTIN deep.*

RASPUTIN

If I belonged there, I wouldn't be here, would I?

YUSUPOV

You defy God's will!

RASPUTIN

God's will is what happens. I'm not out here changing anything God didn't intend. If He wanted me in Pokrovskoye, that's where'd I'd be!

YUSUPOV

Well, then he took you out of where you belong.

RASPUTIN

I didn't burn Russia!

*Slight pause.*

That's what's wrong with the lot of you! You all think I burnt Russia, but it was you! I walked through the flames to be in St. Petersburg, and you all look at me as though I started it just because I came from the flames, but I wasn't reduced to ash, and neither was Russia. That's what I believe in. That's why I won't die here today when my heart stops... and neither does Russia!

YUSUPOV

All I need is your heart to stop!

RASPUTIN

But there's so much more than that Yusupov! The entire world is at your fingertips right now... and you don't even understand. You won't listen to what I'm saying to you right now.

YUSUPOV

Of course, I am.

RASPUTIN

No, no you're not.

*Pause.*

Just look at this conversation. You've made almost no attempt to hear me. I go on and on and you pick out one thing you have a god damned conviction about, and you counter me with whatever is the first thing that comes to mind.

YUSUPOV

What am I supposed to say Grigori? Do you want to just craft my conversation for me so you can die happy?

RASPUTIN

No, I want you to actually have the conversation. Connect with what I'm saying instead of being this relentless wall that I have to keep bouncing off of.

YUSUPOV

I'm sorry, but I just think we disagree on these things-

RASPUTIN

You're going to kill a man!

*Long pause.*

You're going to kill me, Felix. You're going to kill Grigori Yefimovich Rasputin. You're going to take his life... my life, and then you'll live the rest of yours. However many 51 some odd years you have left... and you'll either remember this night, or you'll forget it, but at the end of your life, no matter what, you'll be someone who took the life of an innocent man.

YUSUPOV

You are far from innocent Grigori Rasputin.

RASPUTIN

Not only does the good book say "You shall not kill", but it is also said "Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.'" as well as "Then Jesus said to him, 'Put your sword back into its place. For all who take the sword will perish by the sword.'"

YUSUPOV

But does it not also talk about the justification of killing as well as the damnation of it?

*Sarcastically.*

RASPUTIN

I don't know, you tell me, Felix... I'm not going to cite your sources for you.

YUSUPOV

I don't have the Bible memorized Grigori.

*Loudly.*

RASPUTIN

Then don't quote it!

*Slight pause.*

If you don't know the book, don't pretend to! If you've only been told what it says instead of reading it yourself, then don't pretend to know! Because everybody lies and...

YUSUPOV

Even you?

RASPUTIN

Of course Felix; I'm only a man.

YUSUPOV

Is that true?

RASPUTIN

What do you want me to say? That I'm more than man? That I'm a sorcerer?

YUSUPOV

I want you to admit how it is that you have such a powerful effect on the Romanovs.

RASPUTIN

I'm their friend! I could've been yours too if you weren't such a horse's ass!

YUSUPOV

I just want the Russia I know back.

*Emphasizing each word.*

RASPUTIN

Forget it, you ass.

YUSUPOV

Look-

RASPUTIN

What did I do that makes you so convicted about the fact that I'm deserving of death? Truly. I know it's more than my calling you an ass.

*Pause.*

YUSUPOV

You betrayed...

RASPUTIN

Don't speak so vaguely. I'm not the fall of the Empire, I'm not the source of all evil, I didn't ruin Russia or the Romanovs. No one man could do all of that; you'd be giving me too much credit.

*Pause.*

YUSUPOV

Do you not feel guilty for all that you've done? Do you truly believe you haven't had an effect on Alexandra or Nicholas? Or even Alexei?

*Pause.*

RASPUTIN

Alexei? You believe I harmed that child?

YUSUPOV

You tell me. There must be some reason...

*RASPUTIN shouts in anger.*

RASPUTIN

I care for that boy as if he were my own child! I'm here to help him... what are you here for? To pass ignorant beliefs on the entirety of Russia, and sit around believing you're better than everyone else? Well let me tell you something; I'm a friend to the Romanovs, I care for their child Alexei, I care for Tatiana, Anastasia, Maria, Olga.... They are blameless children, born into the sins of the Empire.

YUSUPOV

You speak treason upon Russia.

RASPUTIN

Russia is not perfect Felix! Do you truly understand nothing? I love Russia as much as anyone. She has blessed me with a life I could have hardly dreamed of when I was a child, and Alexei is not to blame for living so luxuriously. The children know nothing of the dealings behind their palace walls which involve the likes of you or I.

YUSUPOV

They're not all children anymore.

RASPUTIN

They're children Felix. Not one of them has lived long enough to break their covenant to their creator or their Empire.

YUSUPOV

You've done both of these things?

RASPUTIN

I am only human.

YUSUPOV

So you say.

RASPUTIN

Do you pretend I am the God?

YUSUPOV

Do you claim to be?

RASPUTIN

Of course not!

YUSUPOV

Maybe not with the likes of me, but perhaps surrounded by followers willing to believe it.

RASPUTIN

If I truly believed myself a god, I'd surely never admit it, but rather let others make such a proclamation.

YUSUPOV

Is that not then what you're doing by avoiding the question then? You're left-handedly admitting it.



RASPUTIN

Fine Felix, I'm the all-powerful God.

*RASPUTIN waves his hand at YUSUPOV.*

There. Now you're a muskrat.

YUSUPOV

What?

RASPUTIN

See? If I were God, you'd be a muskrat now.

YUSUPOV

You're talking nonsense.

RASPUTIN

No, you are. I'm just making light of it.

YUSUPOV

Why do you deny making such claims? Everyone in St. Petersburg knows you believe yourself more than a man.

RASPUTIN

Does everyone know that? Well, I hadn't realized. If they know it, then it must be based on truth rather than a conviction they feel without having truly weighed all the elements and discerned carefully.

YUSUPOV

You think you're so much better than all of us....

