

PART 1/6

- 1 **NARRATION:** It is December 27th 1938. This is the city of Peking in northern China. The city has seen an overnight dusting of snow. But it is the bone-chillingly cold winds that sweep down from the Gobi Desert that are keeping people indoors, sheltering around their stoves for warmth.
- 2 It has been six months since the Japanese invasion of China and their occupation of Peking – food and fuel are in short supply, jobs scarce, inflation is rampant, the city under martial law as Japanese soldiers patrol the streets. Peking's population of three million people is swollen with refugees from the surrounding countryside seeking sanctuary from the fighting. The last year has seen a crime wave of unprecedented fury sweep across the increasingly desperate city. It is about to reach its peak.

SC 1.1. INT. CAR – DAY

1 SHURA Remember the drill. We make it quick, we keep it calm. In and out.

2 JOE What if they don't hand over the key?

3 PAVEL They will, when they see the guns.

4 SHURA: Good luck everybody. Masks on.

FX: They put masks on.

5 JOE Let's do this!

6 PAVEL Here's to getting rich.

FX: They get out of the car, and walk towards the bank under:

7 **NARRATION:** One criminal gang in particular has all Peking talking. An international gang rumoured to have Polish, German, British, and American members and run by, what the newspapers would later claim was, a 'Russian criminal mastermind'. In the space of a fortnight the gang had raided the city's most exclusive jewellers. Then they had cleaned out a supposedly secure warehouse of gold bullion, jewellery, and pearls. Finally, now, just two days after Christmas, and close to Peking's foreign enclave of embassies, banks, clubs, and luxurious homes – the so-called Legation Quarter – the daring gang are holding up the main branch of the Bank of Peking.

SC 1.2 **INT. PEKING BANK – DAY (RPT OF 5.6)**

FX: **The gang burst into the bank, shouting as they as they go:**

1 SHURA Everybody down, everybody down on the floor! Zai Dishang!

FX: **The people in the bank scream.**

2 SHURA I said down!

3 PAVEL Hey you, teller. Give me the key.

4 TELLER What key?

5 PAVEL The key to the safe. Yaoshi!

FX: **He shoots. Everyone screams.**

6 **NARRATION:** **The raid happened with rapid precision. Later the terrified bank tellers, and mostly Chinese customers, would tell the police the men spoke several languages to each other, Russian maybe, they had accents. They were tall, though their boss seemed shorter. They all wore masks, but you could see their blue and grey eyes. They were foreigners. Outside the bank two Ford saloon cars revved their engines waiting to drive the gang away, pointing towards the nearest gate in the city's Tartar Wall and the open countryside just beyond.**

SC 1.3. EXT. THE BANK - DAY

FX: The sound of the gang getting into the getaway cars.

1 PAVEL: Go go go go go! Get out of here.

FX: The sound of cars screeching their getaway.

2 NARRATION: The cars race off through a narrow gate in the ancient city wall, scattering pedestrians, and disappear off towards the remote hills to the west of Peking.

SC 1.4. INT. SPEEDING CAR - DAY

3 SHURA: We did it. We did it!

4 JOE: Holy Shit! Whoo-hoooo!

5 NARRATION: In broad daylight they have just got away with the most audacious robbery in Peking's living memory. The gang's haul is the largest of any bank robbery in the city's history. To this day not a single cent, penny, dollar, or yuan of any denomination has ever been recovered.

6 The heist hit the headlines as far away as America and Australia:

SC 1.5. NEWSREEL FOOTAGE

1 NEWSREEL REPORTER: PEKING BANK ROBBERY: INTERNATIONAL GANG AT LARGE.

IT WAS REVEALED YESTERDAY THAT AN INTERNATIONAL GANG LED BY A NOTORIOUS RUSSIAN CRIMINAL MASTERMIND, WELL KNOWN TO THE POLICE FORCES OF BOTH PEKING AND SHANGHAI, STOLE A LARGE AMOUNT OF GOLD BULLION & CASH IN VARIOUS CURRENCIES FROM THE MAIN BRANCH OF THE BANK OF PEKING. IT IS BELIEVED THAT THE RUSSIAN LEADER OF THE ROBBERS MAY HAVE FLED PEKING TO HIDE IN THE INTERNATIONAL SETTLEMENTS OF SHANGHAI.

2 **NARRATION:** **So who was this supposed Russian criminal mastermind who had put together the gang of ruthless and professional thieves? A gang that repeatedly took advantage of the chaos in Peking during the early months of the Japanese occupation?**

3 **The rumour mill said that it was a member of the city's Russian émigré community – the so-called White Russians, those who had fled for their lives from the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 and settled in China. Law abiding for the most part – struggling to rebuild their lives in a foreign land after being exiled from their own country. But among them was a small criminal element centred around the city's foreign-controlled Red Light District of bars, drug dens and brothels, known as "The Badlands".**

4 **Perhaps the Russian criminal mastermind was somewhere in the Badlands, sheltered by the city's foreign criminal milieu?**

1 **Perhaps hiding out in the Western Hills, just outside Peking, in one of the plethora of old temples and inns that spotted the largely deserted and unpoliced area? And maybe the newspapers were right and the gang had fled to the International Settlement of Shanghai, most probably to its louche and corrupt French Concession. Wherever - the authorities seemed to be having trouble identifying their main culprit.**

SC 1.6. INT. SHANGHAI POLICE STATION, 1938

FX: Busy office. Telephones ringing etc.

2 POLICE OFFICER: ATTENTION TOUS LES POLICIERS.

3 **NARRATION: The Peking Police sent the French police in Shanghai a description of the criminal mastermind they sought:**

4 POLICE OFFICER: FEATURES: ASIATIC OR WESTERN; USUAL DRESS: WESTERN OR ASIAN; SHOES: WESTERN OR ASIAN; LANGUAGES USUALLY SPOKEN: RUSSIAN, PEKINGNESE, ENGLISH, FRENCH; APPROXIMATE AGE: 30S, 40S; HAIR WORN CROPPED; MARITAL STATUS: UNKNOWN; SURNAME: MAYBE GIRALDI, PERHAPS SOSNITSKY, UNKNOWN FOR SURE.

5 **NARRATION: It was perhaps one of the most confusing bulletins ever issued. I pity the poor policeman looking for this chameleon-like mastermind in the crowded lanes and rookeries of Shanghai's Frenchtown.**

But back in Peking, on the traditional alleyways known as hutongs where the Russian exiles lived, in the backroom bars of the Badlands and in the salons and clubs where the city's high-class society enjoyed low-class gossip, one name was heard again and again.

1 **That name was "Shura". And everyone, absolutely everyone, from the lowliest rickshaw-puller to the most senior diplomat in Peking, knew Shura, and they all had a story to tell...**

FX: **Theme music.**

SC 1.7. **INT. NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT**

2 MC: Nushimen Xianshengmen, Ladies and Gentleman, Gentleman and Ladies, and, especially, everyone in between....welcome. Welcome to the story of a beautiful young woman filled with hopes and dreams in the snows of our old Mother Russia. Welcome, to the story of a clever man, the naïve lover of a fearsome Chinese warlord and a handsome young racing jockey. Set during two revolutions, and two world wars. It is a tale of bank robbers, jewel thieves, bordello madams, drug smugglers and...survival against the whirlwinds of history.

3 **NARRATION: From BBC Radio 3 - this is Peking Noir.**

FX: **Music ends.**

4 **I'm Paul French, a writer and historian who focuses on China in the first half of the twentieth century. I've been on Shura's trail for 15 years since I first heard the name. During that time I've been trying to get to grips with the enigma that was Shura. I tried to track Shura through the paper records, digging around in archives in half a dozen countries.**

- 1 I've spoken and corresponded with elderly Russian émigrés who once lived in Peking and now live as far afield as Sydney, Singapore and Sao Paulo. But believe me, trying to understand Shura is like trapping a moth, you lift the glass and it flies off again.
- 2 I could not even be sure that I was always following the trail of the same person. I was pretty sure I was looking for Alexander Mikhailovitch Sosnitsky, a man. But sometimes I would come across an Alexandra, or Alexandra Mikhailovna, though both seemed to be my Shura.
- 3 Shura is a unisex Russian nickname for Alexander or Alexandra. Mikhailovitch is the patronymic (or name derived from your father) 'son of Mikhail', Mikhailovna is 'daughter of Mikhail'.
- 4 Then, some time later in my research, I kept coming across a Shura Giral di who seemed to have much in common with Shura Sosnitsky. But this Shura Giral di appeared in different guises – even gender. Could they possibly all be the same Shura? What was going on?
- 5 And to make matters worse; whatever anyone declared categorically about Shura, someone else insisted on the exact opposite. Shura was handsome and beautiful; Shura was kind and good, Shura was exploitative and evil. Shura was just another struggling White Russian refugee trying to get by; Shura was the heart and brains of a gang that ran clubs, sex workers, illicit booze and drugs, when not robbing banks and stealing gems to fence in Shanghai. Shura loved ballet and cabaret, creating the Shura Giral di Dance Troupe that topped the bill at all the best Peking nightclubs.

1 **Shura moved Zelig-like across the seedy landscape of interwar Peking, all things to all men – and women. As I delved deeper into my research, I could almost sense Shura, just off-stage, mocking my efforts, wanting to tell me I was wasting my time.**

2 **Years passed...But still I wanted to know. Shura kept appearing in my research – in the crowd at the horse races in Peking; at the opening of a nightclub in Shanghai; spotted strolling along the Grand Praia of Macao, trading silver ingots in Manila's Chinatown...I got the hint. It seemed Shura was daring me to dig deeper.**

3 **So, I'll take that dare, gather all the evidence I can, dig as deep as possible back into the tumultuous and chaotic China of the 1920s, 30s and 40s, and ask, who was Shura? And what you're about to hear is what I found.**

FX: Theme music.

4 **NARRATION:** **I should explain how I first came to know Shura. It was in a long-forgotten archive on a cold and rainy February day in London. I was researching the story that would become my book *Midnight in Peking*...**

5 **Pamela Werner, the young adopted daughter of a former British diplomat had been murdered in Peking in January 1937, about a year before the robbery of the Bank of Peking. In the chaos of the Japanese invasion of China nobody ever found her killer. Pamela's father, who was a strait-laced man in his seventies, had sought out Shura as a guide to the city's Russian émigré underworld where he believed the killer was hiding.**

SC 1.8. **EXT. THE KAVKAZ – DAY**

FX: **The sound of Werner arriving outside the Kavkaz, busy street.**

- 1 RICKSHAW GUY: Hey, Mr Man, you need a rickshaw ride?
- 2 WERNER I'm looking for a club, a place called the Kavkaz? I was told it was here?
- 3 RICK/ GUY: That's it, over there. Who you looking for?
- 4 WERNER: Shura Giraldi? You know him?
- 5 RICK/ GUY: Ah, all Peking know Shura. But you need to talk to Zaichack. Ask him where Shura is. You'll need an introduction.
- 6 WERNER: Thanks.

FX: **He starts to leave.**

- 7 RICK/ GUY: When you need a ride home, I take you. Okay. Okay? I will wait for you Mr Man.

SC 1.9. **INT THE KAVKAZ – DAY**

- 8 WERNER: Hello? Hello? Is there anybody here? Hello?

FX: **Zaichack comes out of the gloom.**

- 9 ZAICHECK What do you want? Who are you?
- 10 WERNER Are you Zaichack?
- 11 ZAICHECK What's it to you?
- 12 WERNER I need to talk to Shura Giraldi. My name is Edward Werner. I've come to talk to him about my daughter, Pamela... she was murdered. I think he might he might be able to help track down the men that were involved.

(BEAT)

- 1 ZAICHEK: Men? You better come this way.
- 2 **NARRATION:** **Though from two totally different worlds – a Russian émigré on the losing side thrown towards China on the tides of history, and a highly educated British diplomat-scholar who spent his days immersed in his extensive private library - the stiff and formal Werner found he liked the mercurial Shura though he had been told repeatedly that he should trust him about as far as he could throw him....**

SC 1.10. **INT. THE KAVKAZ**

- 3 SHURA So why come to me, Mr Werner?
- 4 WERNER I need names. And I was told you could help.
- 5 SHURA Why?
- 6 WERNER You know everyone in the Badlands, know their business, know the good from the bad? Or so I'm told.
- 7 SHURA You should start with Saxsen. He's a pimp and a drug dealer. I believe he will know about the men you are looking for. You'll find him in the restaurants along Chuanpan Hutong. You'll need to pay him though.
- 8 WERNER That's not a problem -
- 9 SHURA Don't - tell him that. If ever there was a man who would take advantage it's him. Me, on the other hand, I am always happy to help. I have a daughter myself, you know. So I understand. I will pray for your daughter's soul.

FX: **sounds of the Badlands. Jazz plays, maybe we hear Rickshaw guy pestering Werner for a ride.**

1 **NARRATION:** The Badlands of Peking were a tight-knit warren of vice and lust and depravity spread across several hutongs. To many Shura was best remembered as ‘The King of the Badlands’.

2 But I found that that certainly wasn’t everyone’s impression....

FX: Maybe a phone call being placed; Paul answering in his study.

3 **NARRATION:** Vladimir Nelsky, or “Vova” to his friends, had been a stateless young White Russian in Peking and had known the Badlands in its 1930s heyday. Vova contacted me after reading *Midnight in Peking*. He wrote down all he could remember, now an old man living in Brazil for over sixty years. He declared himself shocked that anyone should suggest the man he knew as ‘Diadia Shura’, or Uncle Shura, was a crook.

SC 1.11. NEUTRAL BG

4 **Vova Nelsky:** *Shura was no criminal mastermind, no dope dealer. Shura was a Bohemian, a slightly effeminate and somewhat shady teller of great anecdotes. Shura welcomed everyone into his home, took them all to the countryside, just outside the walls of Peking, to the Patachu Hills among the old ruined temples for the fresh air.*

5 **NARRATION:** At roughly the same time, Sylvia Walker, the daughter of a trained Russian émigré ballet dancer who joined Shura’s dance troupe in the 1930s sent me a letter from her home in Australia where the family emigrated in the 1950s to say she was thrilled to read the name Shura again in connection to the old Peking Badlands, the first time she had in more than sixty years.

1 **She told me she knew for sure that Shura (who, like seemingly everyone I managed to speak to, she had liked immensely) had participated in every aspect of 1930s Peking – good and bad.**

SC 1.12. NEUTRAL BG

2 **Sylvia Walker:** *You know Shura owned or controlled all the nightclubs and cabarets in Peking back then. And all those robberies after the Japanese came, that was Shura. Everyone knew – Russian and Chinese, everyone – that it was Shura, it was common knowledge.*

3 **NARRATION:** **Sylvia had been a young girl when she knew Shura and so saw him as a kindly older figure in the small Russian community of Peking. However, her mother Tatiana, had known Shura intimately.**

SC 1.13. INT. FOH AT THE MANHATTAN CLUB - NIGHT

FX: A waiter approaches Tatiana.

4 WAITER Excuse me Madam, can I help you?

5 TATIANA I'm here to see Shura. I have an appointment. I'm a dancer.

6 WAITER Backstage. The door is over there.

7 **NARRATION:** **At just sixteen, Tatiana, the daughter of Russian émigrés to Shanghai, had come to Peking to see Shura about his dance troupe that performed in cabarets throughout the Badlands. Could this Shura – choreographer, lover of the Ballets Russes, the life and soul of every party – also rob banks?**

8 TATIANA Excuse me. I'm here for an audition.

- 1 SHURA Audition?
- 2 TATIANA For the Shura Giraldi dancers? This is the group, no?
- 3 SHURA Are you the ballet dancer from Shanghai?
- 4 TATIANA Yes. My name is Tatiana. I have an appointment.
- 5 **NARRATION:** **When Tatiana first met Shura she recalled he was a slight man with famously petite feet and a perfect set of small white teeth. He was always immaculately groomed and dressed, tweed suits in winter, linens in summer, well-polished brogues, and wore his hair slicked down. He supervised the troupe, but left the rehearsals and choreography to another White Russian man, who before the revolution had run several well-known cabarets in Moscow.**

SC 1.14. NEUTRAL BG

- 6 **Tatiana:** *Shura always treated the girls with respect. Shura let émigré boys with weak lungs spend the summer in a villa in the hills, gardening and recuperating away from the overcrowded slum hutongs they lived in. Shura helped girls who had.... problems... dope fixes, babies they didn't want and couldn't afford to keep, bad men they needed to get away from....sometimes Shura sent them to Shanghai or Harbin to start a new life away from our Peking Badlands; sometimes they just needed a place to stay, a few dollars.*

SC 1.15. INT. THE VILLA – EVENING (RPT OF SC 4.14)

1 MC: Ladies and Gentleman. Welcome to the villa at Paomachang. Isn't it gorgeous? Isn't it big! Isn't it the perfect place for a party!

