

Tiger Rage (third Draft)

a screenplay by
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based on the novel by
John Valliant

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1 EXT. SEA OF JAPAN, EAST SIBERIA - MORNING 1

An enormous male siberian tiger, 680 pounds of pure muscle, roams down the beach on a cold october morning. Fog covers part of the cove. The sky is solid and leaden.

The waves crash onto the shore. The tiger strolls to the edge and stops to watch the sea raging. It stares at it for a long moment.

2 EXT. PLAINS - DAY 2

On a nearby plain, two boys, Dimitri (12) and Oleg (13), hunt with an old two-barrel shotgun. Their clothes speak of their poverty: torn sweaters, worn watchcaps, weathered jackets. The two boys stalk.

A Siberian roe deer grazes without noticing their presence. The boys approach through the fog, crouching low to the ground so as not to be noticed.

The churning of the sea and the forceful breeze help them come almost within twenty yards' distance. Dimitri, the younger of the two, raises his shotgun and rushes off a shot. The deer darts off, unharmed.

Dimitri looks up, frustrated.

OLEG

You had him.

Dimitri, ashamed, doesn't know what to say.

OLEG (CONT'D)

We've only got five shots left. What are we going to eat?

Dimitri looks over and over again at where the deer was.

DIMITRI

I aimed behind the shoulder, but it was too windy.

Oleg shakes his head in disapproval. He takes out the spent casing, and slips a new one in the chamber.

OLEG

I'm going to show you how to hunt.

Oleg walks off. Sullen, Dimitri follows.

3 EXT. SEA OF JAPAN, EAST SIBERIA - MORNING 3

The tiger takes a few more steps toward the sea, captivated by the movement of the waves. Some seagulls perch a few yards away from him, but he remains motionless. The gulls notice the predator and, terrified, flap away.

4 EXT. NEAR THE SEA - MORNING 4

Dimitri and Oleg continue the hunt. They follow a line of bushes near the sea. Oleg squats to check some hog tracks.

OLEG

A boar passed by here.

He looks up to where the tracks lead. Dimitri takes a few more steps toward the beach. From within the fog he suddenly sees the immense figure of the tiger as it watches the tide wash in and pull back.

Terrified, Dimitri steps backward, taking care not to make the slightest sound or movement that might alert the tiger to his presence.

He moves up to where Oleg is still crouching, trying to guess which way the boar went. Dimitri touches his shoulder. Oleg turns to look at him, upset.

OLEG (CONT'D)

What?

Dimitri signals for him to lower his voice. He can barely breathe. Scared, he points toward the beach. Oleg half rises and spots the tiger in the distance.

Dimitri yanks his brother by the jacket to hide in the bushes. They both breathe agitatedly.

DIMITRI

(whispering)

Let's go.

He starts crawling backwards through the brush, but his brother grabs his arm.

OLEG

Let's hunt it.

DIMITRI

Are you crazy?

Oleg ignores him and starts to crawl through the undergrowth, chest to the ground. Dimitri grabs him by the heel.

DIMITRI (CONT'D)

Come on.

Oleg shakes off his brother's hand and keeps going. He drags himself to the edge of the beach. The tiger is still transfixed by the waves. Oleg reaches some rocks and leans with his back against them. Being this close to the tiger makes him incredibly tense. From afar, Dimitri watches his brother approach.

Oleg crawls to another mound of rocks. He covers himself and looks up. The tiger is some 40 yards away. Oleg climbs onto a rock, aims at the animal's shoulder and fires.

The pellets bury into its shoulder. The tiger spins on its axis and roars in pain. It turns toward the shot and sees Oleg, who freezes in terror.

The tiger steps toward Oleg, slowly and decisively. Blood runs from its right shoulder blade.

Further off, horrified, Dimitri watches the tiger approach. Oleg, shivering, again aims at the animal and shoots. The shot hits the sand, a couple of yards before the tiger.

The tiger stops. They look at each other for a moment. The tiger turns around and trots off wounded toward the forest.

Pallid and faint, Oleg watches the tiger fade into the fog.

5 EXT. TAIGA - MORNING

5

The wounded tiger wanders in the snow. It stops to lick its wound, then starts off again, limping. Majestic, it trails blood behind it.

6 EXT. TAIGA - DAY

6

A boar is eating in the snow, grunting and snuffling as it buries its snout, searching for herbs.

There is nothing around the boar, only some trees and bushes. It calmly sniffs from one place to the next.

Suddenly, out of nowhere, we start to hear voices coming from a radio.

RADIO VOICE (O.S.)

Aleksandr...

The boar shoots up, trying to find the voices. There is nothing nearby that he can find.

RADIO VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Aleksandr...

The boar sniffs. The voices have it on edge.

RADIO VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Aleksandr, report...

The frightened boar shoots off into the trees.

Out of nowhere something shifts from within the white background. A perfectly camouflaged hunter emerges with a bow in his hand.

The hunter pulls off his mask. It is Aleksandr (42), tall, blond, his face weathered from years of sun and snow.

Aleksandr opens his thick jacket; a fox terrier peeks out. He lowers the dog and she runs to sniff around for the boar.

He takes out his portable radio.

ALEKSANDR

Aleksandr here... this better be urgent... over...

RADIO VOICE (O.S.)

The fishes arrived, I repeat, the fishes have arrived... over.

ALEKSANDR

I'm on my way. Over.

The terrier starts to follow the boar's trail and barks. Aleksandr calls to it.

ALEKSANDR (CONT'D)

Misha, come, come on...

The dog keeps sniffing stubbornly.

ALEKSANDR (CONT'D)

Misha, let's go.

Misha stops, turns, and runs toward her master. As Aleksandr walks off, he puts away the arrow he had ready to hunt.

7 EXT. TOWN - DAY

7

Aleksandr drives an old military, double traction Kunk truck, with a few cots and a stove in the back.

He drives up to a small village. He parks beside another two Gaz trucks - two old, powerful Russian SUVs - gets out leaving Misha inside.