RASPUTIN

I cannot believe you would say something like that right now.

YUSUPOV

You believe yourself lower?

RASPUTIN

What do you believe Felix?

YUSUPOV

That you don't belong here with us.

RASPUTIN

I don't. I belong in hell, so get the deed over with and stab me in the back or whatever will make you feel comfortable enough to sleep tonight.

YUSUPOV

I-

RASPUTIN

I take that back. I truly hope you don't sleep. In all of these years, that you've forced your ignorance onto everyone in your influence, I hope that tonight is the first night some of it actually starts to fester within you. Who knows, maybe you won't turn out to be such a wicked man in the end.

YUSUPOV

Why are you so eager to die Grigori?

RASPUTIN

Because I die tonight. That's what happens.

YUSUPOV

How did you know that?

*RASPUTIN looks at YUSUPOV and gives  
no answer.*

You're not the devil.

*RASPUTIN looks at YUSUPOV surprised,  
but still wary.*

I know you aren't all of the evil in Russia.

*Pause.*

It'd be easier if you were, but there is something unnatural inside of you that I don't understand. How could you know of my intentions to kill you without some sort of dark magic? I'm no fool. I know you're neither angel nor demon, but what are you that could have the foresight?

RASPUTIN

I'm Grigori Yefimovich Rasputin. A peasant who made it to St. Petersburg with nothing to lose.

YUSUPOV

How could a peasant know such things?

RASPUTIN

How could a Prince know so little?

YUSUPOV

Do not aim to offend me so often when I stand between you and your grave.

RASPUTIN

Then move out of the way, and let me lie down!

YUSUPOV

I don't understand this!

RASPUTIN

Why do you need to? You have a job to do. Dmitri and Vladimir can help you if you need the courage.

YUSUPOV

I don't need them, I can do this! I simply want to understand how your foresight muddles in with your wish to die by my hand.

RASPUTIN

I want Russia to flourish. There are ideas and thoughts this land has to offer the world that could outlive the both of us. That can change the world beyond our measure, but there's a point when I no longer have a place within it, and that point is today.

YUSUPOV

How do you know that?

RASPUTIN

Because you're going to kill me.

YUSUPOV

That's not what I'm asking!

*Pause.*

RASPUTIN

Do you really believe I have foresight? What does that do to your worldview if a peasant who's not of the devil has such gifts? If you believe them from God, then how could you strike me down?

YUSUPOV

I don't pretend to understand all of God's will.

RASPUTIN

You've changed your mind about that, have you?

YUSUPOV

I can understand part of it, without the whole.

RASPUTIN

Can you? Can we ever fully understand anything without understanding everything?

*Slight pause.*

Not truly. No, I don't think so. I find it very unlikely.

YUSUPOV

What are you going on about now?

RASPUTIN

No, pause with me. Help me through this thought. What can we understand?

YUSUPOV

What kind of a question is that? There's plenty we can understand.

RASPUTIN

Don't just answer; think about it.

*Pause.*

Seriously. Sit with me and let's try to think through this together.

*Both YUSUPOV and RASPUTIN sit.*

What's something you feel you understand implicitly?

*Pause.*

YUSUPOV

My duty to my daughter.

RASPUTIN

How old is she now?

YUSUPOV

Are we really going to talk about that right now?

RASPUTIN

You won't tell me your daughter's age?

YUSUPOV

Bebé is about 9 months old now I think.

RASPUTIN

Beautiful. Mine are 16, 18, and 21 now, but you probably don't want to know that do you?

*YUSUPOV avoids looking at RASPUTIN.*

I'm sure it's hard to imagine little Bébé growing up without a father like my children will... for the rest of their lives. Or even your wife.

*YUSUPOV looks at RASPUTIN sharply.*

Irina is about the same age as my boy Dmitri, isn't she? Weird to think about... huh? Losing the people close to you. Like my family will... or already has in a way.

*Pause.*

YUSUPOV

I'm not here because of your family.

RASPUTIN

But that's not your choice... you have to be, don't you see? You can't separate it in your mind just because you want to. That's why you can't trust conviction to the heart. The action of killing this father and husband is eternally tied with killing that "traitor Rasputin." And your heart doesn't have to acknowledge that.

YUSUPOV

I don't want to acknowledge that; I'd rather let my heart keep me from thinking about your wife and children.

RASPUTIN

That's only natural, but it's also wrong.

YUSUPOV

What am I supposed to do Grigori?

*Pause.*

RASPUTIN

Let's not think about that right now; let's get back to the matter at hand.

YUSUPOV

Which is what?

RASPUTIN

How do you understand your duty for your daughter?

YUSUPOV

I don't know how to explain it.

RASPUTIN

Isn't that... right there... proof of my point? That you can't understand it fully?

YUSUPOV

I understand that I have to protect her.

RASPUTIN

Fully?

YUSUPOV

Y-yes. I think so.

RASPUTIN

You need to be confident in your point. Don't get me wrong, I don't think that you should be confident, because I think you're wrong, but if you were right, you'd have to be confident in it. If you truly understood a subject, you'd be able to explain it better and have confidence that you actually know what you're talking about, because you'd actually know what you were talking about.

YUSUPOV

But it is just... what you said; it's implicit.

RASPUTIN

What does that mean?

YUSUPOV

That you just understand it without being able to know why, because I know my obligation to my daughter implicitly; I don't need reasons to explain it.

RASPUTIN

You can't leave that nuance behind though! If you keep inconsistencies bottled up, then eventually they'll come out and wreak havoc. Even if it only on others.

YUSUPOV

But if I believe that is truly right, regardless of whatever nuance there is underneath...

RASPUTIN

That makes it illogical. I don't care what it is; it can be the most obvious thing, but if you can't understand it, you can't claim to know it. And if you don't have some logical comprehension of a situation, you have no right to kill a man and claim the Bible absolves you, because you think maybe it says something.

YUSUPOV

Does it not say there are justified killings?

RASPUTIN

It doesn't matter if you haven't read it! You can't understand what the words say, the meaning behind it, and why it applies to a certain situation if YOU, yourself have not read the words!