FX: The crowd whoops and cheers.

2 NARRATION: For a time Shura owned a large house near Paomachang, in the Western Hills, out by the racecourse where foreigners loved to raise and race their stout Mongolian ponies and the Chinese loved to bet on them. In 1937, Tanya was invited to a party at the house with the other girls from the dance troupe, on a short break from the city and its political tensions:

FX: The party is in full swing.

3 MC: Ladies and Gentleman. Your hostess for this evening is now ready to perform.

4 TATIANA: Hostess?

5 MC: Please, put your hands together for the talented, the sensational, the beautiful - Shura!

6 TATIANA: Wait a minute. What's going on? That's not Shura. That's - a woman!

(ZAICHEK LAUGHS.)

7 ZAICHEK Oh that's Shura alright.

8 TATIANA But Shura is a man!

9 ZAICHEK Oh Tatiana, don't you know? Shura can be anyone Shura wants to be!

FX: Gasps and laughs from audience.

- 1 **NARRATION:** This was the first time Tatiana had witnessed Shura's effortless transformation. The other girls in the troupe, better versed in the ways of the Badlands, teased her for her naivety – Shura was a he/she, whose company was much sought after by rich foreign businessmen, connected Chinese officials, and the powerful warlords of Northern China. After that visit to Paomachang, Tatiana became used to seeing Shura in flowing colourful silk dressing gowns, gossiping with the troupe members and sipping syrupy liqueurs that stung their teeth they were so sweet.

- 2 It was like someone switched the light on! This was what had confused my research so much. Edward Werner, Vova Nelsky, Tatiana, Sylvia, and others – as well as me - had all encountered our own, and often very different, Shuras. And the Shura I was searching for sometimes presented as male and sometimes as female. When passing as a man Shura bound his breasts tightly and wore a sharp tailored suit; when she was a woman she wore startlingly coloured robes, both Chinese-style cheongsam and Western dresses, letting her raven hair flow loose, said witnesses. Shura had added an incredibly massive layer of confusion and obfuscation to anyone looking by changing gender. Switching for anonymity, for commercial gain or criminal advantage, for love, for a whim. No wonder that French police description in Shanghai had been so hopeless!!

- 3 So, you're probably thinking - Is this a true story? Are these details correct, can we trust these old documents, are these witnesses reliable after so many years?

- 1 Well, this story is full of truths, but like an old jigsaw brought down from the attic after decades, I've found that there are many pieces missing – incidents I can't quite reach.
- 2 So here, along with witness testimony where it has been offered, documentation where we have it, expert opinion where it can help us clarify what we've been told, we're also using drama to recreate and join the dots of Shura's story, and over the course of the series/programme, go in search of a lost life and a forgotten world.
- 3 The search will take us from a Russian Far East in violent revolution, to the chaos of the mass emigration of the White Russians, to the crowded hutongs of Peking; from that city's nightclubs and cabarets, to the casinos of Shanghai; from a China wracked by rampaging warlordism, invaded by Japan, and then fighting its own civil war that culminated in its own revolution. Shura saw it all; Shura lived through it all; Shura, in part, explains it all.

OUTRO:

- 4 **NARRATION:** In the next episode of *Peking Noir*, we go back to where Shura's story all began, 2,000 miles away from Peking, to a young girl coming of age against the backdrop of the pounding beat of revolution in a Siberia in chaos.

END OF PART 1

PART 2/6

1 **NARRATION:** **Shura grew up in the Siberian city of Tomsk, in a home dominated by Shura's father Mikhail Ivanovich Sosnitsky, a loyal and god-fearing Tsarist official.**

It is where our story starts around 1920...with Shura an adolescent girl, starting to explore life.

SC 2.1. **INT. CLUB IN TOMSK - NIGHT**

2 **BOY:** **Kiss me.**

3 **SHURA:** **I don't know how.**

4 **BOY:** **I can show you. It's easy. I put my lips next to yours like this.
See**

FX: **He goes to kiss her.**

5 **SHURA:** **Stop.**

6 **BOY:** **What? It's only a kiss. Don't you like me?**

7 **SHURA:** **Yes.**

8 **BOY:** **Then comes closer.**

9 **NARRATION:** **Tomsk had boomed on a gold rush in the 19th century. However, the gold dwindled and Tomsk had become sidelined as the Trans-Siberian Railway bypassed the town. I knew that by 1920 Tomsk was a university city, and a centre of the pro-monarchist 'White' Resistance to the growing power of the 'Red' Bolsheviks. But I hadn't known that Tomsk had a surprisingly heady nightlife for a town over two thousand miles from Moscow – nightclubs, cabarets, bars and theatres. Perhaps this is where Shura's love of dancing and cabaret began? But these were not carefree times.**

1 **The Russian Bolshevik Revolution that began in 1917 was rippling slowly out eastwards from Moscow and the newly named city of Leningrad. The resistance to the Bolsheviks – Cossacks, loyal regiments of the Tsarist army, those who felt their future prospects under the communists would be grim – were collectively called the “Whites”. White regiments fought Red detachments tooth and nail, though the Whites were pushed back further and further east, until the revolution reached Siberia and Tomsk.**

SC 2.2. **INT SHURA'S FAMILY HOME, TOMSK - EARLY MORNING**

FX: **The sound of someone aggressively hammering on a door.**

2 GUARD Open up. Open up!

FX: **A maid (Anna) runs downstairs.**

3 ANNA Who is it?

4 GUARD Open up in there. NOW!

FX: **Anna opens the door.**

5 ANNA Who are you? What do you want? Do you know what time it is?

FX: **The Guard pushes past Anna, into the house.**

6 GUARD Is this the home of Ivan Sosnitsky? The Tax Assessor?

7 ANNA Yes.

8 GUARD Where is he?

FX: **Ivan appears.**

- 1 IVAN I am Ivan Sosnitsky. Who do you think you are barging into my home at this time of the morning and frightening my servants -
- 2 GUARD You are under arrest Ivan Sosnitsky -
- 3 IVAN For what?
- 4 GUARD For aiding and inciting counter-revolutionary activity in the Tomsk oblast, calling for the return of the Tsar and his regime and supporting the armies of the White Generals and their foreign allies. Come with me now -

FX: **He grabs him.**

- 5 IVAN At least - let me say goodbye to my daughter.
- 6 GUARD No -
- 7 IVAN Please, I beg you. Her Mother is dead. I am all she has.

FX: **The Guard hesitates.**

- 8 GUARD Make it quick.
- 9 IVAN Go and wake her Anna.

FX: **Anna rushes off.**

- 10 IVAN I know you, don't I? You used to work for Luka Baranov. You were his groom -
- 11 GUARD (*shouting*) Hurry up up there.
- 12 IVAN You could pretend I wasn't here. Tell them the house was empty. I can leave now and we can say no more of it.

FX: **Anna reappears.**

- 13 ANNA She's not there.
- 14 IVAN What do you mean?

1 ANNA Shura. She is not in her room. Perhaps, she has gone to the dance hall again.

(THE GUARD LAUGHS)

2 GUARD Looks like your precious daughter is a slut, Sosnitsky.

(IVAN SPITS AT THE GUARD)

FX: **The Guard slaps Ivan, he reacts as does Anna.**

3 GUARD You're going to regret that.

FX: **The Guard drags Ivan away.**

4 IVAN Find Shura Anna. Find her!

5 **NARRATION:** **When the Bolsheviks arrived the communist commissars began to exact brutal revolutionary justice to anyone thought to be sympathetic to, or working for, the restoration of the Tsar.**

SC 2.3. EXT THE PUBLIC SQUARE AT TOMSK - DAY

FX: **It is busy, chaotic. A military van drives through the crowds.**

1 GUARD 2 Make way. Make way for the prisoners.

FX: **The crowd react.**

2 GUARD 2 Make way I said.

FX: **Shura runs on to find Anna. The Guard gets the prisoners out and starts to line them up against the wall.**

3 SHURA Anna? Anna?!

4 ANNA Shura. Where have you been?

5 SHURA Where's Papa?

6 ANNA Did you get my message?

7 SHURA When I got home I found your note.

8 ANNA So you've been out all night. You wicked girl! I suppose you were with Nastya Stasevich? She is a bad influence -

9 SHURA Anna, where is my Father?

10 ANNA The Bolsheviks arrested him. They are bringing him here. Look.

11 OFFICER Listen up! Look at these men. All of these prisoners have been found guilty of aiding and inciting counter-revolutionary activity and placing unbearable burdens upon the proletariat of Tomsk. Take a good look at their faces and remember them. They are traitors.

FX: **The crowd react.**

12 OFFICER Let this be a warning to you all. Positions!

13 SHURA No Papa!

1 ANNA Be quiet.

FX: **She grabs her. We hear the soldiers getting into line.**

2 OFFICER Take aim.

FX: **Shura gets free from Anna.**

3 SHURA No!

4 OFFICER Fire!

FX: **The sound of gun fire.**

(SHURA SCREAMS)

5 **NARRATION:** Revolutionary justice was dispensed in public to ensure the population's horrified compliance. It became known as the "Red Terror". Few families escaped it. The "Terror" was to set Shura off on their life's journey beyond Russia.

6 Later Shura was to tell anyone who would ask that the revolution changed everything for the Russian émigrés, reduced them to poverty, stripped them off their pride.

SC 2.4. **INT SHURA'S FAMILY HOME, TOMSK - DAY**

FX: **Anna's bedroom she is packing her bags.**

7 SHURA Take me with you?

8 ANNA No.

9 SHURA Please Anna, I have no one else.

10 ANNA Your father was a Tsarist official. If they find me helping you they will shoot me too. It's bad enough I worked for him.

11 SHURA But what will I do? Where do I go?

12 ANNA Leave now. Take anything of value, your rings, necklaces. Then, get out of Russia.

SC 2.5. EXT STATION - DAY

FX: **A crowded station people trying to get on the train to leave. Guards are trying to control the overcrowding.**

1 GUARD Move back there. Move back. The train can't leave until you all move back!

FX: **Shura tries to get on the train, she has two bags in her hand.**

2 SHURA Excuse me. Let me through. Let me through!

3 GUARD This train is full, it's leaving. Move back!

4 SHURA Let me through!

5 GUARD Move back! Can't you see it's leaving. Move back.

(NASTYA WHO IS ALREADY ON THE TRAIN CALLS OUT TO SHURA.)

6 NASTYA Shura! Shura over here. Shura!

7 SHURA Nastya?

8 NASTYA Quick! Take my hand. Take my hand.

FX: **The train's whistle blows, the Guard shouts. Shura takes Nastya's hand and is pulled onto the train just as it leaves.**

9 SHURA Pull!

FX: **Shura is now on the train.**

10 SHURA Oh Nastya. Thank God. Thank God.

(THEY HUG.)

11 NASTYA I heard about your father, I'm sorry. I know he didn't like me. But I'm still sorry. Yesterday they arrested my brother.

12 SHURA What for?

- 1 NASTYA Helping the White Armies. They took his shop. From now on we need to stick together. A girl of your age shouldn't be on her own.
- 2 SHURA You're not much older than me Nastja.
- 3 NASTYA But life has made me a little more streetwise, no? Have you got money?
- 4 SHURA A little and I have my jewellery. Just a few things. A necklace, a family icon.
- 5 NASTYA Well hold on tight to that. You're going to need it.
- 6 **NARRATION:** **The exact number of Russian émigrés who fled the Bolsheviks is unknown. Best guess is somewhere between 800,000 and two million. Many went north and left Russia through the Baltic States and Finland, eventually destined for Western Europe and perhaps on to America. Others reached Odessa and the Black Sea ports. They boarded ships to Turkey and Constantinople (today's Istanbul).**
- 7 **Shura chose the third route. An exodus that numbered 250,000 men, women and children. Those that went ever further East. As far as you could go on Russian soil across a frozen Lake Baikal to the very edge of the old Russian Empire at Vladivostok.**

SC 2.6. EXT DOCKS AT VLADIVOSTOK - DAY

FX: **There are crowds of people pushing trying to get on to the boat. People could die in the crush. We hear the sound of the boats' horns, lapping of the dock water, chug on the boat engine.**

- 1 SHURA Stay close Nastya. Don't get separated.
- 2 NASTYA I can't breathe. I'm being crushed.
- 3 **NARRATION:** **At Vladivostok they crowded onto rusting and leaky tramp steamers headed down to Korea. Momentarily safe perhaps, but now stateless, in exile, unemployed, often desperate, and headed to a strange country.**
- 4 OLD MAN Please Miss. Miss? Take my Granddaughter with you. I am ill, I can't fight for my place. Please, take her on the boat with you.
- 5 NASTYA Don't be ridiculous old man. Get away.
- 6 OLD MAN Please, she is no trouble and we have travelled far, waited four days at the dock -
- 7 NASTYA We can't help you - No.
- 8 OLD MAN She is a good girl. Please. Her name is Marie. Her parents were nice people. Music teachers. The Bolsheviks killed them. Left them hanging outside their home -
- 9 NASTYA No. I said no!
- 10 SHURA Look, take my arm. We won't take your granddaughter but if you stay with me I'll make sure you both get on the boat.
- 11 OLD MAN You are an angel. God's angel.
- 12 SHURA Hold tight
- 13 NASTYA You're going to regret that Shura.

FX: **Another surge of people.**

SC 2.7. **INT. A VERY BASIC BATHROOM/LOO ON BOARD SHIP**
- NIGHT

FX: **NASTYA IS AT A SINK WASHING. SHE SCRUBS**
HERSELF.

- 1 NASTYA Did you bring a wash cloth?
- 2 SHURA I don't think so. I left so fast.
- 3 NASTYA I need to get clean. God this ship is filthy and the train. I'm
 sure that old man you picked up has got TB. You should
 cover your face when you're around him.
- 4 You don't want to catch it. Oh I wish we were back in Tomsk.
 What I wouldn't give for a good night out at the club. I
 wonder if that boy got out?
- 5 SHURA What boy?
- 6 NASTYA The one you danced with on our last night. The one who
 tried to kiss you. You think I didn't see? Why didn't you kiss
 him back, he was handsome?
- 7 SHURA I'm shy around boys?
- 8 NASTYA Why?
- (BEAT)
- 9 SHURA I don't know. I'm not like you.
- 10 NASTYA You want to share the cloth?
- 11 SHURA I'm fine.
- 12 NASTYA I don't mind. You don't need to be shy around me. We're
 best friends, aren't we?

FX: **A knock at the door. Marie on the other side of the door.**

- 13 MARIE Shura, are you there? Are you in there?

1 NASTYA Oh who's this now?

2 SHURA It's Marie.

3 NASTYA That kid? Oh For God's sake!

FX: **Shura opens the door.**

4 SHURA Marie, are you alright?

5 MARIE It's my Dedushka, he can't stop coughing.

FX: **SHURA goes to help.**

6 **NARRATION:** **The overcrowded ships made it to ports along the Korean coast such as Seishin, now Chongjin in today's North Korea. From there they desperately tried to board trains that would take them into northern China – to Manchuria and cities where exiled Russians were making their new homes.**

SC 2.8. INT TRAIN TO HARBIN - DAY

FX: The sound of a busy rattling train.

(THE OLD MAN COUGHS.)

1 SHURA What will we do when we get to Harbin?

2 NASTYA Get a job.

3 SHURA Doing what?

4 NASTYA I don't know. I can dance. Maybe I'll do that. What about you?

5 SHURA I haven't thought about it.

6 NASTYA It's best not to stay in Harbin for long. There's too much competition, it's full of Russians. But I have a friend. He has a club, the Balalaika. Maybe he'll give us a job. It will do for the time being. Then we can move onto Peking, or even Shanghai.

(THE OLD MAN COUGHS, VERY BAD NOW.)

7 NASTYA Listen to the old man. He'll be lucky if he lasts the night.

(THE OLD MAN COUGHS AGAIN.)

8 MARIE My Dedushka is sick.

9 SHURA Come and sit next to me, Marie.

(THE CHILD SITS WITH SHURA.)