Outside the trucks are Sergei (35), rosy-cheeked with thinning hair; Mikhail (42), tall, tough, with an intense gaze; Ivan (25), thin with darting eyes; Yegor (32), dark eyes and very tall, and Sasha (30), with blue eyes and very white skin. The five wear green jackets and forest ranger insignias.

Mikhail, points at a small wooden house a little further away on the edge of the town. The smoke coming from the chimney quickly dissipates into the leaden sky.

MIKHAIL

The chinese got here half an hour ago.

Aleksandr thinks for a moment.

ALEKSANDR

You and Sergei come in the back.
Yegor and Ivan, come in with me.
Sasha, try to record everything.

8

EXT. HOUSE, TOWN - DAY

8

Aleksandr, Yegor, and Ivan arrive at the house. Yegor and Ivan squat under the windows, ready to pull out their weapons. Sasha stands, recording with a video camera.

Aleksandr knocks on the door. A twelve year-old boy opens.

ALEKSANDR

Hello Tolya, is your father home?

The boy nods and closes the door. No one opens after a while, and Aleksandr bangs on the door. A few seconds later Lena (45), Anatoly's wife appears - a robust Russian matron.

LENA

Stop banging on the door like that,
you're scaring my children.

ALEKSANDR

Tell Anatoly to come out.

LENA

He's not here.

ALEKSANDR

We know he's in there.

Aleksandr peers in and catches a glimpse of Anatoly (50) a large, burly man. Lena realizes Aleksandr has spotted Anatoly and tries to shut the door, but Aleksandr pushes in. Ivan and Yegor follow.

9 INT. HOUSE, TOWN - DAY

9

Inside the house are children of different ages and an old portly Russian woman sitting at a table. A tigress is hanging dead from a rope and three frightened Chinese men scramble to hide in a corner.

As soon as Aleksandr enters, Anatoly picks up a machete.

ANATOLY

Get out of my house.

Aleksandr moves in slowly.

ALEKSANDR

Don't make this more complicated.

Sasha records everything. Sergei and Mikhail look through the window.

LENA

Get out.

Aleksandr takes one more step.

ALEKSANDR

Give it to me.

Anatoly takes three steps forward, brandishing the machete, trying to cut Aleksandr. Aleksandr skillfully dodges him. Suddenly Aleksandr jumps on Anatoly but cannot avoid a minor cut to the shoulder. Aleksandr knocks down Anatoly and wrenches the machete away from him.

The scared children start crying. The Chinese men nervously huddle in a corner. Aleksandr and Anatoly lock into a fight. Mikhail and Sergei burst in through one of the windows.

They fight on the floor. Mikhail rushes in to pull Anatoly's neck. Anatoly fights like a bull.

Lena and Tolya, the eldest of the children, try to help him, but Yegor controls them.

LENA

Let go of him, you bastards.

The boy kicks at Yegor, but Yegor just shoves him aside. Anatoly is still fighting when one of the Chinese men tries to run; as she records, Sasha spots him and trips him up.

The Chinese man falls forward onto the tigress and then slips on the spilled tiger's blood.

It is a chaotic, absurd melee, with women, old women, children, and Chinese. It ends when Aleksandr manages to twist Anatoly's arm and cuff him. Anatoly gives up and just huffs against the floor.

The Chinese hide behind a table, frightened. Mikhail and Aleksandr stand up and go to cuff them as well. One of them speaks to them in Chinese.

CHINESE MAN 1
(in Chinese)
We can fix this.

He picks up a suitcase and opens it. It is full of money. He grabs a stack of bills and holds it toward Aleksandr.

Aleksandr doesn't even look at the suitcase. He tries to turn him around to cuff him, but the man confronts him.

CHINESE MAN 1 (CONT'D)
(in Chinese)
Get your filthy face away from me.
You don't know who I am.

Aleksandr stands squarely before him.

ALEKSANDR
Viagra is what you use for impotence,
not tiger bones.

The man faces and pushes Aleksandr.

CHINESE MAN 1
(in Chinese, shouting)
Go fuck yourself.

Aleksandr grabs him by the neck and tightens his grip as he slams him against the wall. Mikhail rushes to intervene.

MIKHAIL
Let him go... Let him go...

Mikhail pulls Aleksandr off, who glares at the Chinese man as he gasps for air.

ALEKSANDR
Viagra... Vi-a-gra...

10 EXT. TAIGA - DAY

10

A stag paces down a path. The wounded tiger, huddled behind a mound of snow, waits for it to move past him. The stag doesn't notice him and keeps on.

Suddenly the tiger clumsily tries to pounce on the stag. Wounded, he claws at it weakly, and the stag escapes unharmed.

The tiger remains hurt, its shoulder bleeding.

11 INT. HOUSE, TOWN - MOMENTS LATER

11

The tigress lies on the floor. Sasha is examining it.

SASHA

Six feet long, five years old. Female.
Number 334.

Aleksandr, who has tied a rag around his injured shoulder, turns to Anatoly.

ALEKSANDR

A female, Anatoly...

ANATOLY

You're also a hunter, you should understand.

He squats down and looks at the animal.

ALEKSANDR

We hunters don't kill tigers.

The Chinese men watch silently. The old woman stands up.

OLD WOMAN

You killed innocents, and that is much worse. Your grandfather would be ashamed of you.

He just glares at the woman without saying a word.

12 EXT. HOUSE, TOWN - MORNING

12

The Gaz and the Kunk trucks are parked outside the house. Cuffed, Anatoly and the three Chinese men are escorted toward one of the trucks. Anatoly's wife follows Aleksandr and points at the six children who watch their father climb arrested.

LENA

Now you're taking him away, who is going to feed my children?

ALEKSANDR

I warned Anatoly.

LENA

With what the Chinese were going to pay us for that tiger, my children could eat for five years.

ALEKSANDR

Lena, there are only 400 tigers left.
If they die, we die.

Lena gestures toward her children, dressed in tatters, who just stare at the conversation.

LENA

We're the one's who are dying.