YUSUPOV

Why do I have to know each word if I know they're in there somewhere?

*Pause.*

RASPUTIN

I hate that I have to explain this to you.

YUSUPOV

It's in there; my knowledge of it is immaterial as long as my actions align with what it says.

*RASPUTIN inhales sharply and sighs.*

RASPUTIN

"A fool takes no pleasure in understanding, but only in expressing his opinion!"  
 "Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but he who hates reproof is stupid!" "Teach me, O Lord, the way of your statutes; and I will keep it to the end. Give me understanding, that I may keep your law and observe it with my whole heart!" "All scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness!" "All the words of my mouth are righteous; there is nothing twisted or crooked in them. They are all straight to him who understands, and right to those who find knowledge!"

*Slight pause.*

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction!"

*Slight pause.*

Do you need more reason to want to understand? Do you not trust the Bible when the Bible itself tells you to understand it? I'm only a man, what more can I tell you that God hasn't breathed the words Himself?

*Pause.*

Huh, Felix? I'm waiting.

YUSUPOV

I'm wrong there. All right.

RASPUTIN

Tell it to me.

YUSUPOV

I understand nothing! I don't know why I'm absolved in killing you. I don't fully understand why I have to kill you, or what all you've done wrong; I don't understand my own convictions that guide the way I live every day of my life. I don't understand my love for my own daughter!! There. Are you happy Grigori? I can't explain myself when it comes to my daughter. Maybe I'm not better than you, and I should die tonight instead.

RASPUTIN

That won't happen.

YUSUPOV

Well, great Grigori! What the hell am I supposed to do now?



RASPUTIN

What do you mean?

YUSUPOV

I don't know the reasons for my own life, therefore; I don't know what life I'm supposed to lead.

RASPUTIN

Your life.

YUSUPOV

How can I go back to living the way I was?

RASPUTIN

I don't know Felix. That's a big question.

YUSUPOV

Is that not what you're here for?

RASPUTIN

I'm here to die.

YUSUPOV

Okay, but you've spent the whole night so far trying to get me to think differently, and now that I'm open to trying to broaden my understanding, you're just going to abandon me?

RASPUTIN

Well, you're going to murder me... so I think I'm still on the moral side of this exchange.

YUSUPOV

I'm serious Grigori! Do you actually care about understanding, or was all of that just that? Like what you spout to the people of St. Petersburg?

RASPUTIN

Of course, I care for understanding, but I don't know how you should live your life, Felix. I'm about to be dead. Thinking about such futile futures is not what I'm most concerned with.

YUSUPOV

Futile futures? What does that mean?

RASPUTIN

I don't see you changing anything. I don't see you changing your ways or making any true difference in the history of Russia, other than the causing of my death tonight.

YUSUPOV

How do you know any of that?

RASPUTIN

There are things you come to understand after you look long enough.

YUSUPOV

Look at what?

RASPUTIN

Everything, as much as I can.

YUSUPOV

What are you looking at now?

RASPUTIN

What?

YUSUPOV

Right now, in this room with me. With Dmitri and Vladimir upstairs, waiting in case I fail to finish the job, other than everything you're posturing to me to try to confuse me, what are you truly analyzing and calculating to understand better?

RASPUTIN

Nothing. For the first time in my life, I truly don't have to worry about what's happened before and where I've come from. I can truly just be here, and let the night unfold. It's very liberating in a way...

*Pause.*

... dying. There's something about knowing it's coming and not wanting to stop it that gives you a new kind of power.

YUSUPOV

Why don't you want to stop it? And don't deflect; actually answer me this time.

*RASPUTIN chuckles.*

RASPUTIN

Why should I?

*Pause.*

YUSUPOV

Because no man wants to die.

RASPUTIN

Not truly. Only true that man fears death. It brings us back to understanding.

YUSUPOV

Well, I fear death, but why don't you?

RASPUTIN

I do... in a way, but I'm not going to kill you or anyone to avoid it. I'm going to die. Even if it wasn't going to be tonight; I'm sure to die.

YUSUPOV

I know that, but why not try to prolong it? Why do you feel so confident that tonight of all nights is the best night for you to die?

*Pause.*

RASPUTIN

Have you ever heard from God? In a real way?

YUSUPOV

What do you mean?

RASPUTIN

Has God ever given you insight into your life or your future?

YUSUPOV

Is this about your vision of the Virgin Mary or something?

RASPUTIN

Yes and no.

YUSUPOV

I heard that's maybe the reason you came to St. Petersburg.

RASPUTIN

It is. I came here because of what I saw.

YUSUPOV

What did you see?

RASPUTIN

I can't tell you that.

YUSUPOV

Why not?

RASPUTIN

Something like that is between me and my creator.

YUSUPOV

And the Virgin Mary.

RASPUTIN

Naturally.

YUSUPOV

Why you? Why did Mary come to you instead of a thousand other Siberian peasants who needed to believe in something?

RASPUTIN

Because I'm the one who's here now. I don't know. I can't claim to know God's providence beyond what He's shared with us, but I do know that when I felt the mouth of God speaking to me directly, there wasn't a doubt in my mind but to follow. And now here I am. In Moika Palace waiting to die.

*Long pause.*

YUSUPOV

I'm not going to kill you, Rasputin.

RASPUTIN

What?

YUSUPOV

I'm not going to kill you Grigori.

RASPUTIN

Yes, you are.

YUSUPOV

No, I'm not. I don't know what I'm doing here.

RASPUTIN

You're here to kill me.

YUSUPOV

I can't anymore. I don't know if this has all been some mind game to convince me not to kill you, but if so, it worked. I don't believe I have the moral standing to take such an action right now without an incredible amount of deliberation, the type of deliberation that you've clearly adopted for yourself.

RASPUTIN

Felix, you misunderstand. I simply wanted you to look upon your actions with consequence, not abandon your convictions altogether?

YUSUPOV

What?