SC 2.9. INT TRAIN TO HARBIN - NEXT MORNING

FX: **The train gets into the station at Harbin. We can hear the Guard shouting:**

- | | | |
|---|-------------------|---|
| 1 | GUARD | Harbin station. Harbin. You must disembark. Harbin station. |
| 2 | NASTYA | Shura, wake up. |
| 3 | SHURA | What is it? |
| 4 | NASTYA | We're here. Look. Harbin. |
| 5 | SHURA | We're safe. |
| 6 | NASTYA | We made it. |
| 7 | NARRATION: | Harbin was the most common destination for those Russians leaving via Vladivostok and heading for northern China. It was a Chinese city, but one with a large and established Russian community of 34,000, a terminus of the Russian-built and operated China Eastern Railway. Harbin had Russian schools, Russian Orthodox churches, Russian language newspapers, literary journals, a symphony orchestra of Russian musicians...and ways of making a living. |

FX: **Shura sits up.**

- | | | |
|----|--------|---|
| 8 | SHURA | Where's Marie? |
| 9 | NASTYA | I don't know. |
| 10 | SHURA | Wake the old man. Tell him. |
| | | (NASTJA GOES TO WAKE THE OLD MAN.) |
| 11 | NASTYA | Wake up old man. |
| | | (SHE TOUCHES HIM, REALIZES HE IS DEAD.) |
| 12 | NASTYA | Shit. |

- 1 SHURA What?
- 2 NASTYA He's dead.
- (BEAT)
- 3 GUARD (O.S.) Harbin station. Everybody out. Harbin station. This is the end of the line.
- 4 SHURA Go and find the child. Quick.

FX: ***Nastya goes. Shura goes to the old man. She says a prayer for him (which runs under the next narration).***

- 5 SHURA Father of all, we pray to you for this good man, and for all those whom we love but see no longer.
- 6 Grant to them eternal rest. Let light perpetual shine upon them.
- 7 May his soul and the souls of all the departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace.
- 8 **NARRATION:** **Forced exile, becoming a refugee, having to survive on your own, without family, without many of the necessary skills – languages, trades – ensures that someone becomes either a survivor fast or perishes, washed away on a tide of desperation. You learn to do things you would not have thought possible, perhaps not even moral, or that you were capable of, in your former life. You learn fast.**

FX: **Shura searches the old man's pockets.**

- 9 SHURA I'm sorry old man. But If I don't take it, someone else will.

FX: **Shura finds a watch. She pockets it.**

1 **NARRATION:** **Shura did what they could for the old man. But then Shura had to protect those who were left alive, those who still had a journey to make, a road to continue along. Who among us could honestly say we would have done any different? What Shura found on that crowded train, in the chaos of Harbin Railway Station in 1922 was a survival instinct that would never leave them.**

FX: **Nastya returns.**

2 NASTYA The kid's not in the next carriage? Maybe she's at the other end?

FX: **Nastya checks the old man's pockets.**

3 SHURA What are you doing?

4 NASTYA Checking his pockets.

5 SHURA What for? There's nothing there.

6 NASTYA How do you know?

7 SHURA Look at him, he's poor. You can tell.

8 GUARD Get off the train. Leave the train.

9 NASTYA Go and look for the child - try the other carriage. I'll stay here with the things.

10 SHURA Are you sure?

11 NASTYA She's only young. She's going to need our help.

FX: **Shura goes to look for Marie. Music cue.**

SC 2.10. INT TRAIN TO HARBIN - DAY

FX: **Shura and Marie walk down the carriage, heading back to their seats.**

1 MARIE There are so many people, I got lost.

2 SHURA Well you are lucky I came to find you. Anything could have happened. Let's go find Nastja. We need to go.

FX: **She gets to her seat and realizes that Nastya is gone. Only the old man is there.**

3 SHURA Nastya? Where is she?

FX: **The Guard appears.**

4 GUARD Time to go. This train terminates here. C'mon.

5 SHURA But my friend. She was going to wait for me. She has my things.

6 GUARD Well she's not here now is she? C'mon. Time to go. You too old man. Move.

FX: **He prods him.**

7 SHURA He can't. He's dead.

8 MARIE Dedushka?

SC 2.11. EXT HARBIN TRAIN STATION.

FX: Busy crowds of people swarming.

- 1 SHURA Excuse me, Excuse me. Please, Miss can you stop?
- 2 WOMAN What?
- 3 SHURA You have children. Will you take this child?
- 4 WOMAN Don't be ridiculous.

FX: Shura grabs the woman by the arm.

- 5 SHURA Please, Please. She's not mine. And I -
- 6 WOMAN Get off me.
- 7 **NARRATION:** **The White Russian exodus had seen so many émigrés pour into Harbin in just a few years that housing and welfare soon became strained, jobs scarce, the crime rate soared, poverty endemic.**

FX: The woman is gone. Shura, panics, approaches a man.

- 8 SHURA Please, please can you help me? I was robbed. I have nothing. I need you to take this child...
- 9 WOMAN 2 Go away -
- 10 SHURA I'll give you this watch. I'll give you the watch if you take the child.
- 11 WOMAN 2 Let me see it?
- 12 SHURA Here.

FX: Shura hands the watch to the woman. The woman runs away with the watch.

- 13 SHURA Hey. Hey! No. Come back. Give me that back!

FX: The crowd surges. The woman is gone.

- 14 SHURA Shit. Shit!

SC 2.12. EXT THE BALALAIKA, HARBIN - DAY

FX: **Shura is banging on the door of a club.**

1 **NARRATION:** Many of the young Russian émigré women were from bourgeois families, not always as so often falsely claimed from the aristocracy, but from the once prosperous middle-class. They often had no more formal skills than good manners, a little French, and the ability to dance.

2 And so now, in exile, in China, employment choices were stark – menial and low paid labour, if you could find it, and stand it, or the more louche world of the “entertainment” industry.

FX: **A man opens the door.**

3 DOORMAN What do you want?

4 SHURA This is the Balalika?

5 DOORMAN Yeah.

6 SHURA My friend. She said she'd be here. Her name is Nastya -

7 DOORMAN We have no one by that name here -

FX: **He goes to shut the door.**

8 SHURA But I need a job. Please. I'll do anything. I need your help. I have nothing and I need to eat.

9 DOORMAN What can you do?

10 SHURA I can dance.

11 DOORMAN Let me look at you.

(HE DOES.)

12 DOORMAN You'll do, I suppose. But you can't bring the kid.

- 1 SHURA Please. It's just for tonight. Tomorrow I'll find lodgings.
 Tonight, I need a job. She can watch.

 (HE HESITATES)
- 2 DOORMAN You better come in.
- 3 **NARRATION:** **And so Shura enters the world of taxi-dancing. Men
 bought tickets from the ballroom, gave the tickets to
 their dance partners who traded them in with the
 nightclub for cash later.**
- 4 **It was not, as is popularly portrayed, prostitution.
 Though it could easily become so. A league of nations
 report on Shanghai in the 1920s found nearly a quarter
 of Russian émigré women in the city engaged in either
 full-time or casual prostitution to support themselves
 and their families.**

SC 2.13. **INT. HARBIN NIGHTCLUB – NIGHT**

- 5 CUSTOMER What's your name?
- 6 SHURA Shura.
- 7 CUSTOMER Come and dance with me, Shura.
- FX:** **She gets up to dance.**
- 8 CUSTOMER Not like that. You need to come closer. Like this.
- FX:** **He pulls her in, Shura winces as the music builds.**
- 9 **NARRATION:** **These were desperate times for Shura - a new country,
 forced to earn a living, a young child dependent on them
 - a tiny microcosm of the great Russian emigration.
 Shura was safe from the Bolsheviks, but taxi-dancing in
 the many rough dancehalls of Russian Harbin
 demanded a whole new level of survival skills...**

OUTRO:

- 1 **NARRATION:** Next time on *Peking Noir*....Shura and Marie are destined to move on once again. To leave Harbin to seek new opportunities in a new city, where perhaps there is less competition and a chance to build a new life. But 1920s China is rarely a place where life is easy...

END OF PART 2

PART 3/6

3.1. INT. NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

1 MC: Gentleman, Gentleman, please take your partners for the next foxtrot. You only need a ticket and a little courage.

FX: **Music underplays the narration.**

2 **NARRATION:** It soon became clear that Harbin was too packed, too competitive. Taxi-dancing in Russian clubs meant being grabbed by uncouth working class Russian men – stevedores, railway engine stokers, men fresh from working in the city’s vast slaughterhouses and still smelling of pig’s blood. The Chinese, who Shura found preferred their more petite figure, their strong Siberian cheek bones and grey eyes, were kinder, more polite, but in Harbin their gentle patronage was in short supply.

3 Perhaps Shura was drawn by Peking’s aesthetic charms, its temples and imperial past, its narrow hutong alleyways with a multitude of hidden courtyards. Maybe Shura heard that Peking had many nightclubs and that Peking was a city where Chinese men appreciated the beauty and grace of Russian women as dance partners.

4 In Peking the Russian émigrés were a small, but noticeable minority; the poorest lived on Yang-I Hutong, a particularly notorious slum alleyway known chiefly for its opium-ravaged prostitutes, illegally brewed somogon vodka that could reputedly blind a horse, and regular outbreaks of cholera, tuberculosis, and typhoid. And it is in the squalor of Yang-I Hutong that Shura and Marie first found lodgings in Peking.

1 **We often think of the Russian émigrés as Counts and Countesses but they were a far more varied exile community – ballerinas, opera singers, novelists and pamphleteers alongside horse traders, butchers, ladies maids and, among them, a fair share of Russia's criminal milieu.**

FX: A door slams muffling the music inside the club.

SC 3.2. EXT CLUB IN BADLANDS, PEKING - NIGHT

FX: We are in a grubby back alley outside a nightclub.

2 SHURA Pay up Saxsen.

3 SAXSEN You've got to be kidding? You've only worked a week!

4 SHURA And that was long enough.

5 SAXSEN If you aren't cut out for this kind of work - why come here? It might have been fine in Harbin. But in Peking, we expect a little more for our dollar. A Russian girl like you can't afford to be fussy.

6 SHURA Look, I know what you were before the revolution; a deserter from the Tsar's army, a coward, and a cheat. That coat you're wearing isn't even yours it's got a bullet hole in the back -

7 SAXSEN Now listen to me you bitch -

8 SHURA No! You listen to me. I've been in Peking long enough not to get cheated out of what I'm owed. I danced, you pay up!

FX: He grabs Shura, shoves them up against the wall and pulls a dagger from a sheath

(SHURA GASPS)

1 SAXSEN You think I won't use this? I slit the throat of many a Kraut during the war and a good few Bolshies after. A young bitch like you - this will slip through to the bone.

FX: He wields the knife, about to strike as Leopard grabs him from behind.

2 LEOPARD Hey!

3 SAXSEN Woah!

FX: Leopard pulls Saxsen off Shura.

4 LEOPARD Let her go!

5 SAXSEN Who the hell are you?

6 LEOPARD An admirer.

7 SAXSEN This is between me and her. Don't get involved you Chinese prick. Unless you want your throat cut too.

FX: Leopard grabs him, they fight.

8 LEOPARD Who are you calling a prick? You Russian dog.

FX: Leopard attacks Saxsen, Saxsen tries to fight back, eventually he is punched to the ground.

9 SHURA Stop stop stop! You'll kill him.

10 LEOPARD That's the idea.

FX: He kicks him in the face.

11 SHURA STOP!

FX: Leopard stops. A silence. Saxsen doesn't move.

12 LEOPARD Is he dead?

FX: Shura goes to check.

13 SHURA We need to get out of here.

FX: They run.

SC 3.3. INT A BAR/CAFE - NIGHT

FX: Shura tucks into a plate of dumplings. Leopard drinks and smokes.

- 1 LEOPARD You're enjoying that.
- 2 SHURA I've had worse.
- 3 LEOPARD How long is it since you've eaten?
- 4 SHURA Long enough for this to taste like decent food.
- (HE LAUGHS)
- 5 LEOPARD But these are the best jiaozi dumplings in the city. How have you managed all this time on your own?
- 6 SHURA I'm not on my own. I have a kid I look after. A girl.
- 7 LEOPARD Not yours?
- 8 SHURA No. But it's a long story...
- 9 LEOPARD So tell me about it.
- 10 SHURA Why?
- 11 LEOPARD I'm interested.
- (BEAT)
- 12 SHURA We left Russia by train, then boat, then another train. First we lived in Harbin now we live here in Peking, in Yang-I hutong.
- 13 LEOPARD A slum? But I thought Russians were rich aristocrats.
- 14 SHURA A friend - she betrayed me. Stole all I had; my rings, my mother's necklace, a gold icon with my family crest. I wouldn't be living in the Badlands or eating food like this if I had my jewellery.
- 15 LEOPARD Well from now on, you trust me.

1 SHURA I don't even know who you are.

FX: **She finishes the meal. Pushes the plate away.**

2 LEOPARD Have you heard of Leopard? Great Provider of Tongzhou?

3 SHURA That's you? Then why have you brought me to a place like this?

(HE LAUGHS)

4 LEOPARD I like you Shura but no offence, you look like you could do with a protector.

5 SHURA And a new job. Now that you've probably killed my employer.

6 LEOPARD How would you like to work in the best clubs in Peking?

7 SHURA You could arrange that for me?

8 LEOPARD I'd want something in return.

FX: **She gets up.**

9 LEOPARD Where are you going?

10 SHURA Home. I've finished my dinner.

11 LEOPARD Let me come with you.

12 SHURA Don't be ridiculous -

13 LEOPARD Then when can I see you again?

FX: **She's off.**

14 SHURA If you're such a 'Great Provider' Find me a new job, somewhere good, then we can talk.

(HE SHOUTS AFTER HER)

15 LEOPARD How about - I set you up in your own place? My gift.

FX: **Shura stops.**

- 1 SHURA You're not serious?
- 2 LEOPARD You heard of a club called the Kavkaz?
- 3 **NARRATION:** **In the China of the late 1920s, it was completely within the power of a man like Leopard to give a favoured lover property. For you see, Leopard was what was known as a Northern Warlord. They gave themselves fantastical names – “The Tiger of Mukden”, “The Jade Marshal”, “The Betrayal General”.**
- 4 **Shura had arrived in Peking in the midst of China's chaotic warlord era. Over two and half centuries of the Qing Dynasty had ended in revolution in 1912. The ossified Qing royal household was replaced by a weak Republican government riven with factions and dissension. A massive power vacuum opened up, especially in Northern China.**
- 5 **Through means both fair and, shall we say, not so fair, the warlords accrued great wealth. But where to spend it? Most of their domains were, to be frank, either dreary provincial towns or remote villages. So, the property markets of their favourite playgrounds – especially Peking and Shanghai – boomed with warlord cash. Nightclubs, and dancehall-cabarets like the Kavkaz, were a particular favourite investment of the warlords – they made a lot of money and many warlords liked to spend their downtime in Peking nightclubs!**

SC 3.4. INT A NEW CLUB, THE KAVKAZ- NIGHT

FX: MUSIC PLAYS AS WE HEAR MONTAGE SCENES OF SHURA AT HER NEW CLUB.

1 MC Gentlemen, gentlemen. May I introduce you to our new owner of the Kavkaz.

FX: The men react.

2 MC She is beautiful, she is exotic, she is young.

FX: The men react, wolf-whistle.

3 MC Our Russian jewel, Shura!

FX: A round of applause. Music weaves in and out of the next sequence.....

4 **NARRATION:** It seems that Leopard made good on his sobriquet – he was a ‘Great Provider’, and most likely did more than find Shura a better job. He really did buy Shura the Kavkaz – long to be Shura’s Peking base of operations.

5 As the 1920s became the 1930s, the Kavkaz became notorious. Several memoirs of the time note that the Kavkaz ‘became the centre of Russian émigré night-life in Peking’ and very prosperous.

6 Yet, even almost a century later, it’s impossible to conclusively prove that Shura ever really owned the Kavkaz. It was hinted at; Shura denied it, but always with a twinkle in the eye. Indeed, sometimes Shura claimed to be merely the club’s humble cashier.