Mikhail opens the trunk to one of the trucks and starts loading in the confiscated rifles and shotguns.

LENA (CONT'D)

Leave me at least a gun so my boys
can go hunting.

Aleksandr picks up a shotgun, turns and hands it over to her. She receives it coldly. Aleksandr turns to leave. Ivan, the youngest of his team, catches up to him.

IVAN

This is against the law. They're
going to use that shotgun to poach
again.

Aleksandr looks him in the eyes. He says nothing, and with the others gets into the trucks and leaves.

13 EXT. TAIGA - DAY

13

The wounded tiger rests on the snow. His injury does not look good. He licks it for a while until something catches his attention. He raises his head and pricks up his ear.

In the distance we hear the grunting of boars. The tiger crouches. A sow trots down a path with three young, eight month-old boars following close behind.

The tiger whisks his tail, ready to attack. The sow trots on with two of her offspring behind her, but one of them stops to sniff the snow.

The time is now: the tiger pounces. The terrified young boar tries to run, but the tiger claws it down. It tries to stand up, but another swipe tears off its foreleg.

The young boar starts to squeal in pain. The other two scatter in a panic. The sow turns back to defend her offspring, who squeals feverishly with its last few breaths.

The tiger, busy finishing off his prey, does not notice the sow charging toward him until it digs a tusk into his side. The tiger twirls around and claws at the sow's face with such force, it almost rips off its snout.

The sow does not back down and charges furiously at it again. Too slow, the tiger cannot shake her off and catches another tusk. He springs away as best he can, lands on her and buries his teeth in her side.

The sow squirms in pain and scampers away to join her other offspring.

The tiger stands before his victim. A hundred and twenty pounds of fresh meat await.

14 EXT. ROAD, TAIGA - DAY 14

The two Gaz trucks and Aleksandr's Kunk drive down the road. Suddenly some battered, older trucks catch up to them.

A villager waves his hand out the window and signals for them to stop. There are others in the truck who look at them menacingly.

15 INT. KUNK TRUCK - DAY 15

Mikhail drives. Beside him, Aleksandr sits with Misha on his lap, with Anatoly and the Chinese men cuffed behind them. Mikhail turns to look at the villagers.

MIKHAIL

We've got trouble.

Aleksandr takes out his radio and calls.

ALEKSANDR

Don't stop...

SERGEI (O.S.)

Affirmative. Over.

16 EXT. ROAD, TAIGA - DAY 16

The men keep waving for them to stop. They do not.

17 INT. KUNK TRUCK - DAY 17

Mikhail and Aleksandr look at the villagers, who now honk their horn and insist they stop.

ALEKSANDR

Step on it.

Mikhail accelerates and leaves the truck that is following him behind. He looks through the rearview mirror and sees that the villagers' truck has cut off the other Gaz trucks.

18 EXT. ROAD, TAIGA - CONTINUOUS

18

The trucks from Aleksandr's team come to a halt. Out of one of the trucks steps Fyodor (52), a farmer with large hands and a penetrating gaze.

From behind Fyodor, several villagers get out of their trucks with old shotguns and rifles from the Soviet era. They are badly dressed, with tattered coats and torn pants.

Aleksandr and his crew descend from their trucks.

ALEKSANDR

(To Fyodor)

What's the problem?

FYODOR

You're the problem.

Fyodor gestures toward the truck where Anatoly and the Chinese are being held.

FYODOR (CONT'D)

You're gonna let Anatoly go.

Ivan, takes a step forward.

IVAN

He's under arrest. He broke the law.

Fyodor turns to look at him threateningly.

FYODOR

You're going to let him go.

He picks up his shotgun and aims at Ivan, who goes sheet white. The other villagers also pick up their weapons.

Aleksandr, without losing his cool, approaches Fyodor.

ALEKSANDR

Why don't you aim at me?

Fyodor turns the gun and aims at Aleksandr.

FYODOR

Do you think I'm afraid of you?

(a beat)

I'm not one of those Chechen women
you killed.

Aleksandr approaches him slowly.

ALEKSANDR

Shoot me. Here.

He points at the space between his eyebrows with his index and middle finger. Fyodor aims at Aleksandr's face; but Aleksandr doesn't back down.

The villagers grow nervous. Everyone aims at Aleksandr. Yegor, Sasha, Sergei, and Mikhail also aim their weapons. It looks like a gunfight is about to start.

ALEKSANDR (CONT'D)

Shoot me.

Fyodor breathes nervously, with his finger on the trigger.

ALEKSANDR (CONT'D)

Go ahead. Shoot.

There is tremendous tension. Aleksandr walks toward Fyodor, who steps back, disconcerted.

All of a sudden, from far off, a convoy of three police trucks approaches. Mikhail whispers to Sergei.

MIKHAIL

Great. Just what we needed.

The trucks come to a halt. From one of the vehicles descends Captain Romanov (54), a giant, muscular Caucasian - almost 6'8 and 270 pounds - with a thick moustache.

Vadim (35) steps down beside him - short, burly. Vadim and the other men descend with their weapons at ready.

Romanov slowly approaches both groups.

CAPTAIN ROMANOV

Mikhail, Aleksandr... Fyodor? What's going on here?

MIKHAIL

We arrested Anatoly for killing a tigress.

Romanov turns toward Aleksandr.

CAPTAIN ROMANOV

We agreed you'd let us know before arresting anyone.

MIKHAIL

We were just on our way to hand them over to you.

Romanov, trying to remain calm, turns toward Fyodor, who still has his gun aimed at Aleksandr.

CAPTAIN ROMANOV
Fyodor, put that gun down.

FYODOR
We won't let them arrest any more of
us.

CAPTAIN ROMANOV
It's the law, Fyodor. Put down the
gun.

FYODOR
The law doesn't feed us.

CAPTAIN ROMANOV
Go. There's nothing for you here.

Fyodor and the others just look at him. Romanov holds out
his hand.

CAPTAIN ROMANOV (CONT'D)
Go.

Romanov's agents raise their weapons. Aleksandr and his team
won't give up that easily either.