RASPUTIN

Believing something you don't understand is wrong, but that doesn't make the thing you believe wrong, it just means you need to do your due deliberation and find the reasoning behind it, do so without bias, and come to a reasonable conclusion.

YUSUPOV

So you believe the reasonable conclusion is to kill you?

*RASPUTIN thinks for a moment.*

RASPUTIN

That's not really what I'm saying, but hmm... think about this, if you don't kill me, Dmitri and Vladimir surely will, and I'd rather be murdered by....

YUSUPOV

I don't want to murder anybody.

RASPUTIN

... I'd rather be killed by you than those two.

YUSUPOV

Why?

RASPUTIN

Who would you rather be killed by? Someone who's imbecilic and cares for nothing other than convictions they haven't thought through, or someone who's weighed the balance and has a shred of noble guilt for the action he's going to commit.

YUSUPOV

I haven't weighed the balance though. You've shown me that. I don't really know how I came to be here.

RASPUTIN

What do you mean? How would you say you came to be here before you had this realization?

YUSUPOV

I- well I guess I just thought it was my duty in a way.

*Slight pause.*

I felt that you had caused so much turmoil with Alexandra, and the family that you had caused them to be figures with which the people could no longer approve; thus all this unrest in Russia, but I'm having my doubts.

RASPUTIN

You don't think I did all of that anymore?

YUSUPOV

I don't know, but at the very least, I'm starting to think I didn't look into the issue closely enough.

RASPUTIN

Well, I think that's definitely the case. You're not the only one though.

YUSUPOV

What?

RASPUTIN

Everyone thinks I'm changing them, but Alexandra's just shy in times when it hurts her as a public figure. Look, I love the royal family, but I know as well as any reasonable person that the Romanovs will not rule Russia forever.

*YUSUPOV is a bit shocked.*

YUSUPOV

What?

RASPUTIN

Come on Felix, you can't believe they're eternal, no empire is.

YUSUPOV

Are you doing it?

RASPUTIN

What?

YUSUPOV

Are you telling me that you're working to end the Romanov rule?

RASPUTIN

Of course not. I love them. I love them more than most people ever have or could even understand. When I was a young boy in Tobolsk I wanted to be brought out of the cold, but Siberia is where the Rasputin family belonged. So many Rasputins live in Siberia that it's hard to travel anywhere around without finding my kin. I came to St. Petersburg because of the Virgin Mary, but I left because I wanted something better for myself. I've played my hand in ways I never expected when I first set out, but God has guided me, and I've had to act in my own self-interest on many occasion, but my life was made just a little easier the day that Nicholas made me Rasputinovi.

YUSUPOV

They did that?

RASPUTIN

What are you asking me?

YUSUPOV

They made you Rasputinovi on their own?

RASPUTIN

I know what you're asking. Yes, I asked them to give me the name. Is that such a crime?

YUSUPOV

I wasn't saying...

RASPUTIN

I'm their friend, and I wanted to leave the world I came from behind and start a new life in a new place with a new family; so I asked them to make me new because it meant nothing to them, and it meant everything to me. Some people may have assumed that they did so without my asking, and I didn't correct them, and since then, that fact has sought to undermine me, like so many of my deeds.

YUSUPOV

Are you really trying to tell me that all the rumours about you are simply people trying to undermine you? That everything you've done has been fully in the interest of the Romanov family?

RASPUTIN

No, not all the rumours are false. I told you I'm not perfect, but I have never done anything to undermine the Romanovs. If I could change what runs in my veins, I'd make them my flesh and blood, but my love for the family does not mean that I'm to blame for all of their shortcomings. They're human too.

YUSUPOV

If it isn't you, in some way, then why does everyone blame you then? Why would we all be a part of this conspiracy?

RASPUTIN

What's all of this coming from? I thought you realized you didn't want to kill me anymore.

YUSUPOV

I said I didn't feel comfortable taking someone's life when I hadn't weighed all the factors.

*Slight pause.*

Now I'm weighing them.

*RASPUTIN looks at YUSUPOV very intently.*

RASPUTIN

If you're really trying to weigh things and come to a real conclusion, think about it yourself... why would people vilify me?

*YUSUPOV thinks.*

What's different about me as opposed to you, Monsieur Philippe, or anyone else who associates themselves with the family?



*YUSUPOV thinks more.*

Be honest, what was the initial bias you had against me? What's the only real difference?

*YUSUPOV understands.*

YUSUPOV

The rest of us aren't peasants.

RASPUTIN

And there you have it.

YUSUPOV

You don't mean to suggest you support a classist rebellion?

RASPUTIN

I'm here to prove something... it may not have been my goal when I started, but things change, and I realize more my place in history.

YUSUPOV

What place is that?

RASPUTIN

I'm the peasant who made it... and the peasant who was murdered for it and then blamed for the fall of an empire.

YUSUPOV

The Russian Empire has not fallen.

RASPUTIN

Not yet, but look around; I mean, it's the reason you invited me into your home to kill me. You see the Empire flailing and failing. It's only a matter of time before the people of Russia change something. Once they have their Napoleon I fear it'll be revolution and war. I only hope the bloodshed isn't gratuitous... and that my bloodshed minimizes the effect.

YUSUPOV

You think the people will rebel?

RASPUTIN

Do you not?

*YUSUPOV doesn't want to admit he believes  
that as well.*

YUSUPOV

How will your death minimize the bloodshed?

RASPUTIN

I hope there's mourn and regret. Sympathy for the peasants of the people. You can never understand the drive it takes to get here and the constitution it takes to push yourself that much... it's a quality only the people have, and to put that much into improving your quality of life just to be struck down because you're an outsider... can you tell me that doesn't strike a chord with you and make you feel a twinge of sympathy for me?

YUSUPOV

It does.

RASPUTIN

The let all of those who agreed with you and the others have that twinge in their hearts when my blood is spilt. Isn't that something worth believing in?

YUSUPOV

You want to be a martyr?

RASPUTIN

I want to be a catalyst for change. Even if no one ever understands what I came on this earth to do, my actions and inactions will mean something. They do mean something. In fact, I think they already mean something to you.