7 Perhaps that’s how you survive as an émigré in a strange city in a faraway land – you keep your business to yourself.

SC 3.5. **INT KAVKAZ CLUB - NIGHT**

- 1 MAN 1 Shura of Siberia.
- 2 MAN 2 As cool as a Russian Winter.
- 3 MAN 3 She won't let you close.
- 4 MAN 1 But in those eyes there is the fire of desire.
- 5 MAN 2 All the men in Peking want a portrait with her.
- 6 MAN 3 Standing next to Shura is the closest thing to heaven.
- 7 MC Now All Peking Know Shura!

FX: **A photographers bulb explodes.**

SC 3.6. **INT. BACK ROOM AT THE CLUB - NIGHT**

FX: **Music plays off. A group of men are gambling, The sound of Leopard and Shura is heard coming down the steps into the room.**

- 8 SHURA How many times do I have to tell you? It's my club so I make the rules. It's what we do here. A portrait with me is worth 500 dollars -
- 9 LEOPARD Everybody get out of here. I want this room to myself. NOW!

FX: **The room scatters.**

- 10 SHURA Must you do that? When they gamble in here we make money.
- 11 LEOPARD How many more portraits do I have to look at of you with these - other men – they look like the cat that got the cream. And what have you ever given me? I give you all this. It's about time I got something in return.

- 1 SHURA I didn't ask you to look after me. You offered. Remember?
And I run this place very well. Before I took over it barely
made a profit.
- 2 LEOPARD Listen to me. Tomorrow, I go away.
- 3 SHURA Where?
- 4 LEOPARD I can't tell you. But when I come back, I want you to come
and live with me.
- 5 SHURA I don't think so. I decide where I live.

(HE LAUGHS)
- 6 LEOPARD Oh Shura, why aren't you scared of me? Everybody is
scared of me.
- 7 SHURA I am not everybody.
- 8 LEOPARD If something happened to me, while I was away, would you
care?
- 9 SHURA What exactly are you up to?
- 10 **NARRATION:** **We shouldn't forget that throughout this time – the
1920s and early 1930s - a constant civil war raged;
fought between self-appointed warlord generals and
their mercenary armies of disaffected peasants. Shura
was always too discreet to name their warlord so we've
called him Leopard: The Great Provider of Tongzhou.**
- 11 **Warlords had power, but they came and went...life with
a warlord was like living on the rim of a volcano.... But
Shura, it seems, thought that maybe the gains were
worth the risks.**
- FX: Montage music.**

SC 3.7. EXT. TRAIN TRACKS - NIGHT

FX: The Gang are wrecking the tracks.

- 1 LEOPARD Are you ready?
- 2 HENG Ready.
- 3 GANG MEMBER 2 That train won't go any further than here.
- 4 LEOPARD When it stops, you take the driver. Then we go through first class. Remember, we want everything.

FX: The sound of the train approaching in the distance.

- 5 NARRATION: **Between 1916 and 1928 alone, Peking was ruled by more than seven different warlords, all of whom were eventually chased out, hunted down or killed in one way or another. It wasn't a career with high longevity expectations.**
- 6 HENG Here she comes.
- 7 LEOPARD The 'delayed' express from Tientsin to Peking is about to get a little lighter.

FX: The sound of the train horn. Music to cover the short scenes as Leopard robs train after train after train.

- 8 NARRATION: **To take a train from Shanghai, Nanking, or Tientsin to Peking was to take your very life in your hands...**
- 9 **Trains were a favourite target for the warlords. The stretches between stations were often long and remote and therefore vulnerable.**

SC 3.8. INT. ON THE TRAIN

FX: **Leopard enters the carriage, he has a gun.**

1 LEOPARD Hands up! Reach for heaven.

FX: **The passengers scream and call out.**

2 LEOPARD I want everything you've got. Anything valuable goes in the bag. Jewellery cash, watches - all greatly received.

FX: **The passengers react and then comply as Leopard and the gang walk down the train.**

3 NARRATION: The 1932 movie *Shanghai Express* with Marlene Dietrich and the Chinese-American actress Anna May Wong was the biggest grossing movie in Hollywood that year – the midst of the Great Depression. Audiences flocked to see a Northern China in civil war, a train leaving Peking only to be hijacked by a warlord who kidnaps all aboard.

SC 3.9. INT. ANOTHER TRAIN ANOTHER DAY

FX: **The gang enter another train.**

4 LEOPARD Ladies and Gentlemen. This is a heist.

FXL **The train reacts.**

5 LEOPARD Not scaring you, am I madam?

FX: **Leopard laughs in delight.**

6 NARRATION: Was *Shanghai Express* Fiction? Partly, though the story was based on a famous 1924 train heist and major kidnapping by a northern warlord that became known as the Lincheng Outrage, after the small town where the train was forced to stop. Leopard is just carrying on a grand Northern Chinese warlord tradition.

SC 3.10. INT ANOTHER TRAIN ANOTHER TRAIN

FX: **Leopard and the gang going down a carriage collecting valuables.**

1 LEOPARD Call it a contribution to the fighting fund of the Leopard, the Great Provider of Tongzhou. You will be defeating Bolshevism, Kuomintang tyranny & foreign domination.

2 PASSENGER I'm not giving you anything. I don't support your 'cause'. This is just daylight robbery.

3 LEOPARD Heng?

4 HENG Yep.

5 LEOPARD Get rid of him.

FX: **The gang member drags the passenger roughly away as he protests, screaming.**

6 LEOPARD Anyone else not feeling charitable today?

7 **NARRATION:** **The warlords of Northern China made the American Wild West look tame. They robbed trains, took hostages, demanded fantastic ransoms. One Northern Warlord, not unlike our Great Provider Leopard in his general demeanour and life goals, who kidnapped a party of three English tourists demanded, among other bounty: a staggering (for the time) 32,500 Chinese dollars - equivalent to around £1 million today; five bales of silk; and 100 “top quality” gold rings;**

8 **Some negotiation took place but the warlord basically got everything he wanted and the hostages were freed.**

FX: **Music ends.**

SC 3.11. INT A TRAIN - NIGHT

FX: The gang are going through the stolen goods.

- | | | |
|----|-------------|---|
| 1 | HENG | Broaches 50 |
| 2 | G/ MEMBER 2 | Watches 20 |
| 3 | HENG | Money. 1,000 Dollars |
| 4 | G/ MEMBER 2 | Necklaces 4 |
| 5 | HENG | Diamond rings? |
| 6 | G/ MEMBER | 2 |
| 7 | HENG | And some kind of gold icon with a family crest |
| 8 | LEOPARD | Let me see that. Where did you get this? |
| 9 | HENG | There's a Russian in the last carriage. She was dripping in gold. |
| 10 | LEOPARD | Bring her to me. |

SC 3.12. INT. DOWNSTAIRS IN THE KAVKAZ CLUB - NIGHT

- | | | |
|----|---------|---|
| 11 | SHURA | How did you find it? |
| 12 | LEOPARD | It is yours, isn't it? |
| 13 | SHURA | The one that was stolen. See, it has the family name. |
| 14 | LEOPARD | And I have another surprise for you. Heng! |

FX: Heng enters with...

- | | | |
|----|---------|-------------------------------------|
| 15 | LEOPARD | Meet the Countess of Sosnitsky |
| 16 | SHURA | Nastya? |
| 17 | NASTYA | Shura! Oh Shura. You must help me - |

1 LEOPARD Can you believe it? The little thief was pretending to be you! Sitting in first class and wearing your jewels round her neck like she's the Empress Dowager herself.

2 NASTYA Oh Shura. Can you forgive me? I'm sorry I ran, but I had no choice. Please don't let them hurt me.

3 LEOPARD What do you want me to do with her?

4 SHURA What do you mean?

5 LEOPARD She stole from you. She should be punished.

6 NASTYA Please, Shura, Shura. I have suffered. You know what it's like to be a stranger in this terrible country -

7 LEOPARD Well?

(BEAT)

8 SHURA Take her away. Do what you want. I don't care.

FX: **Heng takes Nastya away.**

9 NASTYA No, no! Shura no. Please. They will kill me!

FX: **She is gone.**

10 SHURA Thank you, for finding this. All of it.

11 LEOPARD It will fetch a good sum if you decide to sell. With your jewellery back and the Kavkaz, you probably no longer need my help.

FX: **He goes to leave.**

12 SHURA Why don't you - help me to put it on? Start with my necklace.

FX: **She hands him the necklace. A moment.**

13 LEOPARD Turn around.

FX: **He puts a necklace on her.**

- 1 SHURA My father gave me this. It was a present to my mother. To hold it again in my hands, to have it round my neck, it reminds me of the past....
- 2 LEOPARD You have a beautiful neck.
- 3 SHURA And you have strong hands.
(BEAT)
- 4 LEOPARD You pretend not to like me, Shura. But really, I don't think that's the case.
(BEAT)
- 5 SHURA Kiss me.
(HE DOES)
- 6 **NARRATION:** **Despite the precarious lifestyle of a warlord, it seems Shura was happy at this time. The Kavkaz was successful, Marie became a teenager.**
- 7 **John Blofeld, an English aesthete living in Peking, met Shura at the Kavkaz. He wrote that Shura 'had by then grown fond of the Chinese people and of Peking', and of her warlord lover, who was oddly formal in many ways. Shura knew he would propose and that they would become engaged, and that their relationship would have to become physical. But, Blofeld was told, Shura 'became alarmed by the appearance of inexplicable physical changes in herself.' These changes became impossible to conceal. Shura was confused, sexually inexperienced, scared.**

SC 3.13. INT. SHURA'S HOUSE IN THE BADLANDS - NIGHT

(MARIE IS NOW 13)

- 1 MARIE Why can't I stay up?
- 2 SHURA I have a visitor coming Marie.
- 3 MARIE Is it Leopard?
- 4 SHURA Go to bed.

FX: The bell rings.

- 5 MARIE But I can't sleep if you aren't with me. I have nightmares.
Every night I dream about Dedushka, about my mother and
father. I see their last moments -
- 6 SHURA It's just for one night, Marie. Tomorrow I will stay with you.

**FX: The door knocks again, Shura goes to answer it. She
 unlocks the door.**

- 7 LEOPARD I was worried you weren't coming. These are for you.

FX: He hands her flowers.

- 8 SHURA Lilies.
- 9 LEOPARD The exotic kind.

SC 3.14. INT SHURA'S HOUSE IN THE BADLANDS, BEDROOM - NIGHT

FX: Leopard is on the bed.

1 LEOPARD There is no need to be nervous. I know what I'm doing.

2 SHURA Let me turn down the light -

FX: She does.

3 LEOPARD Take off the robe.

4 SHURA I'm scared.

5 LEOPARD Why? You are beautiful and I am in love with you. And you like me, don't you?

6 SHURA Yes.

7 LEOPARD Then take off your robe.

FX: She takes off her robe,

(SHURA BREATHES HARD.)

8 LEOPARD Come closer, I can hardly see you.

FX: She moves closer and he touches her,

(SHE REACTS)

9 LEOPARD You like this?

10 SHURA Yes.

(SHURA BREATHES, AROUSED. SO IS HE.)

11 LEOPARD Now... let me touch you.

12 **NARRATION:** Nobody knows exactly what happened that night. But Shura's physical changes had continued to alarm her. They were, Shura said, simply 'inexplicable'.

1 **What we do know is that that night Leopard fled Peking never to return. While Shura, alone, grieved the end of the relationship for months - confused, ashamed, unsure of what was happening to her body.**

FX: **The sound of a door slamming (off).**

(SHURA IS CRYING)

FX: **Marie knocks on the door.**

2 MARIE Shura? Shura? Let me in? Shura?

3 SHURA Go away Marie.

4 MARIE What happened, Shura? Did something happen? Why has Leopard gone? Shura? Can I come in?

5 SHURA The door's open.

FX: **MARIE enters the room.**

6 MARIE Are you crying? Oh Shura, what happened? What happened?

(MARIE GOES TO SHURA TO COMFORT HER, SHURA SOBS.)

OUTRO

7 **NARRATION:** **In the next episode of Peking Noir - it's the 1930s and boom time as the nightclubs and cabarets of the Badlands are packed nightly. The Jazz Age has finally reached Peking and Shura is determined to get a big fat slice of the action....**

END OF PART 3

PART 4/6

- 1 **NARRATION:** The early 1930s was boom time in Peking. The warlord menace had been wiped out by Chiang Kai-Shek's army and his nationalist government was now in control of the city.
- 2 Ok so, Peking was no Shanghai. Not as big, rich or wild. But it did have its own nightlife scene of clubs, cabarets, opium dens and dive-bars. The Chinese had their palaces of sin in a red-light area to the west of the imposing Qianmen gate, known as the Bada Hutong. The foreigners had the Badlands in a narrow cluster of hutongs that housed dozens of bars, bordellos, cabarets, and drug-dens...

SC 4.1. EXT. A BUSY STREET IN PEKING - DAY 1936

FX: **Tatiana, a sixteen-year-old Russian dancer, squeezes past rickshaws, market sellers etc. as she makes her way up the main street.**

- 3 TATIANA Excuse me, Excuse me. Sorry.
- 4 R/SHAW GUY Hello pretty girl? You want a rickshaw ride?
- 5 TATIANA No, thank you.
- 6 R/SHAW GUY But you look lost. This is the Badlands. You don't want to get lost here. Are you Russian? *Eluosiren?* Let me take you home -
- 7 TATIANA No, thank you. I'm trying to find The Manhattan club. Is it this way?
- 8 R/SHAW GUY The Manhattan Cabaret? Zuobian. *(It's on the left.)*

FX: **She moves off.**

- 1 R/SHAW GUY What's a pretty little Russian lady like you doing at the Manhattan?
- 2 TATIANA I've got an audition, if you must know, for a dance troupe.
- 3 R/SHAW GUY Oh, well hao yun, good luck. You tell Shura I think you are very pretty.
- 4 TATIANA Shura? You know Shura?
- (THE RICKSHAW GUY LAUGHS.)
- 5 R/SHAW GUY This is Peking lady. Everyone knows Shura!

FX: **Music, Titles.**

- 6 **NARRATION:** **This is Tatiana Korovina. When I published my book *Midnight in Peking*, Tatiana's daughter Sylvia got in touch and told me the stories that her mother had told her.**
- 7 TATIANA *I was born just after the Russian Revolution, so I don't remember the old country. My family fled to Shanghai, but from a young age I wanted to be a dancer. I was just 16 when I met Shura. That meeting changed my life...*

SC 4.2. INT FOH AT THE MANHATTAN CLUB - NIGHT

FX: Tatiana arrives in the club. It is rowdy.

1 MC Gentlemen, Gentlemen welcome to the Manhattan Cabaret!
Isn't it glamorous, isn't it sexy, isn't it expensive?

FX: The crowd react. A waiter approaches Tatiana, their lines run over the MC.

2 WAITER Excuse me Madam, can I help you?

3 MC This evening we give you entertainment, music, dance and girls. Lots of girls.

FX: The crowd react.

4 TATIANA I'm here to see Shura. I have an appointment. I'm a dancer.

5 WAITER Backstage. The door is over there. Follow the stairs, going up.

FX: The MC continues while Tatiana makes her way backstage.

6 MC Our first act tonight is the classiest, most exotic dance troupe performing in all of Peking. They have been celebrated in Shanghai; cheered across all of the Orient.

FX: Meanwhile the dance troupe is getting ready to go on.

7 SHURA Is everybody ready? Is everybody here? Remember, Big Smiles girls?

8 DANCER Marie isn't here, Shura.

9 SHURA Shit. I don't know what's got into that girl lately. She is never on time!

10 TATIANA Excuse me. I'm here for an audition.

11 SHURA Audition?

- 1 TATIANA For the Shura Giraldi dancers? This is the group, no?
- 2 SHURA Are you the ballet dancer from Shanghai?
- 3 TATIANA Yes. My name is Tatiana. I have an appointment.
- 4 SHURA Come out front with me and watch. Stand by girls. Where is Marie?!
- 5 TATIANA Sorry but - who are you?
- 6 SHURA Me? Why, I'm Mr Shura Giraldi. Himself.

FX: Suddenly Marie enters running upstairs, pushing past Tatiana.

- 7 MARIE Sorry. Sorry I'm late. Get out the way.
- 8 TATIANA Sorry.
- 9 DANCER Hurry up Marie.
- 10 SHURA You are making a habit of this lately and it doesn't suit you, or me.
- 11 MARIE Sorry. I lost track of time.
- 12 SHURA Are you drunk? Where is your headdress?
- 13 MARIE I - I left it in the dressing room - I'll go back.
- 14 SHURA There's no time.
- 15 MARIE I can run.