Fyodor realizes the fight is lost. He lowers his gun, and
Aleksandr smiles wryly.

ALEKSANDR
A Chechen woman would have shot me.
They've got more guts than you.

Fyodor exchanges a glance with Aleksandr as he turns. The
villagers start to get into their vehicles. Aleksandr looks
to Romanov.

ALEKSANDR (CONT'D)
Here. You take them.

He turns to Sergei and Ivan.

ALEKSANDR (CONT'D)
Bring the cameras.

19 EXT. ROAD, TAIGA - MOMENTS LATER

19

The three Chinese men and Anatoly climb inside the patrol
cars. Sergei and Ivan record from different positions.
Aleksandr talks to the camera.

ALEKSANDR
This video is proof that Captain
Romanov and his officers have received
custody of the prisoners.

Aleksandr holds up the briefcase taken from the Chinese.

ALEKSANDR (CONT'D)

We are handing in as proof this
briefcase with 50,000 dollars.

He turns to Romanov and opens the briefcase.

ALEKSANDR (CONT'D)

Do you want to count them?

Romanov counts out a few stacks of bills, then closes the briefcase. The two cameras record everything. Romanov hands the briefcase over to one of his men, who goes to store it in one of the patrol cars. Romanov turns to the camera.

CAPTAIN ROMANOV

50,000 dollars, counted.

ALEKSANDR

You should take the prisoners straight to Vladivostock. Remember what Fyodor and the others did the last time.

CAPTAIN ROMANOV

Don't you worry. They're on the express train to Vladivostock.

Romanov calls his men.

CAPTAIN ROMANOV (CONT'D)

Let's go.

Before he gets in, he turns to Aleksandr.

CAPTAIN ROMANOV (CONT'D)

Next time, trust us.

Aleksandr stares at him without saying a word. Romanov gets into his patrol car and leaves.

20 INT. HOUSE, TOWN - DAY

20

In a very humble home, Markov (48), a gap-toothed man covered by a tattered coat, is sitting at the table with his five children - two girls and three boys that range from four to thirteen years of age.

He points at the bowl of soup before one of his sons, Pyotr.

MARKOV

Pyotr, finish your soup.

PYOTR

I don't like it.

MARKOV
You have to finish it.

Markov leans back in his chair.

MARKOV (CONT'D)
I'm going to hunt for a few days.

One of the girls immediately shoots back.

GIRL
No, don't leave again.

MARKOV
If I don't hunt, we'll have nothing
to eat.

Markov remains pensive.

MARKOV (CONT'D)
Your aunt Irina is going to come
cook you some food. Don't miss school.

He gets up, and without another word, leaves the house. The children remain in silence as they watch their sullen father leave the room.

21 INT. HOUSE, TOWN - DAY 21

Sitting at a table, Markov reloads some shotgun shells. He pours gun powder into the empty cases, then pours in some buckshot and closes the shell with pliers.

22 EXT. RUSTIC CABIN - DAY 22

Walking through the snow, in a desolate forest, Markov reaches a rudimentary cabin. He opens a rusty padlock and enters.

23 INT. RUSTIC CABIN - DAY 23

Markov leaves his hunting gear and backpack on a wooden table. From under a cot, he takes out a shotgun wrapped in newspaper. He sits on the cot with the shotgun in his hand and takes out some shells with which to load it.

24 INT. LABORATORY, FOREST AND WILDLIFE PROTECTION OFFICES - MORNING 24

In an improvised laboratory, in a room with concrete walls, the tigress lies open on a metal table.

An old iron heater stands, lit, in one of the corners. It is being fed by Sergei, who every now and again puts a fresh log in the fire.

Sasha carries out the autopsy on the tigress. One by one, she sets the organs aside: liver, kidneys, etc. Leaning on a wall, Aleksandr watches her. Misha sits quietly beside him.

SASHA

They shot her three times in the belly. She died of septicemia. It was a slow death.

Aleksandr smiles.

ALEKSANDR

Anatoly never was a very good hunter.
(a beat)
Did she give birth in the spring?

SASHA

I don't think so. Her matrix isn't dilated.

Sergei is done with the logs.

ALEKSANDR

Sergei, go help them empty out the radiators.

Sergei nods. As soon as he leaves, Aleksandr goes toward Sasha. He hugs her and tries to kiss her. She pulls away brusquely.

SASHA

No Aleksandr, not anymore.

ALEKSANDR

I'm not going to let you leave my life.

SASHA

And I'm not letting you stay.

She stares into his eyes, defiant. He holds her gaze sternly.

ALEKSANDR

I'll wait for you.

SASHA

I'm not going. Yegor's going to my house.

ALEKSANDR

I'll wait.

Aleksandr looks at her for another moment, turns and leaves. Misha runs after him. Sasha just watches him go.

25 EXT. FOREST AND WILDLIFE PROTECTION OFFICES - DAY 25

Aleksandr steps out. The Gaz trucks are parked outside the single-story complex of buildings, badly built concrete structures which contrast with the wooden cabins in the rest of the town.

Yegor, Sergei and Ivan are drawing water from the radiators so that they don't explode in the cold. They carefully collect the water in a tank and close it.

Mikhail checks one of the motors, ducked under the hood. He tightens something with some pliers. Aleksandr approaches.

ALEKSANDR

We've finished the autopsy.

Mikhail closes the hood and wipes the engine grease off on his clothes.

26 EXT. BEHIND FOREST AND WILDLIFE PROTECTION OFFICES - DAY 26

In a clearing, Aleksandr and his team drag the dead tigress carcass with the help of some thick rope. They lay it on the snow and then begin placing several logs upon her.

Aleksandr douses the pyre with gasoline and lights it. Everyone watches sorrowfully as the fire consumes the tigress's powerful body.

Yegor stands behind Sasha and holds her. She leans back into his embrace affectionately.

Aleksandr won't take his eyes off her. She feels his gaze and looks over at him discreetly. Their eyes meet for a few moments, and she goes back to watching the tigress burn.