YUSUPOV

That's true.

RASPUTIN

Don't you understand what you're putting into effect here?

YUSUPOV

Me?

RASPUTIN

Your killing me. It's not just taking me out; it's igniting a red flame on Russian soil that you can never put out. And flames have a tendency to grow beyond our borders, as much as we may try to keep them at bay.

YUSUPOV

I don't know if I'm ready to cause a revolution.

RASPUTIN

Then what did you come here for? Your reasons may have changed, but did you not want to make this a better world?

YUSUPOV

Why can't Vlad do it?

RASPUTIN

Because Vladimir isn't here, and Vladimir doesn't understand! But now you do... and you can be a part of this.

YUSUPOV

I don't know if I trust myself anymore.

RASPUTIN

I can see the future Felix. There's war and bloodshed. There are times of darkness that seem so hopeless that a heart can barely breathe in the world, but beyond all that, there's a glimmer of hope for a better world. A place of sunshine where people care about each other. Not just those they're familiar with, but there's a future where people travel across the world simply to understand each other and help however they can.

YUSUPOV

I don't see the future like you Grigori... I can't see past my own understanding.

RASPUTIN

That's what we're here for. I want you to see this future with me. A better future, but we can't be complicit and believe things will get better without us. We have to put our hands on the gears and push them forward.

YUSUPOV

Okay, Rasputin! I understand that you want things to change. I get it, but I'm no revolutionary. I'm a Count, a prince, an aristocrat. I wasn't born with that drive. How can I be a part of a movement I have nothing to do with?

RASPUTIN

You have to take that first step.

YUSUPOV

What step?

RASPUTIN

A step into understanding.

YUSUPOV

Is that not what I'm doing? Do you not see me here trying! My bowels are upside down and I'm out of sorts because I feel like my entire life isn't my own, but something that's been forced upon me. So in a way, I understand. I understand that my life is so different from yours, but that doesn't mean I can feel that. I still feel so foreign to a life that needs change like that. I just know to keep things under control and wanting them to stay the same.

RASPUTIN

Things will never be the same. Whether you walk away from tonight a murderer or not, you'll walk away changed, and Russia will change with or without you.

YUSUPOV

But, Grigori, I want to understand! I do. I want to understand your life and where you are in history, but the more I understand the harder it is for me to kill you.

*Slight pause.*

I don't want to murder you Grigori. Your sins don't warrant death.

RASPUTIN

Don't you see that's what I wanted you to understand from the beginning? Killing isn't supposed to be easy or justified. It's ending a life, a life that's the same as your own. You can't take a soul without giving away some of your soul with it. But even if it isn't justified, taking a life can be understood and appreciated.

YUSUPOV

But does that make it right?

RASPUTIN

No!

*Slight pause.*

No, it doesn't. Killing can be the right action, but it's never righteous. It's always murder.

*YUSUPOV tries not to break down.*

YUSUPOV

Why did you come here tonight Grigori?

RASPUTIN

What?

YUSUPOV

Why did you come? If you knew I was planning to murder you, why would you come?

RASPUTIN

Did I not tell you?

YUSUPOV

You told me why you feel you need to die, but you didn't tell me why you felt you should come here and indulge your own vanity by unearthing my entire life.

RASPUTIN

My vanity?

YUSUPOV

Did you need to change my life, my understanding? What can I do after this? I can't be a part of a People's Revolution! I'm married to the Romanovs! I'm a prince in the Empire. There's not a place for me in this war beyond tonight. So what am I to do, but crumble under my own deeds that I know have some semblance of understanding? You came here to make me understand, but you've destroyed me just as I sought to destroy you, though my destruction will live with me past tonight.

*Pause.*

RASPUTIN

I can't give you sympathy Felix.

*YUSUPOV looks at RASPUTIN.*

I feel your pain, but the veil has been lifted, and your reaction amounts to "woe is me." I'm sorry, but there are other lives out there truly in need, and you've ignored them your whole life. I'm not going to apologize for forcing you to understand that there are lives out there who matter. Not just lives, but there are people who are murdered under false pretenses and people call it justified. Their lives matter, but are completely ignored, and you sit here weeping that now that someone has brought their own death to your doorstep that you have to look at it. No Felix. No. I won't indulge this vanity of yours.

YUSUPOV

My life has the same value as anyone else's.

RASPUTIN

But you're not dying, Felix!! I am! They ... are! Your life has worth, but you're not the one who's being murdered without consequence. Do you think after you murder me that you'll be put on trial? Imprisoned? That you'll have any consequences for my death? If I killed you instead, I would be made an example of and put to death for treason. Russia already values your life, but it doesn't value the rest of us. And you sit here and plea for my pity....

*Pause.*

I can't Felix. I care for you and truly want a better life for you, but I can't offer you any sympathy or remorse.

YUSUPOV

I'm sorry.

RASPUTIN

What?

YUSUPOV

I'm sorry Grigori.

RASPUTIN

Thank you.

YUSUPOV

I'm sorry for all of the evils of Russia.

RASPUTIN

It's not the evils of Russia; it's the evils of your people.

YUSUPOV

My people are the Russian people.

RASPUTIN

No, they're not. I know you think that, but you're bound by class before you're bound by Russia.

YUSUPOV

I suppose I am.

RASPUTIN

I know you can't rectify all the wrongdoings of the rich and powerful; they're far too great, and I'm ashamed I've added to the toll since I've risen in St. Petersburg, but I have a chance to make up for my actions, and so do you.

YUSUPOV

You still want me to kill you...

RASPUTIN

I want a better Russia!

YUSUPOV

But why can't you do that yourself? Why can't you leave my palace and work to change Russia from your position of power?

RASPUTIN

I have a life such as yours. You're a prince and a Romanov. I am a peasant and a Romanov. Your position has you placed well within the highest of Russia. I'm the highest of the lowest. Call me king of the decrepit, lord of the lost, the Peasant Tsar of the People. I'm something different than I was born, and I, like you, can't make the change in the Romanovs that I would like to.