FX: She goes to leave, but she trips.

- 16 SHURA Watch out!

FX: MARIE stumbles on the stairs and falls, everyone reacts.

- 17 DANCER Oh my god, Marie. Marie! Is she alright?

FX: The girls run to Marie.

- 18 SHURA Just go on girls. Go on without her.

- 1 DANCER But we dance in pairs, Shura.
(MARIE MOANS)
- 2 SHURA New girl, Tatiana. You go on.
- 3 TATIANA What? But -
- 4 SHURA Just follow the other girls. It can be your audition.
- 5 TATIANA But I'm not in costume.
- 6 SHURA That dress you're wearing is fine.
- 7 MC (O.S) Gentlemen, please put your hands together for The Shura Giraldi dancers!
- 8 SHURA Just go! Go, go go! (*They do. To Marie:*) Oh Marie. Marie. What am I going to do with you?

FX: **Music. The audience whoops and applauds as the girls rush on stage and go into their number.**

- 9 **NARRATION:** **Shura exploited Peking's nightlife explosion – the demand for jazz music and high kicking chorus lines by forming the Shura Giraldi Dance Troupe.**
- 10 **(I have to admit here that i don't know why Shura dropped the Sosnitsky family name and became Shura Giraldi. I think Shura just liked the sound of it – more cosmopolitan; more modern?)**
- 11 **In any case, Shura's troupe made the Badlands swing. Shura had kept the Kavkaz bar as a base of operations. John Blofeld, the English aesthete whose memoir provides an invaluable record of this period, recalled that Shura now presented publicly as a man.**
- 12 **Shura now seemed once again outwardly happy and prosperous but, according to Blofeld, after the sudden estrangement from the warlord Leopard:**

SC 4.3. NEUTRAL BG

- 1 BLOFELD *Shura became increasingly alarmed by the continuing appearance of inexplicable physical changes in herself. Unhappily, these changes became impossible to conceal ... and they continued almost to the point of transforming her into a man – but not quite Shura's exceptionally virile growth of facial hair and his well-developed feminine bust (now modestly restrained by a special garment) were not the most striking of her (now his) contradictory sex-attributes.*
- 2 **NARRATION:** **Blofeld wrote that Shura had endured 'months of grief and shame' after Leopard's desertion. It must have been a confusing time.**
- 3 **Yet eventually it seems the old ever-optimistic upbeat Shura returned. Shura had to work, earn, survive.**

SC 4.4. INT. THE KAVKAZ - DAY

FX: Shura is taking all the dancers through their paces.

- 4 SHURA And so, just before we break for lunch, I'd like to announce that from now on, Tatiana will be permanently joining the group.

FX: The girls congratulate her.

- 5 SHURA She is only young so you girls be nice to her and treat her well. No swearing please. Tatiana, we rehearse everyday here at the Kavkaz and perform our new numbers on Friday and Saturday night in the clubs. I'd like to start to rehearse the number from the Blue Angel after lunch girls? Tatiana, come with me and try on the Marlene costume -

- 1 DANCER So Tatiana is playing Marlene? What about Marie, Shura? I thought she was doing that part?
- 2 SHURA Marie is taking a little break from performing. She's not ballet trained like the rest of you so it's hard for her to keep up.

FX: **All the girls move off.**

- 3 SHURA Everybody back at two please. Don't forget Saturday we are top of the bill at The Alcazar so we all have to be in tiptop condition. Come Tatiana.

FX: **Zaichkek enters.**

- 4 ZAICHEK There's a delivery coming in Shura.
- 5 SHURA Shi Shui Ya?
- 6 ZAICHEK How should I know. Wo bu shi nide ayih. I'm not your nanny. Who's this?
- 7 SHURA Tatiana. She's our new dancer. This is Zaichkek.
- 8 TATIANA It's nice to meet you, Zaichkek.
- 9 SHURA Nothing goes on at the Kavkaz without Zaichkek knowing about it. He looks after us all. He works for the government. He's very important.
- 10 ZAICHEK And yet you treat me like your barman.
- 11 SHURA What rubbish. You give as good as you get!
- (ZAICHEK SCOFFS)
- 12 **NARRATION:** **Shura's newly-discovered optimism may have had something to do with the fact that he'd taken a new lover. A Chinese man, a high-placed official of the Nationalist government in peking, which is to say a man who could be very helpful to someone who operated in an area known as the Badlands!**

1 **The official's name is lost to history because Shura only ever called him 'Zaichek', which is Russian for 'little bunny'. Incidentally, in the 1930s 'little bunny', was a Chinese slang name for a gay man. We'll never know if Zaichek was "in" on Shura's joke?**

2 ZAICHEK Have you seen Marie today, Shura?

3 SHURA She's resting up after her little fall at the weekend.

4 ZAICHEK You need to have a word with that girl. People are talking.

5 SHURA Saying what?

(BEAT)

6 ZAICHEK She's been seen with that bastard Saxsen.

7 SHURA Saxsen?! The Badlands is rife with, cholera, TB and syphilis and yet a rat like Saxsen still manages to survive.

8 TATIANA Who is Saxsen?

9 ZAICHEK A Russian club owner, a pimp and a drug dealer. Someone to avoid. So you will talk to her?

10 SHURA If I get the time.

11 ZAICHEK Please. Make the time.

FX: **He leaves.**

12 TATIANA Is everything alright with Marie? I feel bad taking her place.

13 SHURA Marie hasn't been alright for a long time. If you come to a country as a refugee you are always listening for the knock on the door, the moment when you will be told to move on. There's always a feeling of – unease. But you keep going, try to be nice to people, work hard, and just hope you are making it easier for the next generation.

- 1 TATIANA Thank you for letting me join the company.
- 2 SHURA You went on for Marie without a moment's notice. That's the sign of a true professional.
- 3 **NARRATION:** **By the mid-30s, the warlords had been defeated, but China was still weak. There was fuel and food shortages, refugees from the countryside flocking into the city. Paper money was increasingly worthless – inflation became stagflation. Shura's cash register take tonight is almost worthless the next day.**
- 4 **John Blofeld recalled that, when faced with big decisions in life, it was to a Russian Orthodox priest that Shura turned.**
- 5 **Father Vassily - known by the Chinese as the "Ruski Lama" - had fled Siberia to Mongolia where, it seems, he'd picked up a knowledge of shamanism that he blended with his own rather exuberant style of Christianity, mixing mythology, Buddhism and spiritualism all together. He lived in Peking's ancient lama temple – the Yonghegong.**

SC 4.5. INT THE LAMA TEMPLE, DAY

(VASSILY IS INTONING A PRAYER.)

- 1 SHURA I have come to ask for your guidance Father Vassily. You have always been my confidant.
- 2 VASSILY You have fought to overcome your struggles in a place that is not your home and you are stronger and wiser now than when we first met. You are a credit to us Russians. But what can be troubling you?
- 3 SHURA It is my child, Father. Little Marie. Last night we talked, it was ugly, she told me that she has been taking dope, to help her sleep. She buys it from Saxsen the pimp and she has become – hooked. I need to get her out of the Badlands, as soon as possible. Take her far away from bad influences. Somewhere with fresh air and quiet, but for that, I will need money. A lot more money than I can earn running the Kavkaz and a dance troupe. So, I wondered, if you had any suggestions, Father, of how to rid us of the demon's grip? I thought perhaps if you could perform one of your - miracles?
- (PAUSE AS HE THINKS)
- 4 VASSILY You, are very special Shura. You are above mere male and female. Because of this, I believe that you live on an almost... 'elevated plain' This means that you are above the law, wouldn't you say?
- 5 SHURA Well, I've never really thought of it like that before but -
- 6 VASSILY This dance troupe of yours, does it travel...?
- 7 SHURA Yes.
- 8 VASSILY Then I have an idea...

SC 4.6. INT THE KAVKAZ - NIGHT

- 1 ZAICHEK Smuggling? Are you kidding me? Shura this is madness!
- 2 SHURA The girls will conceal the jewels about their person. They catch the train, as usual, then when they get to Shanghai, after their performance, they meet with Father Vassily's contact. The contact will exchange the jewels for cash. It's simple.
- 3 ZAICHEK And if they get caught?
- 4 SHURA I need the money, Zaichek. And this is a quick way of getting it. I need to get us out of the Badlands. Fast.
- 5 ZAICHEK You talked to Marie?
- 6 SHURA Did you know what she was taking?
- 7 ZAICHEK I had my suspicions.
- 8 SHURA So then you know how serious this is. I need to get her away from Saxsen before he gets his claws in deeper.
- 9 ZAICHEK Which girls would do the smuggling?
- 10 SHURA The new one, Tatiana. I mean I won't tell her she's smuggling. I'll just say, 'can she take the jewels to a friend'. The Chinese guards won't search a young white woman. Marie can go with her. I'll tell her what's going on. She can be the one who does the handover.
- 11 ZAICHEK And you think Marie is up to this? You can trust her?
- 12 SHURA I'll have to. She's the only one who is streetwise.
- 13 ZAICHEK Well I hope you know what you're doing.
- 14 SHURA God is on our side.

SC 4.7. EXT. SHANGHAI TRAIN STATION - NIGHT

FX: Marie and Tatiana at the station.

(TATIANA IS OBLIVIOUS, MARIE NERVOUS.)

- 1 POLICE Welcome to the Shanghai International Settlement. Papers please ladies?
- 2 MARIE Here.
- 3 POLICE And the purpose of your visit?
- 4 MARIE We're dancers. The Shura Giraldi Troupe?
- 5 POLICE Oh yes, we've had a few of you travelling through today?
- 6 TATIANA We're always on the road.
- 7 MARIE Here's a free ticket. Why don't you come and see us? We're at the Paramount?
- 8 POLICE Well, thank you very much.
- 9 MARIE Can we go then?
- (BEAT)
- 10 POLICE Of course. But watch out for smugglers.
- 11 TATIANA Sorry?
- 12 POLICE There's some nasty characters travelling these trains, be sure to look after yourselves.
- 13 MARIE We will, don't you worry.

FX: Marie and Tatiana walk quickly on.

- 14 TATIANA Are you feeling okay?
- 15 MARIE I am now. Come on, we don't want to miss the train.

FX: They hurry on.

- 1 **NARRATION:** **Smuggling on the *Shanghai Express* between Peking and Shanghai was rampant. Shanghai was an international city, with a foreign police force, but it was corrupt – ‘a thin slice of heaven on a thick slice of hell’, said the missionaries. You could do any kind of business there. Still, if you got caught - jail sentences were harsh.**

SC 4.8. **EXT. ALLEY WAY, STREET - NIGHT**

- 2 MAN What kept you?
- 3 MARIE We got lost.
- 4 MAN Shanghai so good, eh? You got a package for me?
- 5 MARIE You give us your package first.
- (BEAT)
- 6 MAN Well, aren't you the professional? What, don't you trust me?
- 7 MARIE Just hand it over. Tatiana, when he gives you his package, you hand him the jewellery, okay?
- 8 TATIANA Are you sure about this Marie it seems –
- 9 MAIRE Just do it.
- 10 TATIANA Here.

FX: **The man gives Marie the package. She and Tatiana give him the jewels.**

- 11 MAN There you go.
- 12 MARIE Wait a minute. This isn't cash? There should be cash. What's going on?!
- (THE MAN LAUGHS)

FX: **Checks out his jewels.**

1 MAN Did no one tell you? What's in there is better than cash.

FX: **The sound of a dog barking, someone's coming.**

2 MAN I gotta go.

FX: **He runs.**

3 MARIE Hey, come back.... Shit. Shit!

4 TATIANA Marie, what the hell's going on? What are we involved in?

5 MAIRE Shura's new scheme, by looks of it.

6 TATIANA What's in that package?

7 **NARRATION:** **With the economy in freefall and cash increasingly worthless, other commodities became commonly traded as payment...rice or grain, maybe gold or silver, if you were lucky...and sometimes, more problematic products...**

SC 4.9. INT. THE KAVKAZ - DAY

FX: Shura goes through the package.

- | | | |
|---|---------|---|
| 1 | ZAICHEK | It's Heroin. |
| 2 | SHURA | Drugs?! But what are we going to do with drugs?! What are
- I will kill that girl. She knew we/ needed - |
| 3 | ZAICHEK | It's not her fault, Shura. She was only doing as she was
told. It's those bastards in Shanghai - |
| 4 | SHURA | But this was supposed to solve our problems! A little cash for
an exchange of jewels. I can't get rid of this! I'll have to talk
to Father Vassily explain there's been a mistake - |
| 5 | ZAICHEK | Or...we could try to sell it? |
| 6 | SHURA | What? And become dope dealers? I did not watch my father
die and escape Tomsk to become a drug dealer. That would
make us no better than Saxsen. |
| 7 | ZAICHEK | True. But it might put him out of business?

(BEAT) |
| 8 | SHURA | Well I would like to see that snake squirm. Would I be able to
get out of the Badlands? |
| 9 | ZAICHEK | Not only that. You'd be able to buy a mansion. |

SC 4.10. **INT. STAGE**

1 MC 'Ladies and Gentleman, Gentleman and Ladies, Welcome, Dobro Pozhalovat, HuanyingHuanying...are you ready to witness a reinvention? May I introduce to you Shura - the drugs' baron.

FX: **Music plays under:**

2 **NARRATION:** **So that was how the deal worked out – gems for heroin. With cash barely worth the paper it's printed on, drugs are a reliable currency. And the nighttime denizens of the Badlands are demanding the newly fashionable heroin.**

SC 4.11. **INT THE KAVKAZ**

FX: **Zaichek is cutting up the drugs.**

3 SHURA How much in each?

4 ZAICHEK I don't know? This much?

5 SHURA Too much.

6 ZAICHEK You think?

7 SHURA We need to ask someone who knows. Marie!

8 **NARRATION:** **The junkies of the Badlands had to pay in British pounds, American dollars, French francs, Dutch guilders, Italian lira, Mexican silver dollars...anything but worthless local Chinese money.**

SC 4.12. **EXT A STREET CORNER**

- 1 MARIE We are much cheaper than Saxsen. And this is good stuff.
So you tell your friends, you tell your customers, that from
now on you come to us, alright?
- 2 R/SHAW GUY So Shura is going into business. So many fingers, so many
pies.
- 3 MARIE We Russians are resourceful. We have to survive.
- 4 R/SHAW GUY Survive? Shura *thrive* in Peking!

SC 4.13. **INT THE KAVKAZ**

FX: **They count out money.**

- 5 ZAICHEK Two hundred, Three hundred. There's one fifty missing.
- 6 SHURA Marie?
- 7 ZAICHEK She's been helping herself to the profits.
- 8 SHURA What the hell am I going to do with that girl! I think now
might be the time to move while luck is still on our side. Time
to buy that house in the country. Can we afford it, yet?
- 9 ZAICHEK With money left over to throw a housewarming.
- 10 SHURA Then let's make it a big one. Really big.
- 11 **NARRATION:** **Even if it wasn't quite how Shura and Father Vassily had
planned it, Shura was becoming wealthy. Shura could
leave the crowded alleys of Yang-i hutong and the
Badlands. Move outside the city's ancient tartar walls.
Out to Paomachang racecourse where stout Mongolian
ponies, invariably ridden by Russian émigré jockeys,
raced every weekend to cheering crowds. Nearby were
many luxurious villas for the wealthy, just four miles
from the crowded city, but close to the races and fresh
air. Shura bought himself one of the biggest and
grandest....**

SC 4.14. INT THE VILLA - NIGHT

FX: A housewarming party in full swing.

- | | | |
|----|---------|--|
| 1 | TATIANA | Zaichек! Zaichек! |
| 2 | ZAICHEK | Tatiana! Shura will be so glad that you came. |
| 3 | TATIANA | Where is he? |
| 4 | ZAICHEK | Getting ready to perform with the band. |
| 5 | TATIANA | Perform? |
| 6 | ZAICHEK | A special number to celebrate. |
| 7 | TATIANA | What a beautiful house this is. I can't believe it. Zaichек,
can I introduce you to Roy, he's my boyfriend. |
| 8 | ZAICHEK | Well hello Roy. You're Chinese? |
| 9 | ROY | My Father is. My mother is English. I was born in Oxford. |
| 10 | TATIANA | Roy is the manager of one of the clubs we perform at. This is
Zaichек, Roy. He's Shura's - |
| 11 | ZAICHEK | Friend. |
| 12 | TATIANA | Is Marie here, Zaichек? |
| 13 | ZAICHEK | Not yet. But I'm sure she will be here soon. |

FX: Anton, a Russian jockey enters.