27 EXT. RUSTIC CABIN - DAY 27

Markov locks the door with the rusty padlock, turns around and with his 12 gauge shotgun and snowshoes, walks out toward the snowy forest.

28 EXT. TAIGA - DAY 28

It is very cold. Markov's breath expands in the air. He walks laboriously through the snow.

29 EXT. TAIGA - DAY 29

The tiger is gnawing on the piglet when he suddenly catches wind of something. He sniffs and looks around. In the distance he sees a man approach.

The wounded tiger gazes intently at him for a moment, then silently walks away.

30 EXT. TAIGA - DAY

30

Markov notices some boar tracks in the snow. He starts to follow them until he runs into the fresh carcass of the piglet in the midst of a pool of blood. He squats down to study the tracks surrounding the dismembered piglet, and when he does he notices enormous tiger tracks leading up the hillside.

He immediately stands up and nervously looks around him. He unlocks the safety catch from his shotgun and fires into the air. Nothing moves.

He takes out another shell, loads it in and fires: nothing. He reloads and, without unlocking the weapon's safety catch, draws out his knife and kneels beside the piglet.

Without dropping his guard, Markov slices off long strips of meat and stacks them one by one into his backpack.

Once finished, he closes the backpack, sheathes his knife and wary walks away.

31 EXT. TAIGA - DAY

31

Hunched down, the tiger buries its furious eyes into the hunter who has just stolen his food and clumsily walks away into the snow. The tiger slowly begins to follow him.

32 INT. ALEKSANDR'S HOUSE - EVENING

32

Aleksandr's home is a modest cabin. The decor is peculiar: strangely shaped sticks, stones and rocks of different colors, an old mask. The tables are large tree trunks. The furniture is handmade. Rough wooden sculptures lie scattered throughout the room.

There is a fire burning in the chimney. Misha lies beside the fire. Aleksandr is sitting on a sofa. He drinks from a glass of vodka. The bottle is beside him, on a table.

With a knife, Aleksandr carves into a piece of wood: these are his sculptures. He looks restless. He leaves the sculpture aside and gets up. He walks around. He picks up the phone and decides to dial a number.

33 INT. SASHA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

33

It is a small cabin. There is a lit chimney in the center of the room. Some old toys adorn the house. Cheap paintings.

Seated at a table, drinking coffee, are Yegor, Sasha and Olga (68) Sasha's aunt - a robust woman with several years of vodka on her.

The phone rings. Olga tries to stand, but Sasha holds her back.

SASHA
I'll get it.

Sasha goes to answer a phone on the wall by the entrance to the kitchen.

SASHA (CONT'D)
Yes?

ALEKSANDR (O.S.)
Why haven't you come?

Sasha turns to look at Yegor, who is talking with Olga.

SASHA
I told you I wasn't going. I'm here with Yegor.

ALEKSANDR (O.S.)
It's been two weeks.

SASHA
I have to go now. Bye.

Sasha hangs up and goes back to the dining room. She still looks nervous.

OLGA
Who was that?

SASHA
Raisa, she wanted some sugar.

34 INT. ALEKSANDR'S HOUSE - NIGHT 34

Aleksandr angrily throws the phone at a couch, and it lies there, off the hook.

35 EXT. TOWN STREETS - NIGHT 35

The town is silent lighted by the moon. The smoke of chimneys spreads over the rooftops and fades into the clear night.

36 INT. ALEKSANDR'S HOUSE - NIGHT 36

Despite the intense cold, Aleksandr is dressed in pants and a sleeveless shirt. He is tall, strong. Lean.

He is working out, lifting heavy kettle balls. He crouches, picks them up off the ground, and lifts them over his head. He finishes a set of fifteen, which he counts off audibly.

He turns around and pours himself a tall glass of vodka, which he drinks down in one shot. Misha watches him, lying by the chimney.

Aleksandr returns to the kettle balls. He picks up the heaviest one, and when he is about to start another set, he hears knocking at the door. He goes to open without covering himself. He runs into Sasha who is dressed from head to toe.

ALEKSANDR

You made it. Come in.

With his hand, he gestures for her to enter. She turns and with her head gestures outside. Yegor is getting out of one of the Gaz trucks.

ALEKSANDR (CONT'D)

What's the matter?

SASHA

A truck driver told us that he saw a tigress with two cubs near the sawmill.

Yegor runs excitedly to the door.

YEGOR

How'd you like the good news? We tried to call you but I think your phone is disconnected.

Aleksandr and Sasha exchange a glance.

SASHA

Mikhail is waiting there for us.

37 INT. GAZ TRUCK - NIGHT

37

Yegor drives down a path. Aleksandr sits in the passenger seat. Sasha in the back seat.

The truck's lights illuminate the snowy tundra. Yegor points out Mikhail's truck parked by the side of the road.

YEGOR

There's Mikhail.

He parks, opens the door and gets out. Through the windshield, Aleksandr sees Yegor walking through the dark toward Mikhail's truck. Aleksandr turns toward Sasha.

ALEKSANDR

We have to talk.

They look at each other for a few moments, and she gets out. Aleksandr watches her walk away for a few yards, then gets out himself.

38 EXT. ROAD TO THE SAWMILL - NIGHT

38

Aleksandr, Yegor and Sasha walk some hundred yards toward where Mikhail is, who gestures for them to be quiet. He points toward the forest and hands some binoculars to Sasha.

MIKHAIL

(whispering)

They're over there, they haven't scared yet.

She picks up a 10,000,000 candlepower lamp and lights up the forest. Forty yards away, six eyes shine. Three tigers are wandering through the trees. Every now and again, the tiger cubs play with each other.

Sasha watches them through the binoculars: they are a beautiful trio. She smiles joyfully.

SASHA

(whispering)

They must be three months old.

She hands the binoculars over to Aleksandr, who looks at them, satisfied. The cubs chase each other. The tigress's gaze is fixed on the light. Her eyes burn with an intense yellow. Aleksandr turns to Yegor.

ALEKSANDR

Get us a warrant to close the area until they leave.