YUSUPOV

But you have Nicholas in your pocket.

RASPUTIN

I don't. I'm just his friend.

YUSUPOV

Just his friend? Come on, you advise both Nicholas and Alexandra.

RASPUTIN

I give my opinion, as their loyal friend, but I can't discuss with them their downfall. I fear they don't see it coming. As sheltered and kept from the turmoil of the lower class, they are even more ignorant. I can't be upset with them for understanding; no one ever let them, and I fear they're too far removed.

YUSUPOV

Can't you try to talk to them?

RASPUTIN

You don't think I have?

YUSUPOV

I clearly don't know what you've done Rasputin.

RASPUTIN

If I was the serpent whispering my deepest desires into the Tsar and Tsarina, Russia would not have palaces and princes that cater to people like you, but I can't change that. I feel sorrow for the peasants who look up to me expecting that I can, but I'm only one man.

YUSUPOV

There are other peasants in Russia, why don't you lead them? You spoke of a Napoleon... are you not in the unique position of being the Napoleonic leader of the peasants?

RASPUTIN

People don't trust me. You don't trust me because I'm peasant born, the people don't trust me because I made a place for myself in St. Petersburg.

YUSUPOV

It can't be that simple.

RASPUTIN

I came here to honor God. I believe He had a plan for me. I've never known what that plan was. I thought I knew, but the more I realize I'm clueless to His will. I like to believe my death will improve and reduce the effects of an upcoming revolution, but all I can do is believe.

YUSUPOV

If you don't know, and you only believe, then how can you ask me to murder you as if it will be the catalyst for the rest of all of time?

RASPUTIN

Because it will be.

YUSUPOV

But you just said you didn't know.

RASPUTIN

I can't Felix. None of us can really know anything, but that doesn't mean we're not right about what we believe.



YUSUPOV

Then why do you have such confidence in these beliefs if it's not something as simple as conviction?

RASPUTIN

Because I've weighed it through logic.

YUSUPOV

What's the logic then? I feel like all you've expressed to me are the conclusions. Why? Truly why should I, Felix Felixovich Yusupov, stand here and murder you, Grigori Yefimovich Rasputin, tonight?

RASPUTIN

Because I need all of this to mean something.

YUSUPOV

So that's it... what it was from the beginning, indulging your vanity?

RASPUTIN

No! I won't lie, my pride, my vanity yearns for my death to be meaningful and not be like all of the other peasants who never made it West of the Ural Mountains.

YUSUPOV

Then what else is there other than simply your pride?

RASPUTIN

The Tsarist Russia is over. Our place within her structures is done. Russia will live on and evolve on her own, but we'll either be dead or barely existing on the sidelines. I don't have to have faith in this, I see it before my eyes as plain as day.

YUSUPOV

The people can't be so close to implementing a new Russia.

RASPUTIN

Go into the streets and have one conversation with a human being who's never stepped inside a palace and tell me there's not an energy brewing among the masses, looking for change. Until you've tried to hear the people and understand their perspective, don't tell me what the people can or cannot be.

YUSUPOV

How can I be so clueless to my own homeland?

RASPUTIN

You haven't tried.

*Pause.*

YUSUPOV

I just can't kill you Grigori. I never thought I'd have such a hard time with this, but as I've come to the end of this road. I realize you're not the man thought you were, and I'm not the man I thought I was; I just can't do it.

*Beat.*

RASPUTIN

How were you going to do it?

YUSUPOV

What?

RASPUTIN

You never told me. And I really wanna know. How you'd kill a man.

*Pause.*

*YUSUPOV slowly goes behind a counter to grab a pistol and puts it on the counter.*

*RASPUTIN begins to walk over to the gun.*

A pistol? Huh. Was this your idea or Vlad's?

*YUSUPOV inhales and exhales deeply.*

YUSUPOV

Vladimir.

RASPUTIN

Yeah, I definitely believe that.

YUSUPOV

What's to come of him?

RASPUTIN

What?

YUSUPOV

Do you think I could change his mind?

RASPUTIN

Change it about what?

YUSUPOV

Killing you, if you and I talk to him we can convince him that you don't need to die.

RASPUTIN

No, he'd only kill you too. I don't know if it's possible in any way, but your best bet to make any headway through that thick skull is to...

*RASPUTIN walks over and picks the pistol  
up.*

... kill me, and make him see.

YUSUPOV

Look-

RASPUTIN

Felix. This is why we're here. It's okay.

*RASPUTIN puts the pistol in his hands.*

Don't think of it as ending my life... you've already done that. Think of it as starting the revolution. Russia will never be the same.

YUSUPOV

What if it's worse?

RASPUTIN

It might, but change is needed. Nothing is getting better if things stay the same, but if you kill me, and send a ripple of unrest through Russia, then there's hope.

*YUSUPOV starts to get upset and seems to  
be progressively losing control.*

YUSUPOV

Hope for what? There's no guarantees.

RASPUTIN

There never will be, but that doesn't mean you can't take a leap of faith!

YUSUPOV

But I-

RASPUTIN

I have nothing left to do here! Let me make an impact this way.

*RASPUTIN moves YUSUPOV's hand to point the gun point-blank at his own forehead.*

YUSUPOV

No!

RASPUTIN

Do it!

YUSUPOV

I can't shoot you in the head; you don't deserve that.

RASPUTIN

It's only a body, Felix. It'll convince Vladimir that you meant it and the world will remember it.

*YUSUPOV pulls the gun down and turns away from RASPUTIN.*

YUSUPOV

No, I-

*RASPUTIN grabs YUSUPOV by his arms and forces him back towards him.*

*RASPUTIN shakes him as he yells at him.*

RASPUTIN

Felix! This is it! This is our reckoning!

*The gun goes off into RASPUTIN's chest.*

## YUSUPOV

Oh my!

*YUSUPOV pulls away from RASPUTIN and shoots him again in the chest.*

*RASPUTIN falls backwards harshly and starts to cough.*

Grigori!