- | | | |
|----|-------|---------------------------------|
| 14 | ANTON | Roy? Roy Tchoo,! Hey Roy! |
| 15 | ROY | Anton! |
| 16 | ANTON | Hey! |
| 17 | ROY | Anton! What are you doing here? |

FX: They embrace.

- | | | |
|----|-------|--|
| 18 | ANTON | I'm riding a horse in the 2.15 tomorrow. |
|----|-------|--|

- 1 ROY This is my friend, Anton. Anton is a jockey. This is Tatiana
- 2 TATIANA Are you Russian, Anton?
- 3 ANTON Yes.
- 4 TATIANA Oh Shura would love to meet you -
- 5 ANTON Who's Shura?
- 6 TATIANA He's about to perform. This is his house. He's Russian, like us.
- 7 ROY Did no one tell you whose party this was?
- 8 ANTON I was told to come here by the owner of my horse. He's very rich so I do exactly as I'm told.
- (THEY LAUGH)
- 9 MC Ladies and Gentleman. Welcome to the Villa Giraldi. Isn't it gorgeous?! Your hostess for this evening is now ready to perform.
- 10 TATIANA Hostess? What's going on?
- 11 MC Please, put your hands together for the talented, the sensational, the beautiful - Shura!
- FX:** **The audience goes wild. Shura enters as a woman. She starts to sing.**
- 12 ANTON Wow. She looks like a film star. I gotta get a closer look.
- FX:** **He moves off.**
- 13 ROY He's smitten.
- 14 TATIANA Wait a minute. What's going on? That's not Shura performing.
- 15 ZAICHEK Oh that's Shura alright.

1 **NARRATION:** **As Tatiana would later recall, Shura descended the staircase in their new home as a ‘gorgeous woman in a long dress.....who looked like she was off on a date with some big shot.’**

2 **What made Shura feel so empowered that night? Was it the support and understanding of so many friends in the entertainment profession? Was it the all-pervasive world of Peking opera, where males routinely took female roles and nobody batted an eyelid? Or was it the power that comes with money?**

3 TATIANA But Shura is -

4 ZAICHEK Oh Tatiana, don't you know? Shura can be anyone Shura wants to be.

5 **NARRATION:** **Maybe it was a combination of all of those things, those forces that had finally made Shura – a refugee taxi-dancer from Tomsk – now a rich and powerful person in Peking, who didn’t have to answer to anyone.**

6 TATIANA And look at her! Oh I wish Marie could see this. Where is she? She’s missing all the fun.

FX: **The song continues.**

7 **NARRATION:** **But what none of them knew that night was that this was the end, not the beginning, of the good times.**

8 **Just months later it all came crashing down. War came to China, to Peking, the Badlands, and even to Paomachang. A not wholly unexpected, but still sudden ending.**

SC 4.15. EXT. BADLANDS - NIGHT

FX: Marie is out of it, trying to get to the villa.

- 1 JAPANESE SOLDIER Halt! Stop what you are doing? Girl, where are you going?
- 2 MARIE Home.
- 3 SOLDIER Where?
- 4 MARIE Paomachang.
- 5 SOLDIER At this hour? What are you doing in the Badlands?
- 6 MARIE I used to live here. I was - visiting... a friend. What's the problem? Are you the police?
- (HE LAUGHS)
- 7 SOLDIER You're a Russian?
- 8 MARIE Yes.
- 9 SOLDIER Then you better go quick. Tell your friends, the Japanese are here.

FX: The sound of Japanese troops marching into Peking.

- 10 **NARRATION:** On July 7th 1937 the Japanese army, which had been camped out just eight miles from the Forbidden City at the Marco Polo bridge, invaded.
- 11 Peking fell without a fight; Japan occupied the city. It was the start of Japan's total war against China that would last until the summer of 1945 – more than eight long years later.
- 12 The party at Villa Giraldi that night was one of the last for many, many years. It was time to get used to the new order...

OUTRO:

- 1 **NARRATION:** In the next episode of **Peking Noir Shura**, Marie and the entire Russian émigré community of Peking now live in an occupied city, subject to the vicissitudes and cruelties of the Imperial Japanese Army. Yet, as ever, they must work out a way to survive...

PART 5/6

1 **NARRATION:** **Peking is an occupied city. The Imperial Japanese Army patrol the streets. Their secret police seek out any Chinese resistance.**

2 **The foreigners that can, evacuate for safer places. European and American soldiers leave for home. The Badlands becomes daily sorrier and emptier. Chinese linked to the Nationalist regime, like Shura's partner Zaichek, have to hide their pasts in the hope the secret police don't discover them.**

SC 5.1. INT THE KAVKAZ - DAY

FX: **Shura is mid dance rehearsal.**

3 SHURA And can we take it from the top please. Tatiana? When you enter can you get a little more centre stage.

4 TATIANA Yes Shura.

5 ZAICHEK I think we can make more of her costume, Shura? A lower back will be more provocative. You will be playing at the Manhattan after all.

6 SHURA Good idea, Zaichek. We'll make the adjustments before tonight's performance. Right everyone. Ready? From the top please.

FX: **The rehearsal pianist strikes up when suddenly the door bursts open and two Yakuza enter.**

7 YAKUZA 1 All of you, up against the wall. Up against the wall. Or I shoot!

FX: **All the girls scream.**

- 1 **NARRATION:** **The Russian émigrés remain – no passports, stateless, nowhere to run to. Now in the certain knowledge that the Japanese are the new masters of the ancient city...**
- 2 YAKUZA 2 Move! Move! MOVE!
- 3 **NARRATION:** **Imported “loyal” Yakuza gangsters have arrived from Tokyo to take over the city’s Badlands; to run it at a profit for the Japanese army and subsidise their occupation of china.**
- 4 SHURA Stop! Who the hell are you? This is my club and my rehearsal. I give the orders round here.
- 5 YAKUZA 1 Not anymore, Giraldi. Get against that wall.
- 6 ZAICHEK Who ordered this?
- 7 YAKUZA 1 The new law makers. Now, get up against that wall!
- 8 ZAICHEK We don't take orders from thug Yakuza.
- 9 YAKUZA 1 Listen, you Chinese dog. Your little game is up here. We know what you lot are into.
- 10 SHURA We run a dance troupe and a nightclub.
- 11 YAKUZA 1 Our sources tell us this place is a front for drug smuggling.
- 12 SHURA That’s a lie!
- 13 YAKUZA 2 Listen. We are being very kind by allowing you to continue.
- 14 ZAICHEK What do you mean?
- 15 YAKUZA 1 Stop shouting and crying we'll explain. From now on you'll be selling for us.
- 16 ZAICHEK So you can fund your war against China?
- 17 YAKUZA 1 Only Japanese can make money now so you sell our stuff to your degenerate Russian junkies and these girls here, can entertain the officers.

1 YAKUZA 2 And we don't just mean by dancing.

FX: **The girls object.**

2 SHURA Now you listen to me. These girls are highly-trained dancers they are not -

3 YAKUZA 1 So you won't cooperate, fine. Yoshiaki? Go and get the Russian pimp. Tell him he can run this place. Hand it over to him.

4 SHURA Russian pimp?

5 YAKUZA 2 Saxsen. This place can be his.

6 SHURA That bastard's never setting foot in here. This is my club. I have spent years building it up!

FX: **The Yakuza grabs Shura. Shura reacts.**

7 YAKUZA 1 I hear you're a girl under that shirt Giraldi - why don't you let me see.

8 ZAICHEK Why you filthy bastard/ Get off him!

FX: **He goes for him.**

9 SHURA Zaichек don't!

FX: **The Yakuza shoot Zaichек dead. Three shots. Everyone screams. Shura rushes to him.**

10 SHURA No! Zaichек no!

FX: **The girls scream and cry.**

11 SHURA Oh my god. Zaichек. Zaichек!

FX: **The Yakuza reloads his gun.**

12 YAKUZA 1 He was a well-known degenerate and a Chinese Nationalist pig.

13 SHURA You murdered him!

(SHURA CRIES)

- 1 YAKUZA 1 Now it's your turn Giraldi? You gonna work with us or are you gonna die, like your boyfriend?

FX: **Click of the gun.**

- 2 **NARRATION:** **There was no way to resist the Yakuza and the Japanese army. Once again the Russian émigrés – without a country, a secure home – were forced to accept the new status quo and survive as best they could.**

- 3 **It had been two decades since the Russian revolution. Younger émigrés, like Anton and Tatiana, had no real memories of their homeland. To some – surviving under Japanese occupation, hungry, poor, displaced, the Soviet Union perhaps took on a rosier glow from afar. Many young Russians, feeling adrift in China, perhaps lured by Soviet propaganda of a 'land of plenty', did think of returning, though such journeys invariably ended in Stalin's gulags.**

SC 5.2. EXT A STREET IN PEKING - DAY

FX: Anton, Shura, Tatiana and Roy are at a restaurant.

- 1 SHURA It was cold-blooded murder! That's what it was. And I am lost without him. I know you wouldn't think it to look at him, he was so unassuming, but he did deals with people, smoothed things over for us. He was a very good politician.
- 2 ROY Without The Kavkaz to run, how will you make a living, Shura?
- 3 SHURA Well I won't leave Peking, Roy. They might have put that animal Saxsen in charge of my club but that won't last. He'll soon make a mistake and they'll shoot him too. In the meantime, I will just have to think of new ways to make money.
- 4 TATIANA Illegal ways?
- 5 SHURA We emigres, can't afford to have morals. Acting within the law is for the privileged. I'm a refugee with no income, and a family to look after, I will do everything it takes to survive.
- 6 ANTON Maybe, we could all go back to Russia?
- 7 SHURA Oh don't be ridiculous, Anton.
- 8 ANTON Why is it ridiculous? If you have nothing here, why stay?
- 9 SHURA Going back to Russia is impossible -
- 10 ANTON But inflation is already killing us here, food shortages are hurting everyone. Peking is a godforsaken place now. How is it any worse than Russia?
- 11 SHURA Well, there are no Bolsheviks for a start. And at least in Peking I have friends. Good friends...and contacts. Now might be the time to give them a call...

- 1 **NARRATION:** By the end of 1937 things were getting increasingly desperate in Peking as Japan's grip on the city tightened. The rail lines to Shanghai were disrupted; resistance in the countryside lead the Japanese army to instigate the 'three alls' policy: kill all, burn all, loot all.
- 2 Terrified peasants flooded into Peking, found shelter where they could, or slept on the streets. Food supplies ran low as crops burned; tuberculosis raged through Yang-i hutong taking a terrible toll; Badlands heroin was cut to maximise profits, with baking soda, starch, bleach. The death toll was horrific – overdoses occurred daily. The addicts, their immune systems weakened, became especially susceptible to cholera and TB. Their corpses were left on the streets in the early mornings to be collected by the carts of the Chinese Buddhist benevolent society.
- 3 Money was worthless – merchants wanted only gold, jewels, or rice as payment. The city's police force - those that weren't imprisoned as politically unreliable or had deserted - were hated as collaborators and kept a low profile. A crime wave took hold...

SC 5.3. **INT HOME SHURA - DAY**

FX: **We hear the sound of a telephone ringing. Pavel picks it up.**

- 4 PAVEL Hello.
- 5 SHURA Pavel Oborska?
- 6 PAVEL Speaking.
- 7 SHURA It's Shura Giraldi.

- 1 PAVEL Shura, how the hell are you?
- 2 SHURA I have a little – business proposition for you.
- 3 **NARRATION:** **War changes people, just as does revolution, statelessness, poverty and exile. Survival is all you can think about. You can do nothing about the big picture of history. All you can do is stay alive, feed and protect those dear to you. It's anarchy, and people do things they never thought they could...our Shura included...**

SC 5.4. INT THE KAVKAZ - DAY

FX: **Shura and Anton are drinking.**

- 4 SHURA So, there's a couple of Marines from the US barracks who have healthy gambling debts to pay off; Pavel Oborska, an old friend from Harbin and Herbolt, a German safecracker from Berlin, he's dodged the Nazis by coming to China.
- 5 ANTON And you.
- 6 SHURA I'm the leader.
- 7 ANTON Jesus. Are things *that* desperate?
- 8 SHURA The Japanese control the Badlands now and leave no money for us...not even crumbs. I can't work, I need to pay for the Villa, and then there's Marie to worry about.
- 9 ANTON She's taking dope again?
- 10 SHURA I'm not sure she ever stopped. And the muck they get now – they cut it with bleach. Did you know that?
- 11 ANTON Zaichek wouldn't want you to do this, Shura -

- 1 SHURA When I first came to Peking I had a protector. He was handsome and rich. He told me he loved me and as I got to know him I loved him too. But I was not the person he wanted me to be. Then, I met Zaicheck, and although he wasn't handsome or rich, he looked after me, and more than that, he desired me for who I was, not what I wasn't. I thought, we'd grow old together, that we'd live happily at the Villa, find peace there for Marie. Instead, I am alone again and Marie never got her chance to get well so I have no choice but to be my own protector, and hers. Zaicheck would understand that.
- 2 ANTON Are you scared?
- 3 SHURA Terrified.
- 4 ANTON Promise me, you'll come back alive.
- 5 SHURA Would you miss me if I didn't?
- 6 ANTON Why do you think I came here this evening to see you? Why do you think I hang around Tatiana and Roy so much? It's only so I can see you. Of course I'd miss you!
- 7 SHURA Then come closer?

FX: **He does, maybe they kiss. Music.**

SC 5.5. **INT. STAGE**

- 1 MC And now ladies and gentlemen for the ultimate transformation; Shura the penniless refugee from Tomsk, Shura the girl who sold dances to the highest bidder in Harbin, Shura the man who runs the most fantastic chorus lines Peking has ever seen, the woman who is a caring mother to our darling Marie....Shura with the voice of an angel and the determination of a tiger.
- Shura, the survivor, forced to become a drug dealer, the lover of a warlord, a politician and now a young Russian jockey will become...
- 2 SHURA Shura, the mastermind behind the largest ever bank heist in Chinese history from which not one solitary dollar, yuan, or penny will ever be recovered.

SC 5.6. **INT. THE BANK - DAY**

FX: **The gang burst in. Shooting and shouting as they as they go**

- 3 SHURA Everybody down, everybody down on the floor! Zai Dishang!

FX: **The people in the bank scream.**

- 4 SHURA I said down!
- 5 JOE Hey you, Teller! Give me the key.
- 6 TELLER What key?
- 7 PAVEL The key to the safe. Yaoshi!

FX: **He shoots everyone screams.**

1 SHURA We don't want to hurt you, alright? We are here for the money. Think of your families, don't risk your life. Give him the key.

2 TELLER Here.

FX: **She hands over the keys.**

3 SHURA Go, Let's go! Quick. Quick!

FX: **They rest of the gang run to get the money from the safe.**

4 SHURA Ladies and Gentlemen, I apologise for the inconvenience but I'm afraid that times are hard and needs must. The bank is insured and we will only take their money, not yours. Now, please cooperate, although you should also know that we are desperate and will not hesitate to shoot.... This won't take long.

FX: **Suddenly a member of the public pulls a gun, click.**

5 HERO MAN Hold it right there.

6 SHURA Please Sir, whoever you are - don't be a hero. Put the gun down.

7 HERO MAN I am not about to let you rob this bank and terrify these poor people -

8 SHURA It's not your money, it's the bank's. There is no need for heroics. Now put the gun down.

9 HERO MAN No!

FX: **Pavel and co run back in with the money.**

10 PAVEL We've got it we've got it. Let's go -

FX: **He stops.**

11 JOE Shit. What the hell? He's got a gun!

1 HERO MAN And I will shoot you all!

2 PAVEL I don't think so.

FX: **PAVEL shoots the man, everybody screams.**

3 SHURA What the hell did you do that for?

4 PAVEL Let's get out of here. Go! Run! Run!

FX: **They all leg it.**

5 **NARRATION:** **This was the biggest bank heist in Chinese history – biggest then and still the biggest haul to date nearly a century later. But I have to remind you what I said at the start: for everyone who said Shura was the “King of the Badlands”, someone else said Shura was nothing of the sort. Well, the rumour was Shura robbed the Bank of Peking – but nobody ever proved it.**

6 **However, inflation, stagflation, Japanese bribes and arbitrary taxes, safe houses, hush money ate the takings up quick...and, as every villain knows, steal too much, grab too many headlines, and they never stop looking for you...**

SC 5.7. EXT THE VILLA - LATE AFTERNOON

FX: Shura drinks, Anton smokes while reading the paper.