Yegor gestures at the road.

YEGOR

That's the road to the sawmill.

ALEKSANDR

Try to get one for two or three days.

YEGOR

Ok.

ALEKSANDR

And you and Mikhail follow where the tracks come from.

YEGOR

Ok.

Aleksandr turns toward Sasha.

ALEKSANDR

Can you give me a ride home?

Sasha doesn't seem happy with this, but agrees. With his hand, he gestures at Yegor that he needs the keys to the truck. Yegor walks over to hand them to her, and kisses her affectionately.

YEGOR

Good night.

Mikhail exchanges a glance with Aleksandr and shakes his head. The complicity between them is evident, as is the fact that Mikhail is aware of it all. Aleksandr doesn't respond to Mikhail's gesture as he walks over to the truck with Sasha.

39 INT. RUSTIC CABIN - NIGHT

39

Markov is cutting the piglet's meat into thin strips, which he then salts and wraps. He does it skillfully, stripping the muscle from the bone with precision.

He suddenly hears a loud noise on the roof. Markov looks up, frightened. The sound of steps. Markov hurries to grab his shotgun and some shells.

He walks around the cabin trying to guess what lurks on the roof. Again he hears a strong noise that makes the beams crack, followed by two resounding roars.

Without thinking twice, Markov flips the table over and shields himself behind it, his shotgun cocked and ready to fire. The cabin beams shake again. It seems as the ceiling is going to fall in on him.

We hear another noise. Markov pulls the table even closer to him. Through the window he catches sight of the tiger's shadow dropping onto the ground.

Terrified, Markov recoils against the wall. He aims his shotgun at the window through where he last saw the tiger, and scans the entire house with his eyes.

A silence, and suddenly the wall he was leaning on shakes like paper. Markov pulls away, fast. The wall snaps as if it were about to blow. Markov lets off a shot that shatters the wooden slats.

Again, silence. Markov reloads as fast as he can. Everything seems calm again.

Markov stealthily drags himself all the way to a window and peers out. He sees the tiger padding away under the moonlight, into the black forest.

40 INT. GAZ TRUCK - NIGHT

40

Sasha drives down the road. Aleksandr sits by her side, silently. She suddenly pulls over to the side of the road.

SASHA

What do you want?

ALEKSANDR

You know what I want.

SASHA

Well I don't want any more of this.
I want to be with Yegor.

ALEKSANDR

With Yegor? Come on.

SASHA

He cares about me.

ALEKSANDR

And I don't?

SASHA

All you care about is fucking me in secret.

ALEKSANDR

You used to say I made you feel like a queen.

SASHA

You don't hide queens.

ALEKSANDR

You hide treasures...

SASHA

Aleksandr, enough of your cheap talk.
To you, I'm just a good lay. I never understood why we had to hide.

ALEKSANDR

I don't like people gossiping.

SASHA

I don't want to hide anymore. I want an open, stable relationship.

ALEKSANDR

Stable? You said you hated the cliché
of the boring couple.

SASHA

Well I changed my mind.

The argument has reached a dead end. Without another word,
Aleksandr gets out of the truck. Sasha tries to say something,
but he shuts the door.

41 EXT. TAIGA - NIGHT 41

Sasha drives off. Aleksandr stands in the middle of the taiga,
lit by the moon. He watches her drive off, and walks away.
First, slow, but then he starts trotting faster and faster.

42 INT. RUSTIC CABIN - DAY 42

Markov slips his knife into a sheath attached to his right
boot. He practices pulling it out again and again. Satisfied,
he slips it in again.

He picks up his shotgun and makes sure its loaded.

43 EXT. TAIGA - DAY 43

Markov walks through the taiga, vigilant, anxiously looking
everywhere, making sure the tiger is nowhere in sight.

44 EXT. SMALL CABIN, TAIGA - DAY 44

In the distance, Markov can see a small cabin. Markov heads
over there, looking in every direction.

45 EXT. SMALL CABIN, TAIGA - DAY 45

He reaches the cabin and knocks on the door. Vasya (82), an
old Udege man with Asiatic features, a strong frame and
inquisitive eyes, opens. He recognizes Markov and smiles.

VASYA

Markov... come in, come in...

46 INT. SMALL CABIN, TAIGA - MOMENTS LATER 46

Markov and Vasya are drinking coffee sitting at a rickety
table. Vasya lives in the utmost poverty, but it is evident
that he is a seasoned hunter. Several skins of wild boars
and deer horns, hang from his wall. Vasya looks pensive.

VASYA

That tiger's angry with you. You
stole his food.

MARKOV
So? What do I do?

VASYA
Go back to town.

MARKOV
Help me hunt him.

Vasya starts laughing heartily. Markov doesn't seem to understand what's so funny, but smiles forcedly anyway.

VASYA
I'm half blind. I can't bear the pain in my knees. I'm almost dead.

He takes a sip from his coffee and turns to look at Markov.

VASYA (CONT'D)
Listen. Go to town, lock yourself inside or move to another town. Remember: tigers never forgive.

47 EXT. SMALL CABIN, TAIGA - DAY

47

Markov leaves Vasya's cabin. He has barely taken a few steps when he realizes that there are fresh tiger prints around the cabin.

In one of the tracks, water has barely begun trickling into the print. Panicked, Markov turns in a circle trying to figure out if the tiger is near him.

Nothing. Just the silence of the taiga. Markov feigns going back into the cabin, but keeps on his way, faster and faster, almost tripping over himself.

48 EXT. TAIGA - DAY

48

The tiger walks through the trees following Markov at a distance. He still limps and has trouble advancing, but he does not take his eyes off Markov for a second.

49 EXT. PLAINS CLOSE TO THE TOWN - DAY

49

Someone is running in the snow. Behind him are others. It's Yegor, Sergei, Ivan and Sasha who are running full speed with semiautomatic rifles.

All four suddenly stop. They fall to their knees, aim and fire six shots at some silhouettes 200 yards away. Mikhail supervises, with Aleksandr behind him. Mikhail looks over the silhouettes with some binoculars.