*YUSUPOV kneels down to RASPUTIN and tries to look at his chest to see if anything can be done, but there's already a lot of blood.*

Grigori....

*RASPUTIN squirms a little to try to gain some composure.*

*YUSUPOV scrambles a little not knowing what to do.*

Grigori.

*RASPUTIN, unable to speak, struggles to grab YUSUPOV by the shirt to get his attention.*

*RASPUTIN uses his other hand and seems to search around his and Felix's body until he finds the pistol.*

*RASPUTIN takes the pistol, then he takes YUSUPOV's hand and puts the gun in his hand, and points the gun at his forehead.*

*The gun goes off and RASPUTIN falls back dead.*

*YUSUPOV drops the gun on RASPUTIN's body.*

Grigori.

*Long pause.*

*YUSUPOV stands up slowly and starts to walk back towards the counter.*

*Lights turn red while YUSUPOV leans against the counter and looks out, either down or at the wall.*

### SCENE THREE

*The red lights fade into a dark yellow.*

*Two pairs of footsteps can be heard rushing down the stairs.*

*PAVLOVICH rushes into the room with PURISHKEVICH walking slowly once he gets into the basement.*

*PAVLOVICH walks over to RASPUTIN and looks down at him, while PURISHKEVICH glances at RASPUTIN, then immediately stares at YUSUPOV.*

PAVLOVICH

You did it.

*Slight pause.*

You killed Grigori Rasputin.

PURISHKEVICH

Looks that way at least.

PAVLOVICH

After all this time, the Russian Empire is free from the meddling hands of the Siberian traitor!

*PAVLOVICH crouches down to inspect the body more, but is careful not to get any blood on himself.*

Three shots! That's pretty brutal. I'll be honest, part of me was scared when I heard three bullets that they weren't all yours.

PURISHKEVICH

If they were.

*YUSUPOV is visibly angered by this, but doesn't turn to look at PURISHKEVICH.*

PAVLOVICH

What do you mean? There were three shots, and Grigori has three wounds. One right in the middle of the head! Wow!

PURISHKEVICH

Why don't you have the gun, Felix?

PAVLOVICH

Huh?

PURISHKEVICH

Could you really do it?

*YUSUPOV turns around to aggressively confront PURISHKEVICH.*

YUSUPOV

What is your problem!?

PURISHKEVICH

Do you miss Grigori now that he's gone?

YUSUPOV

He's dead Vlad! I put three bullets inside his body and stopped his heart! What more did you want? Jesus! It's not enough that I've ended a man's life for you, but to be hounded and hounded and maligned in such a way to vilify me... for doing exactly what you wanted! I put a bullet in his brain Vladimir! What more do you want? What about this whole ordeal did I do so demonstrably wrong to make you so critical of everything I do right?

*Pause.*

*PURISHKEVICH maintains eye contact with YUSUPOV.*

PURISHKEVICH

I can see it in you, Yusupov. Your eyes tell me the story. You don't have to fail a task for me to malign you, because I can see the weakness inside you, the yearning to fail, raging like fire. If I didn't push you, we'd have a living Rasputin right now, but I pushed you like you needed and he rightfully has a bullet in his brain.

YUSUPOV

You insufferable prick! He's dead because I killed him! Not because you decided to be a kozyol! What kind of an ego do you have to think that your manipulating people is what makes everything work?

*Beat.*

What's really so different between your manipulating me and Grigori's manipulation of Nicholas? Are you so much better?

PURISHKEVICH

Yes. I'm not bringing about the fall of the Russian Empire.

YUSUPOV

Maybe you are. Maybe I am. Maybe the Russian Empire could stand to fall.

*Pause.*

PAVLOVICH

What?

*PURISHKEVICH grins.*

YUSUPOV

What? Are we going to pretend we have the perfect empire?

PAVLOVICH

Felix, don't talk ill of the motherland.

YUSUPOV

I've given everything to Russia, and like it or not, Grigori gave everything he has for Russia as well. Even if we don't agree with how he gave it all.



PAVLOVICH

But Felix, he betrayed the ideals of the Empire! He conspired and twisted the royal ear! Surely you can't think he was assisting Russia with his crimes.

YUSUPOV

He tried. How much more can you ask of a man, but to try?

PAVLOVICH

Felix-

PURISHKEVICH

He got to you... didn't he?

YUSUPOV

Seeing another man's perspective doesn't mean he got to me.

PURISHKEVICH

I was right about that twinkle in your eye. The despair of losing him.

YUSUPOV

I have the despair of killing a man in my heart! Do you ask me to abandon my humanity? It's not so convenient for the rest of us, we weren't all carved from stone!

PURISHKEVICH

Oh, my broken heart.

PAVLOVICH

Felix, we're not trying to condemn you. You did the Empire a tremendous service today. As far as I'm concerned, your business is your own.

YUSUPOV

Why is it my own? If it's anyone's, it's all of ours. You cannot wipe your hands clean just because you don't have blood on them.

PAVLOVICH

Look-

YUSUPOV

Here....

*YUSUPOV moves over to PAVLOVICH and wipes his bloody hands on PAVLOVICH's face and neck.*

PAVLOVICH

Felix!

*YUSUPOV bends down and gets more of RASPUTIN's blood on his hands.*

*YUSUPOV starts to wipe his hands on PURISHKEVICH, but PURISHKEVICH quickly grabs his arms and YUSUPOV falls to his knees.*

YUSUPOV

Why did we kill him, Vladimir? Why do we have to have all this death?

*Slight pause.*

*YUSUPOV looks up at PURISHKEVICH.*

You're the biggest coward I've ever met.

*PURISHKEVICH throws away YUSUPOV's hands and starts to walk away from him.*

*YUSUPOV grabs the gun from RASPUTIN's body.*

*YUSUPOV stands up, points the gun at PURISHKEVICH, and cocks the gun.*

*PURISHKEVICH stops when he hears the cock.*

PAVLOVICH

Felix?

YUSUPOV

Look at me, Vladimir. Look at me!