1 SHURA They've found Herbolt. The safe cracker. It's in the paper.
They've arrested him.

2 ANTON Let me see.

FX: He takes the paper, worried.

3 ANTON It says here they're looking for a Russian. It won't take long
before the police are here. 'All Peking know Shura'!

4 SHURA So what can I do? Go on the run? I robbed that bank so we
could afford to stay here, so we could live! I can't just leave
everything and disappear.

5 ANTON I don't see how you have a choice. A man died in that raid.
They'll charge you all with murder. We need to start
packing.

6 NARRATION: It wasn't long before the Chinese cops caught some of
the gang hiding in the western hills outside the city.

SC 5.8. EXT. VILLA IN THE WESTERN HILLS – NIGHT

FX: Chinese cops can be heard surrounding the villa.

1 CHINESE COP Pavel Oborska, we know you're in there. We have you surrounded. Come out. With your hands up!

FX: Shots can be heard from inside the villa.

2 CHINESE COP 2 Gun fire, gun fire get down. Get down!

FX: The shots stop, a moment.

3 CHINESE COP He's reloading. I'm going in. Cover me!

4 CHINESE COP 2 Are you sure?

5 CHINESE COP Let's go!

FX: They rush into the villa, shooting.

6 NARRATION: Pavel Oborska was killed. Herbolt, the German safecracker was sent to prison but never revealed the identity of the "Russian Mastermind" behind the heist. The cops turned the safe house upside down. They recovered some pearls and gems, but no cash.

SC 5.9. INT. A HOUSE IN THE HILLS – NIGHT

FX: A cop bangs on the door.

7 US MILITARY Open up! Open up!

FX: Joe, blurry eyed, goes to the door.

8 JOE Who are you? What do you want?

9 US MILITARY Military police. We're here to arrest you.

10 JOE What the hell for?

FX: He gets dragged away.

11 JOE Please. You can't do this. I haven't done anything wrong.

- 1 **NARRATION:** **United States Military Police arrested a Marine thought to be one of the gang. But the Marine Corps dealt with its own problems and quickly shipped the guy back Stateside to avoid embarrassment. Shura's name was never mentioned officially, but it was whispered all around town. A warrant was issued in Peking and Shanghai for:**

SC 5.10. NEUTRAL BG

- 2 POLICE RADIO 'A RUSSIAN – MALE – BELIEVE CALLED SHURA'
- 3 **NARRATION:** **Peking had plenty of them – Russians, men, and Shuras – it's a common name. But nobody in Yang-i hutong, nor the Badlands, was talking. The cops even roused Shura's old confidant Father Vasily out at the Yonghegong temple, but the "Ruski Lama" was deep into a trance and they couldn't make sense of his chanting.**
- 4 **Still, in desperate times and with a reward being offered by the bank and the Japanese authorities, it was only a matter of time before someone talked...after all, 'all Peking know Shura'...**

SC 5.11. INT THE VILLA - LATE AFTERNOON

FX: Shura is packing. Maire enters, she's just woken up and is out of it.

- 1 MARIE Hey. What are you doing?
- 2 ANTON Oh, finally, Marie. Where have you been all day?
- 3 MARIE What's going on?
- 4 SHURA We're moving
- 5 MARIE What? Why?
- 6 SHURA Haven't you noticed? It's not safe here anymore. I see that terrible cheap Yakuza crap has addled your brain.
- 7 MARIE If I could go back to dancing I could earn enough to buy better stuff. But I can't go back to dancing since they took your club away.
- 8 SHURA So the tragedy that is your life that is all my fault, is it? You were supposed to give up your - habit. This is why I got us out of the Badlands. I did all of that for you.
- 9 MARIE It didn't work though did it? I'm still who I was and so are you.
- 10 SHURA Well, I'm determined to prove you wrong. Pack your bags. Roy has arranged us train tickets. You, me and Anton we leave for Shanghai tonight.
- 11 MAIRE So Is Anton your lover now?
- 12 SHURA Do you care?
- 13 MARIE I'm not going anywhere. Certainly not with you.
- 14 SHURA Then stay behind. And die. Let Saxsen have you.
- 15 TATIANA You really don't care what happens to me do you? The only person Shura cares about is Shura.

- 1 SHURA That's not true. I love you more than I've ever loved anyone!
- 2 MARIE Then prove it.

SC 5.12. INT. THE TRAIN STATION AT PEKING.

3 **NARRATION:** Shura is the most wanted person in Peking. Every cop has got that description – vague and confusing as it is. But nobody seeking a “Russian criminal mastermind” is looking for a refugee family understandably leaving occupied Peking for the comparative freedom of Shanghai...

4 ROY Try not to worry, Shura. We will look after everything as best we can here.

5 SHURA Thank you darling, Roy.

6 TATIANA We will miss you so much.

FX: **They hug.**

7 ROY Take care Anton.

8 ANTON I'll miss you, dear friend.

FX: **More hugs.**

9 ROY Look, you better go. There are police over there.

10 ANTON Where?

11 ROY They're patrolling the train.

12 TATIANA Thank God you reinvented yourself Shura, before you left.

13 ROY I was going to say, you look particularly beautiful today, Shura.

(THEY ALL LAUGH)

- 1 TATIANA What should we do about Marie? I am worried about her staying here now you're leaving. If she comes to see us -
- 2 SHURA Don't you worry about Marie. I've got that in hand.
- 3 ROY Quick, the police are coming this way, get in your seats now. Hurry.

FX: **They move off.**

SC 5.13. **INT THE TRAIN AT PEKING.**

FX: **The Train is about to leave, Anton and Shura are aboard.**

- 4 GUARD Papers please. The train is about to leave. You are going to Shanghai?
- 5 ANTON Yes.
- 6 GUARD One gentlemen and - two ladies?
- 7 SHURA I'm travelling with my nephew here, and my niece.
- 8 GUARD Where is she then? The other lady.

FX: **We hear a kafuffle it's Marie coming down the carriage of the train with the Rickshaw guy, she protests.**

- 9 SHURA She's coming now.

FX: **RICKSHAW GUY dumps Marie into her seat.**

- 10 R/SHAW GUY Here you go, Madam. Your luggage is delivered.
- 11 MARIE Shura I -
- 12 SHURA Be quiet Marie, there's a good girl. Thank you, my friend
- 13 R/SHAW GUY Have a safe journey. And when you come back I will take you for a ride in town. Bye-bye!

FX: **RICKSHAW GUY jumps off the train.**

1 SHURA This is our other lady. Guard, if you want to check our tickets?

2 GUARD Thank you.

FX: **The Guard goes down the carriage calling out ‘all aboard’ Train leaving etc. Marie is cat crazy, fuming.**

3 ANTON What the hell?!

4 MARIE Shura, I’m going to kill you!

5 SHURA Hush. You think I’d leave without you Marie? After all these years.

6 MARIE You had me kidnapped and – dragged here by a rickshaw puller. Oh the indignity.

7 SHURA (LAUGHING) You asked me for proof of my love? Well, here we are. It’s time to start your rehabilitation. And mine. Now be quiet. We are just a nice Russian family, travelling together. Sit back, enjoy the view and do as your Auntie tells you.

FX: **The train chugs away.**

8 **NARRATION:** **Peking would not see Shura again for the duration of the war. His disappearing act was total. Across China the White Russians were left marooned, in a legal no-man’s land – nobody took responsibility for them; nobody helped them. Once more they had to find ways to survive. And so new deals, new arrangements had to be made to survive the war....**

OUTRO:

9 **NARRATION:** **Next time, in the concluding episode of *Peking Noir*, we find just how Shura escaped and ingeniously survived the war. But with victory Shura must return to Peking and rebuild an empire. But history cannot be avoided and Shura will, once again, face upheaval, violence and revolution...**

END OF PART 5.

PART 6/6

- 1 **NARRATION:** **War is a time of rumour and gossip. Trying to verify tales told is impossible. Everyone who had once known Shura had a different story about how Shura had survived those dark years. And all of them were fantastic, and plausible, because other Russian émigrés had done the same to survive...**

SC 6.1. NEUTRAL BG

- 2 Russian man: *Shura went to Hong Kong and then, after the Japanese invaded. He spent the war in Macao, selling black-market kerosene and running a fan-tan house where you could gamble all night and buy Portuguese passports from cash-strapped officials.*
- 3 Russian woman: *Nonsense, I know for sure that Shura took a plane to Manila, did a deal with the Japanese and spent the war smuggling silver from Manila to Shanghai. She sang in the café Torino in Chinatown and all the Russian émigrés cried their eyes out.*
- 4 Dutch voice: *I am sure I met Shura running a bar in the Dutch East Indies, down in Sumatra, where collaborationist Dutchies were working in the oil fields. It was where everyone went on payday. He even called it the Kavkaz.*
- 5 `French voice: *Before the Japanese took over Indo-China I am sure I saw Shura - beautiful in a cheongsam, hair piled high, nails blood red, and those famous pearl white teeth right? In a Corsican-run casino run in Saigon. But Shura would only dance with the richest men. I had no money, so I couldn't get close enough to be sure. I think maybe I danced with the daughter but she was tight lipped.*

FX: Bordello

- 1 **NARRATION:** **Best guess? Digging in the archives of Shanghai's French Concession, listening to the old wartime stories and gossip – there was a bordello in a villa in Frenchtown...**

SC 6.2. **INT. A HOUSE IN SHANGHAI – 1941**

FX: **A busy Bordello. People of all nationalities drink, smoke, talk. Shura helps a customer to a table.**

- 2 **SHURA** Please, take a seat, take a seat Mr Furuya. What would you like to drink? We have an excellent brandy that I think would be just to your taste? Let me introduce you to my daughter, Marie. She will take you through what we offer here...

FX: **Narration overlaps.**

- 3 **NARRATION:** **On a quiet shady street, where the women looked like Chinese movie stars, where you could gamble at roulette tables, smoke opium on sumptuous divans; where the whisky was legit. Where Free-French mixed with Vichy-French; Japanese military officers drank with Chinese collaborators as well as detectives of the Shanghai Sûreté, and black-marketeers of all nationalities, gathered. It was said to be run by a Russian woman, a little older, but still captivating. She had a younger Russian man who watched the door, paid the bribes, and a daughter who sometimes got a little wild. And then, after the Japanese were defeated in 1945, they simply disappeared...**

FX: **The sound of the bordello snaps off. Gone like a puff of smoke.**

- 4 **NARRATION:** **Sound like anyone we know?**

SC 6.3. EXT THE KAVKAZ – DECEMBER 1945

- 1 SYLVIA (7yo) Is this the place Mamma?
- 2 TATIANA This is the place. The Kavkaz. Look, there's still the sign on the door.
- 3 SYLVIA Shall we go in?
- 4 TATIANA We'll need to be careful.

FX: They push the door.

- 5 ROY My God, it's a wreck.
- 6 **NARRATION:** **Japan unconditionally surrendered. The war was over. Shanghai had been a safe bolt-hole, but it seems Shura missed Peking. Nationalist China once again controls Peking. The civilian internment camps liberated, the foreigners sent away return to pick up the pieces of their lives. Shura was back by late 1945, sipping Crème-de-Menthe and holding court once again at the Kavkaz.**

FX: Shura approaches.

- 7 SHURA Darling Tatiana! Oh, look at you. Let me look at you. My God, you are so thin.
- 8 TATIANA Shura!

FX: She runs to embrace him.

- 9 ROY It's good to see you Shura.
- 10 SHURA Dear Roy. How are you?
- 11 ROY I've been better.
- 12 SHURA Well you still look so handsome. And who is this?
- 13 TATIANA Our daughter, Sylvia. Born after you left for Shanghai.
- 14 SHURA Well hello little one.

- 1 ROY Not so little now. She's seven.
- 2 SHURA Seven. Goodness. It's been so long?
- 3 TATIANA Say hello Sylvia, this is uncle Shura.
- 4 SYLVIA Hello.
- 5 SHURA Hello darling. I know, why don't you see if you can find my friends, Anton and Marie. They're upstairs. Tell them, your Mamma and Papa are here to see them.
- 6 SYLVIA Can I Mamma?
- 7 TATIANA Yes but be careful. This building might not be safe.

FX: **Sylvia runs off.**

- 8 **NARRATION:** **Seven long years of the Japanese occupation had left Peking impoverished, chaotic – nobody had time to reinvestigate old bank robberies. Shura could breathe slightly easier.**

SC 6.4. **EXT THE KAVKAZ – DECEMBER 1945**

- 9 SHURA Tell me, was it terrible in the camp?
- 10 ROY Yes. But we all worked together. I helped to build a hospital. I'm proud of that. But I will never forget having to dig graves for the dead.
- 11 TATIANA When the Americans finally came and liberated us, people were crying, weeping, screaming.
- 12 ROY How was Shanghai?
- 13 SHURA Oh, we survived. And it was good for Marie, very good. Wait till you see her, she is well again. But we missed Peking.

1 ROY And what about this place Shura? What have they done to the old Kavkaz. Do you think you can get it up and running again?

FX: **Anton and Marie enter with Sylvia.**

2 MARIE Tatiana!

3 ANTON Roy!

4 ROY Oh my dear friend Anton. Anton!

FX: **Hugs.**

5 TATIANA Marie, darling!

6 MARIE You still look so beautiful Tatiana.

7 TATIANA So do you, Marie.

8 MARIE If only that were true. Look, we met your daughter.

9 SYLVIA The lady showed me the stage Mamma.

10 ANTON You know Shura, the upstairs is pretty intact. It's mainly the dance floor and bar that got smashed up.

11 ROY Perhaps it's not as bad as it looks.

12 SHURA If I can get this place open again, will you all come and work for me?

13 ROY Why not. They'll be plenty of US Marines to entertain. And you look like you could do with a manager.

14 SHURA Tatiana, will you come back and perform for us? I can just see it now. A big number where you sing and dance and rise out of the ashes like a phoenix!

SC 6.5. INT THE KAVKAZ - NIGHT

FX: Sound of a rowdy GI audience.

1 MC Ladies and Gentlemen. Especially you, American gentlemen. The war is over! And it's New Year's Eve - It's time to celebrate! Welcome, to the biggest, the rowdiest, the best nightclub in all Peking. The all new Kavkaz! Hit it boys.

FX: Band go into a number. Tatiana sings something joyful, glamorous and razzmatazz.

2 MC Welcome 1946! The year of the Dog.

FX: Cheers ring out, happy new year etc.

3 **NARRATION:** The Americans are back in town and US dollars are flowing. But world war has become civil war – Chinese Nationalist vs Chinese Communist. And civil war looks like becoming revolution – Communist revolution.

4 MC 1947, the year of the Pig.

5 **NARRATION:** The civil war grinds on. It becomes clear that Chiang Kai-shek's armies are losing – Chairman Mao Zedong's communist troops take city after city. There is fighting close to Peking. The Nationalists begin a long retreat, the Communist winter offensive in northeast China is a crushing defeat for Chiang. Peking is once again vulnerable, and starting to panic.

6 MC 1948, the year of the Rat.

7 **NARRATION:** The Red Army's advance is remorseless. The Nationalists retreat now a rout. Chiang prepares to take himself, and all China's gold he can grab, to Taiwan. Anyone – Chinese or foreign – not sympathetic to the Communists makes plans to leave. For Shura it's like Tomsk all over again.

- 1 **The new United Nations is tasked with trying to find countries that will accept the nearly quarter of a million Russian émigrés stranded in china.**
- 2 **Shura, Anton, Marie and all the émigrés need passports. The UN has set up offices in Peking and begun interviews. Passports for America, Britain, Brazil, Canada, Australia are possible.**
- 3 **But those with criminal records, those women suspected of prostitution, anyone whose name has ever appeared in a police report, are sent to the back of the queue.**

SC 6.6. INT AN OFFICE – DAY

FX: A BUREAUCRAT stamping forms.