MIKHAIL

Sergei, four shots on target. Yegor,
three. Sasha, six. Ivan, just one.

Aleksandr approaches.

ALEKSANDR

Ivan and Yegor, try it again.

Obediently, Ivan and Yegor get up and head to their positions.
Aleksandr and Sasha exchange a hard gaze.

Mikhail gives the order.

MIKHAIL

Go.

Ivan and Yegor run full speed. They reach their mark, kneel,
and fire six shots again. Aleksandr picks up his binoculars
and looks at the silhouettes.

ALEKSANDR

Yegor, two shots in the center. Ivan,
not one.

Aleksandr turns to them, bothered.

ALEKSANDR (CONT'D)

Learn to breathe as you run. Control
your pulse.

A patrol car stops in the road and a police officer gets out
and heads toward Aleksandr.

POLICE OFFICER

From the mayor.

He hands him a piece of paper. He reads it, and angrily
crumples it up.

50 INT. GAZ TRUCK - DAY

50

Aleksandr is driving through the town streets: poor houses,
old, abandoned, rusty cars, women shuffling along with their
groceries, boys playing football in muddy lots.

51 EXT. TOWN HALL - DAY

51

Aleksandr's truck parks before an unkempt one-story, concrete
building with the paint peeling off the walls. A
remainder of the days of socialism.

52 INT. MAYOR'S OFFICE - DAY

52

The mayor (60), a pudgy man with red cheeks, sits at his desk. Mikhail and Aleksandr sits before him.

MAYOR

No, I'm not going to let you close that road down to the sawmill.

ALEKSANDR

The tiger cubs are very young, if the mother is frightened she'll abandon them and they will die. We just need two or three days.

MAYOR

And who's going to pay the workers for those "two or three" days?

ALEKSANDR

It's an illegal sawmill, like so many other things in this town.

MAYOR

What do you expect the town to live off? It's people like you that came and ruined everything.

ALEKSANDR

I'm from here.

MAYOR

No, your grandfather was from here. You're not one of us.

ALEKSANDR

My grandfather always fought for the tigers. The tigers are us.

Times have changed. Hadn't you noticed?

ALEKSANDR

I'm holding you responsible for whatever may happen to them.

MAYOR

We're not going to do things your way, here.

The mayor gets up and fixes his coat.

MAYOR (CONT'D)

Now, if you'll allow me, I have work
to do.

53 EXT. TAIGA - DAY

53

Markov is about to arrive home. He suddenly feels something and turns. The tiger is slowly walking toward him.

Markov starts to desperately run for the door. He pulls out the key to the lock but his nerves do not let him open it. The tiger comes closer and closer.

Markov manages to stick the key in the lock. At that moment the tiger charges toward him. He opens the door, slips in and close it quickly.

54 INT. SMALL CABIN, TAIGA - DAY

54

Markov transpires fear. He moves a chest of drawers to jam the door. As he is doing it, the tiger breaks through a small window above him, trying to get in.

Markov shoots at the window, but does it in such a hurry that he fires into the ceiling. The tiger makes several attempts to enter while Markov reloads.

The tiger doesn't fit through the window, and disappears. Silence. The only thing to be heard is Markov's breathing.

Markov, dragging himself along the ground, crawls under a bed. He readies the shotgun to fire.

The air is tense. No sound. Sweating, his hands shaking, Markov sticks his head out from under the bed and quickly looks over the room. Silence.

All of a sudden we begin to hear steps on the roof. Markov pours some shells out beside him, and puts three into his mouth. He aims up and fires. He quickly reloads again and fires. Then two more times.

The shots go through the ceiling. Silence. A drop of blood falls near Markov. He looks up and sees a bloodstain running down the beams.

He gets up to look. Sticking to the walls, he goes to look through one of the windows. He looks out into the forest: nothing. He slides over to another window: nothing.

Suddenly, the tiger jumps at the small window and claws through it, catching Markov's shoulder. Markov yells, trying to scare it away, but the tiger will not stop.

Markov tries to fire off a shot with his free arm, but the tiger pulls him toward the window. Markov realizes he has left his knife next to the bed. He struggles to break free, but the tiger sticks his head in and bites his neck.

The tiger draws back and pulls Markov through the window.

55 EXT. SMALL CABIN, TAIGA - DAY 55

The tiger drags Markov like a rag doll through the forest.

56 EXT. TAIGA - MORNING 56

Vasya is walking through the snow. He walks with an aged clumsiness, stopping to catch his breath every other step.

In the distance he can make out Markov's cabin. As he nears it he realizes there is a bloodbath under one of the windows.

Vasya stops, freezes. He looks around nervously.

57 INT. GAZ TRUCK - MORNING 57

Aleksandr is driving as he eats a sandwich, with Misha by his side. Through the windshield he sees two of Romanov's police trucks parked outside his office.

58 EXT. FOREST AND WILDLIFE PROTECTION OFFICES - MORNING 58

Aleksandr gets out of the truck followed by Misha. He glares at Romanov's men, who are watching the place and enters his office building.

59 INT. FOREST AND WILDLIFE PROTECTION OFFICES - MORNING 59

The office has several grey metal desks. Old and heavy. On the walls are dozens of numbered photographs of tigers. On some of them, overwritten in red, is the word "Dead".

Aleksandr enters and runs into Sasha and Romanov sitting together beside Mikhail's desk. Disconcerted, Aleksandr looks at them all at once.

ALEKSANDR

What happened?

With her head, Sasha gestures to her right. Solitary, sitting on a chair, is Vasya drinking coffee.

ALEKSANDR (CONT'D)

Vasya, what are you doing here?

Vasya looks up at him.

60 EXT. SMALL CABIN, TAIGA - MORNING

60

Aleksandr and his team survey the area where Markov was killed. A few steps away, Romanov watches them. They are all armed with high caliber rifles.

Aleksandr follows the trail of blood. It is obvious that the tiger dragged Markov. The marks of the body are still visible in the snow. Aleksandr looks from one place to the next as if trying to understand things.