*PURISHKEVICH turns towards YUSUPOV.*

What would you do, if a man-made a point of disrespecting you in your own home? In your basement.

*PURISHKEVICH looks intently at YUSUPOV.*

PURISHKEVICH

I'd kill him right then and there.

*PURISHKEVICH glances at RASPUTIN.*

YUSUPOV

You want me to kill you?

PAVLOVICH

Can we stop this?

YUSUPOV

Answer me, do you want me to kill you?

PURISHKEVICH

You can't even make the decision? It has to be made for you? What did you do when Rasputin told you he didn't want to die? How did he not walk right over you? With his cunning and manipulation, I don't understand how you're not the one dead in the middle of the floor right now.

PAVLOVICH

Vladimir, can you cut it out? This is freaking me out.

PURISHKEVICH

Come on Felix. Make a decision.

*YUSUPOV sits down and keeps the gun on PURISHKEVICH.*

YUSUPOV

No, you know what, Vladimir? That's not what this is. We're not playing that game where I'm faced with the decision you're proposing to me like I'm not a man if I don't kill you. This is my game, not yours.

PURISHKEVICH

All right. Tell me the rules.

*Pause.*

PAVLOVICH

I don't like this.

*YUSUPOV chugs the drink he had from before.*

YUSUPOV

Dmitri, I seem to have finished my drink. Would you consider getting me a refill?

PAVLOVICH

Goddammit, yeah, sure.

*PAVLOVICH grabs YUSUPOV's empty glass.*

I'm going to need another drink myself.

*PAVLOVICH starts to walk away.*

You need another one VI-

YUSUPOV

He's just fine.

*PAVLOVICH walks out of the room to get the drinks.*

*PURISHKEVICH stares at YUSUPOV.*

PURISHKEVICH

So, do I get to hear these rules, or are you going to leave me in endless suspense?

YUSUPOV

Answer me this first: what would it take for you to kill me?

PURISHKEVICH

I don't understand the question.

YUSUPOV

I'll make things clear. How far would I have to push you for you to pull the trigger?

PURISHKEVICH

I'm not the one with the gun in my hand, Felix.

*YUSUPOV stands up, walks over to PURISHKEVICH while still pointing the gun closer and closer to PURISHKEVICH's head, then stops.*

*YUSUPOV takes his gun and puts it in PURISHKEVICH's hand so it's faced towards himself.*

YUSUPOV

What would I have to do for you to pull the trigger? I'm sitting here in front of you. You have the gun to my head.

*The gun is only pointing at YUSUPOV's chest.*

*YUSUPOV gestures for PURISHKEVICH to point the gun up at his head.*

... you have a gun to my head.

*PURISHKEVICH points the gun up at his head.*

There, you have a gun to my head, and I've already upset you enough to where you've threatened my life multiple times tonight... what would make you do it?

PURISHKEVICH

Are you asking me to kill you?

*YUSUPOV pulls away his gaze for a moment.*

YUSUPOV

No. Not at all; I'm not you. I don't think asking a man to kill me is good fun... or an appropriate test of a man's will, or anything worthwhile. At least not for me. I just want to know what's your threshold. So, what would it take?

*PAVLOVICH walks back down with the drinks.*

PAVLOVICH

What's going on now? Vladimir, come on, we don't need this... there's no reason to kill...

YUSUPOV

Don't worry Dmitri, he's not killing me yet.

PURISHKEVICH

Are you getting off on this?

YUSUPOV

Why can't you answer the question?

PURISHKEVICH

I'm not going to kill you Felix... is that what you're looking for? I like to play mind games, and I was-

YUSUPOV

I know all that Vlad. That's not what we're talking about, we're past that.

PURISHKEVICH

Then what is this, if not a mind game?

YUSUPOV

Perspective.

PURISHKEVICH

What?

YUSUPOV

What do you think this is?

PURISHKEVICH

I think you're trying to get back at me.

YUSUPOV

For doing what? Not killing me?

PURISHKEVICH

Stop fooling around.

YUSUPOV

I'm not-

PURISHKEVICH

Then what is this?

YUSUPOV

I'm giving you the gravity of the situation. We're sitting around a corpse, but why is he the dead man... and not us?

*PURISHKEVICH leans forward.*

PURISHKEVICH

We didn't betray the Empire.

*Beat.*

Or at least Dmitri and I didn't. I'm truly not so sure about you.

PAVLOVICH

Come on Vladimir. He killed Rasputin.

PURISHKEVICH

Did he? Or did Grigori do it himself?

PAVLOVICH

What kind of a question is that?

PURISHKEVICH

I don't know. I just see something in Felix's eyes. A guilt I don't understand.

*YUSUPOV maintains his intensity but seems to be crying at the same time.*

YUSUPOV

I have guilt in my eyes because I murdered a man.

PURISHKEVICH

You killed him. It was a righteous act-

YUSUPOV

There's no such thing as a righteous murder! It may be the right thing to do, but never righteous.

*Slight pause.*

And I'm afraid I'll be wondering all my life what kind of murder this was.

*Beat.*

Who do you think he was? You mocked me earlier for getting close to him when I first met him... at least I cared enough to talk to the peasant... unlike the two of you.

*Beat.*

Who are you to judge him? You don't know what he went through, you don't know what I went through. Where's the blood on your hands?

*Slight pause.*

It's not enough! You two need blood on your hands for your murder! I'm not the only one who murdered him, we all did.

PAVLOVICH

You're right Felix, we all murdered him. We're tainted with his blood too.

YUSUPOV

You have my blood on your hands.

PURISHKEVICH

What does that mean?

YUSUPOV

I don't know.

*YUSUPOV walks slowly over to  
RASPUTIN's body.*

*Lights start to fade around while YUSUPOV  
stands over RASPUTIN's body.*

*One light is left on YUSUPOV and  
RASPUTIN and turns red as YUSUPOV  
kneels down to his body.*

All of a sudden I see that his life matters. And I guess it didn't before... and I'm left with blood. Just blood.

*Blackout.*

*The End.*