- 4 BUREAUCRAT Refused. Refused. Refused.
- 5 **NARRATION: It was a desperate situation and the clock was ticking.**

SC 6.7. EXT A PEKING RESTAURANT - DAY

- 6 SHURA Passports?
- 7 TATIANA You'll need to apply, immediately. Anton and Marie too.
- 8 SHURA But - why would we need passports? We're not going anywhere? I've been in China nearly thirty years now -
- 9 ROY Things are getting serious here, Shura. When the communists arrive, they will not be kind, certainly not to people like you.
- 10 SHURA But I can't just leave. What about the Kavkaz - we're finally back on our feet after nearly four years -

- 1 ROY There are barely any foreigners left here now. Even if you could stay you won't be able to make a living. You are what they're calling a "Displaced Person". Because my Father was English I have a British passport, Tatiana and Sylvia too. That means we can leave. But as a Russian... you can do one of two things; you can go back to Russia -
- 2 SHURA What? No! The Soviets will kill me -
- 3 ROY Or, you can apply to the United Nations. See if they will allocate you a new place to settle.
- 4 SHURA But - where might that be?
- 5 ROY Australia? England?
- 6 TATIANA America would be great for you Shura. You could open the Kavkaz in San Francisco, or on Hollywood Boulevard?
- 7 SHURA When are you two thinking of leaving?
- 8 ROY As soon as possible. There's no time to lose.
- 9 **NARRATION:** **In 1949 the Nationalist government finally collapsed. Those remaining loyal followed Chiang Kai-shek's lead and fled to Taiwan. On October 1st 1949 the victorious People's Liberation Army paraded through Peking. A new national anthem, *the march of the volunteers*, was blasted from speaker trucks, a new Chinese flag, red with five yellow stars, was unfurled. Chairman Mao took to the rostrum:**

SC 6.8. EXT. LOUDSPEEKER

FX: Mao through a crackly speaker:

1 MAO: Comrades! Today, I hereby declare the formal establishment of the People's Republic of China! The people throughout China have been plunged into bitter suffering and tribulations...

2 NARRATION: **And, although everyone believes Mao said it that historic day:**

3 MAO: 'The Chinese people have stood up...'

4 NARRATION: **He actually didn't. It's an urban myth. But you get the point – everything had changed in China. Time was running out for the few Russian émigrés remaining.**

SC 6.9. EXT. PEKING STREET - DAY

FX: Shura has queued all day unsuccessfully. He is in a state.

5 SHURA Refused!

6 ANTON Both of you?

7 MARIE Yes.

8 ANTON Did they explain why?

9 SHURA It seems the past has caught up with me. And now of course there's no time to appeal. To ask for help, to call in a few favours. I need to sit down.

10 MARIE Come here.

FX: They lean against a wall.

- 1 ANTON Are you feeling alright?
- 2 SHURA Just a little – light-headed. They made us queue for hours.
And what do we get for it? Nothing!
- 3 MARIE We'll just have to make the best of things here.
- 4 SHURA And die like my father, or your parents. No thank you! What
about you, Anton? What did they say to you?
- (BEAT)
- 5 ANTON I didn't go in.
- 6 MARIE Why not?
- 7 SHURA For God's sake Anton this was important!
- 8 ANTON I have something to tell you.
- 9 MARIE What?
- (BEAT)
- 10 ANTON I've already got my passport.
- 11 SHURA I don't understand -
- 12 ANTON I applied last year.
- 13 MARIE Last year!
- 14 ANTON It was in June, when the communists took Shanghai. I got
scared. I asked around and - someone told me that's what I
had to do.
- 15 SHURA You applied and didn't tell us - why?
- 16 ANTON Because I knew, they'd turn you down, Shura.
- 17 MARIE You already know how you're getting out, don't you?
- (BEAT)

- 1 ANTON An old friend of mine, a racehorse owner, he says he can get me on a plane to Hong Kong.
- 2 SHURA When?
- (BEAT)
- 3 ANTON I can leave next week.

SC 6.10. INT. AIRPORT - NIGHT

FX: A busy airport - hectic, tense.

- 4 ANTON Something will come up, Shura. I just know it will. You're Shura! King and Queen of the Badlands. You'll get out. You're the cat with nine lives.
- 5 TANNOY: The Civil Aviation Administration of the People's Republic of China announces the departure of Flight 731 from Peking to Hong Kong. Will all passengers please make their way to Gate 2 with their exit documentation.
- 6 SHURA It's time for you to go.
- 7 ANTON We will see each other again. Maybe even - in Mother Russia. When it's safe, let's promise to meet there.
- 8 SHURA Where about?
- (BEAT)
- 9 ANTON I don't know – *(laughing)* The bar at the Metropole Hotel?
- 10 SHURA If they're still serving champagne cocktails, which I very much doubt?
- 11 ANTON I left when I was five. I remember nothing of Russia. My memories, I realise, they are all from books.
- (HE BEGINS TO CRY)

- 1 SHURA Please don't go.
- 2 ANTON But what will happen to me if I don't?
- 3 SHURA We'll find a way. There's always a way. I promise.

FX: **The announcement again.**

- 4 ANTON Goodbye Shura. I'm sorry.

FX: **He kisses Shura, leaves for the plane.**

SC 6.11. **EXT. STREET - DAY**

FX: **Marie and Shura walk arm-in-arm.**

- 5 MARIE Now that everyone is gone. I've been thinking... what if we were to go into business together?
- 6 SHURA As what?
- 7 MARIE We could open a new bordello?
- 8 SHURA The communists will never allow a cathouse
- 9 MARIE The communists don't need to know.
- 10 SHURA But who would be the girls?

FX: **Marie stops.**

- 11 MARIE Who do you think?
- 12 SHURA Oh no, Marie, no!
- 13 MARIE Oh Shura, for someone so worldly-wise you can be a little naive sometimes. How do you think I paid Saxsen when I couldn't work before the war.

(VOICE OFF CALLING SHURA. IT'S ANTON.)

- 14 ANTON Shura! Shura! Shura wait.

1 SHURA Anton?

2 MARIE Anton!

FX: **He catches them up.**

3 ANTON We Russians, we need to stick together, no? I couldn't just -
leave my family.

4 SHURA Oh Anton. What have you done?

FX: **Hugs.**

5 **NARRATION:** **The UN was gone, foreign embassies shuttered. It took a while for the new regime to get around to dealing with the remaining émigrés. Stalin and Mao were close – big brother and little brother, so they said in those days. Naturally, the White Russians were suspect. They had to be dealt with.**

SC 6.12. **INT/EXT THE KAVKAZ - NIGHT**

6 COM GUARD Kuaile-Kuaile. Hurry up. Hurry up now.

7 MARIE But where are you taking us?

8 COM GUARD All Russians. You are being moved out of Peking. You are all going to Tientsin. To a hotel.

9 SHURA Tientsin? What hotel? Why?

10 COM GUARD Don't ask questions. C'mon move.

11 ANTON But you can't make us leave. This is our home!
Our/(business)

12 COM GUARD Not anymore. All anti-Soviet Russians must leave. I said -
Move!

FX: **Marie, Shura and Anton are shoved onto a truck, it drives away.**

1 **NARRATION:** **‘Forced Repatriation’ they called it. Those stateless Russians still in China were to be sent back to the Soviet Union. Quite what reception awaited them was unknown, but nobody was expecting bouquets of roses and vodka toasts. It was a frightening time.**

SC 6.13. **INT. HOTEL ROOM, TIENTSIN**

FX: **Anton is unpacking a bag. Shura sits on the bed.**

2 ANTON We’ve got two rooms, there are whole families with one tiny space. Maybe Shura, you can hang a scarf on the light. That might make it feel more like home.

FX: **Marie enters.**

3 MARIE There are mice in my room.

4 SHURA Marie, fetch some glasses. There’s vodka in my suitcase. Can you get it, Anton?

5 ANTON It’s 8am.

6 MARIE Just get the bottle.

FX: **Anton stops trying, gives Shura the vodka.**

7 ANTON Here.

8 MARIE What’s that noise? Outside?

FX: **Anton opens the window, we hear a loud speaker broadcasting propaganda.**

9 TANNOY: Comrades be vigilant and alert. There remain among us some corrupted by the bourgeoisie. Chairman Mao Zedong has declared savage offensive against the bourgeoisie and all who would oppose our glorious proletarian revolution and valiant Communist Party.

1 ANTON It's a propaganda truck.

FX: **Shura pouring vodka.**

2 MARIE What's going to happen to us here? Do you think they'll take us back to Russia? If they come for us -

3 SHURA Come. Let us drink, we can tell stories.

4 ANTON What kind of stories?

5 SHURA Happy tales. Stories of the past. Let's remember the ghosts.

6 ANTON But you never tell stories of the past, Shura. You only ever move forwards.

7 MARIE You think this is it for us. Don't you?

8 SHURA Tomorrow, I promise, I will think of a new plan. But today. Let's drink. Let us talk of old friends. Anton, you go first. Tell the tale of the night we met...

9 **NARRATION:** **Eventually Moscow and Peking reached agreement. The final émigrés were to be taken to the Sino-Russian border and handed over to Soviet guards and a most uncertain future.**

SC 6.14. INT. SHURA'S ROOM TIENTSIN HOTEL - DAY

FX: **Early morning, pandemonium at the hotel. Someone banging on the door.**

1 MARIE Shura, Anton. Open up! Shura!

FX: **Anton opens the door.**

2 ANTON What it is it Marie?

3 MARIE They're here. Soldiers.

FX: **Shura wakes up.**

4 SHURA What's going on?

5 MARIE They're downstairs. Everyone in the hotel is being cleared out. They are taking people.

FX: **Shura suddenly getting dressed.**

6 ANTON Taking people where?

7 MARIE On trains. That's what they're saying. They are going to take us back to Russia on a train! Hand us over to the Bolsheviks.

8 ANTON What? Are you sure?

9 MARIE Oh God, Shura - I can't do this. I can't go back, they will kill us. Like they killed my parents -

10 SHURA Listen to me Marie, go and get your things, pack. I will talk to them. Go. Pack!

11 MARIE What if they separate us? This is what I've always dreaded. This is what I dream about - the nightmares!
(SHE IS HYSTERICAL.)

12 SHURA Stop!

13 MARIE I would rather die than go with them.

FX: **Shura grabs her.**

1 SHURA Go and pack now. Do you hear me? NOW! I will think of something, I always do, don't I?

FX: **She goes.**

SC 6.15. **INT. HOTEL CORRIDOR - DAY**

FX: **Guards outside Shura's room.**

2 COM GUARD Come on. Out. Now! Come on!

3 SHURA We will not leave without our friend, Marie. She has gone to pack. She is in her room.

4 COM GUARD Just move! We'll get her.

5 SHURA No. We can't leave without her. Go get her Anton.

6 ANTON *(To Guard)* Can I?

7 COM GUARD Make it quick.

FX: **Anton leaves.**

8 COM GUARD Wait a minute. I recognize you. You're - Shura Giraldi? I've heard about you, about your clubs. There were dancers. You don't look glamorous now. You look like the old poor bourgeois that you are.

9 SHURA Please. Please don't take us away. Say you came here to find us, and we weren't here.

10 COM GUARD I can't do that. The hotel must be cleared.

11 SHURA Then please. Please. Let us at least stay together. Don't separate us. We are a family.

(BEAT)

12 COM GUARD Fine. But get yourselves together.

13 SHURA Thank you. God will remember your kindness.

FX: **Anton appears.**

- 1 ANTON Shura?
- 2 SHURA Where's Marie? We need to go. We can go together.
- 3 ANTON We can't.
- 4 SHURA What's wrong? What is it? Where's Marie?
- 5 **NARRATION:** **Marie would not be the only suicide of the forced repatriations. These were men and women who had either fled the Bolsheviks or grown up hearing stories of the bloody terror of the communist revolution.**

SC 6.16. **EXT. BACK OF A MOVING TRUCK, SOMEWHERE ON THE BORDER - DAY**

- 6 ANTON Look Shura, over that horizon is Russia.
- 7 SHURA Whatever happens next, I want you to know that I love you Anton.
- 8 **NARRATION:** **Shura and Anton did reach the border to be handed over to Soviet guards. Shura would leave Chinese soil for the first time in over 30 years and enter Mother Russia again.**
- 9 ANTON You know, all this time you've feared coming back here, to Russia when maybe, it might all be fine. Maybe, it won't be so bad being back home?

FX: **The truck stops. The Guards get out.**

- 10 GUARD Right. Everybody out. Everybody out! Come on. Move!

FX: **They get up.**

- 11 GUARD We want men on one side. Women on the other.

FX: **The sound of more guards appearing (Russian voices now mingled with Chinese).**

1 CAPTAIN Are these prisoners for us?

2 GUARD Yes sir.

3 CAPTAIN Good. Take the women back to the truck. Drive them into the town to be processed. Line the men up in a row. Shoot them.

FX: **There's a reaction from the prisoners. Weeping, crying out etc.**

4 CAPTAIN SHUT UP! Right. Stand by. Positions, soldiers. Take Aim. FIRE!

FX: **The sound of guns.**

5 NARRATION: This was the swift and final end for so many of the forcibly repatriated émigrés. The men particularly were treated with distrust by the Soviet state, considered parasites, traitors, spies. Those not executed often found themselves in the gulags.

6 The truth is we don't know what happened to Shura after he reached the border...a bullet? A gulag for years and death by overwork, starvation or disease? But you should know, there were, as always with Shura, other rumours...

SC 6.17. EXT BACK OF MOVING TRUCK AT BORDER - DAY

1 SHURA Whatever happens next. I want you to know that I love you Anton.

2 ANTON And I love you. You know, all this time you've feared coming back here, to Russia when maybe, it might all be fine. Maybe, it won't be so bad being back home.

FX: Truck stops. Guards get out.

3 GUARD Right. Everybody out. Everybody out! Come on. Move!

FX: They get up.

4 GUARD Men on one side. Women on the other.

(ANTON WHISPERS TO SHURA)

5 ANTON Shura.

6 SHURA Yes.

7 ANTON Go into the line for the women.

8 SHURA What?

9 ANTON Go with the women.

10 SHURA But I don't want to leave you -

11 ANTON Just do as I say.

12 GUARD What's going on here? I told you to get in line.

FX: He pushes them. Anton speaks up.

13 ANTON She's to go in that line. With the females. She's a woman.

14 GUARD What the hell? Are you joking? He's dressed as a man.

15 ANTON She's a woman.

16 GUARD Don't make me laugh.

1 SHURA Anton don't do this - stay together -

2 ANTON She's a lying bitch. Check her out if you don't believe me?

3 GUARD Come here.

FX: **The Guard grabs Shura, Shura cries out. It's painful.**
Guard laughs.

4 GUARD Well well well. Alright move. Go with the women.

FX: **He pushes Shura.**

5 SHURA Anton!

6 GUARD Men over here. Women over to the left.

FX: **The sound of more guards**

7 CAPTAIN Are these prisoners for us?

8 GUARD Yes sir.

9 CAPTAIN Good. Take the women back to the truck. Drive them into the town to be processed. Line the men up in a row. Shoot them.

10 SHURA Anton! No Anton!

FX: **There's a reaction from the prisoners. Weeping, crying etc.**

11 CAPTAIN SHUT UP! Right. Stand by. Positions, soldiers. Take Aim.
FIRE!

FX: **Gun shots.**

SC 6. 18. **EXT BACK OF TRUCK - DAY**

FX: **The women are moved off the truck.**

- 1 GUARD Line up. Line up.
- 2 **NARRATION:** **And so our story ends pretty much as it started – with uncertainty and rumour.**
- 3 GUARD: Right. I need names. Let's start with you then you'll be told where you are going to next. What's your name, woman?
- 4 SHURA Alexandra Mikhailovna Sosnitsky, they call me Shura.
- 5 GUARD Welcome home, Comrade Shura. To the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics.
- 6 **NARRATION:** **And then Shura disappears entirely from history. Final fate unknown. Left for us to speculate.**

SC 6.19. **NEUTRAL BG.**

- 7 SHURA And now ladies and gentlemen it is time for my final reinvention; Shura the penniless refugee, Shura the girl, Shura the man, Shura, the taxi-dancer, the King of the Badlands, the drug dealer, the bank robber, will become... Shura, the old Russian lady who lives on a farm and waits, for her next opportunity...
- 8 **NARRATION:** **There are only two things everyone I spoke to who had known Shura agreed on. Firstly, they all hoped, perhaps against hope, that Shura performed one last transformation and managed to survive, and maybe even thrive, back in Soviet Russia. And they all agreed that the only thing for sure was that:**
- “All Peking knew Shura”**
- 9 SHURA Zaijian, Dasvidaniya, Goodbye, my friends.
- END OF ‘PEKING NOIR’.**