SASHA

Vasya said Markov stole some boar meat from the tiger, and the tiger chased after him until he killed him.

Aleksandr is still looking at the trails. He crouches down to measure one of the prints with his hand.

ALEKSANDR

It's a male. Big. It looks like he's hurt. He can't put much pressure on the right foreleg.

He stands up and looks around.

ALEKSANDR (CONT'D)

He could still be here, stalking us.

Mikhail, Sergei and Ivan are carefully exploring the area. Misha sniffs, wagging her stumpy tail every now and again.

Suddenly Misha starts barking. Ivan walks up to her. He looks to see what she's barking at and, pale, brings his hand to his head. He calls out to the others.

IVAN

We found something.

Everyone heads over there. They are just arriving when Sergei vomits. The snow is stained by a pool of blood. There are some tatters and bloodied rags and a single half-eaten hand.

Aleksandr leans on a tree. It is evident that what has happened weighs on him.

61 EXT. PATH, TAIGA - DAY

61

Everyone is leaning on their trucks and police vans. Everyone is somber, disconcerted.

MIKHAIL

It's been a long time since a tiger attacked a human.

SASHA

What it did... this isn't normal.

ALEKSANDR

It must be wounded.

CAPTAIN ROMANOV

Who's going to talk to his family?

Sergei, who seems the saddest of all, raises his hand.

SERGEI

I'll do it. Markov was godfather to one of my sons.

CAPTAIN ROMANOV

Who did he live with?

SERGEI

He was a widower. Lived with his five children. The oldest is thirteen.

Romanov turns to Aleksandr.

CAPTAIN ROMANOV

What are you going to do about the tiger? It's your responsibility now.

Ivan jumps in.

IVAN

Legally, we've got to wait for orders from Moscow.

Romanov looks at Ivan disdainfully. He turns to Aleksandr.

CAPTAIN ROMANOV

Who's this?

ALEKSANDR

He's new. He's a lawyer, just out of university.

Romanov turns to Ivan.

CAPTAIN ROMANOV

Might I know what you're doing here?

IVAN

I'm here to protect nature.

Romanov laughs mockingly.

CAPTAIN ROMANOV

A green lawyer. Just what we need
here in Siberia.

62 EXT. SCHOOL, TOWN - DAY

62

The school is barely a room where all the children in town go to class. There are no grades. It is a crumbling building. The contiguous room have broken windows, the floor covered in trash, plants growing inside.

Through the stained windows Aleksandr, Sasha, Ivan, Yegor and Mikhail watch Sergei as he speaks with the teacher.

The teacher listens attentively. She says something to the kids and they start to leave the room except for Markov's children.

Sergei gathers Markov's children in a circle. He starts to speak to them.

Aleksandr stops looking in the window, he walks away from the others and leans on a wall. He looks downcast.

Sasha walks up to him.

SASHA

Are you ok?

Without looking at her, Aleksandr speaks in a low voice.

ALEKSANDR

I confiscated Markov's rifle.

SASHA

What are you talking about?

ALEKSANDR

I took away his rifle so he wouldn't be tempted to hunt a tiger.

SASHA

He had his shotgun.

Aleksandr turns to look at her with a certain toughness.

ALEKSANDR

A shotgun won't kill a tiger.

Through the window we see Markov's children start to cry. Sergei consoles the eldest.

Aleksandr withdraws to his truck. The other's follow.

63 INT. MAYOR'S OFFICE - DAY

63

Gathered in the office are Aleksandr, Mikhail, Romanov, Vadim, the mayor, and two others.

ALEKSANDR

We think it was an isolated incident.
The tiger won't attack again.

MAYOR

Can you guarantee that?

ALEKSANDR

No, but we have to wait for the tiger
to go away. Nobody in town can leave
their house between four and ten in
the morning.

MAYOR

(Sardonically)
A curfew?

ALEKSANDR

Yes, a curfew.

MAYOR

Why don't we just kill it and save
ourselves the trouble?

ALEKSANDR

Don't forget, the only ones authorized
to kill a tiger here are us.

MAYOR

So what do I tell the people: don't
leave your houses, don't work, don't
eat, don't hunt?

ALEKSANDR

I don't think the tiger will come
into town, but just in case, nobody
will be allowed out until the tiger
leaves the area.

Romanov, who, despite his size, always assumes a conciliatory
tone, intervenes.

CAPTAIN ROMANOV

So what's the plan?

ALEKSANDR

You make sure nobody leaves. We'll
keep a lookout for the tiger.

64 EXT. MAYOR'S OFFICE - DAY

64

Mikhail, Aleksandr, Vadim and Romanov leave the office. Outside is Fyodor with several villagers who look at them with hostility. Aleksandr approaches Romanov.

ALEKSANDR

Control them.

Romanov smiles.

CAPTAIN ROMANOV

Why don't you bring your eco-lawyer
to get them in line?

Aleksandr also smiles. He climbs into his truck and drives off. The villagers watch him leave, menacingly.

65 EXT. TOWN STREETS - DAY

65

A funeral procession walks behind Markov's coffin, carried by four men. The coffin is almost only symbolic, made out of wooden boards: inside is what little is left of the hunter.

There are several women at the head of the procession, in silence, holding Markov's children's hands. Some cry quietly. We cannot hear a single voice. Every now and then a lament, or someone clearing his throat.

66 EXT. TOWN ENVIRONS - AFTERNOON

66

A patrol car drives down a road close to town. In a clearing, a group of lumberjacks drink vodka leaning on a truck. Three mutts, wearing collars, are lying before them. A motorcycle is parked beside.

The patrol car stops. Officer Matvei (24) gets out.

OFFICER MATVEI

Hi Pavel, Nikolai.

Pavel (58), a large, robust man, raises a glass of vodka toward the police officer playfully.

PAVEL

What's new, officer Matvei?

OFFICER MATVEI

You have to go home.

PAVEL

Home? Matvei, not even my wife wants
me home at this hour.

Pavel and the lumberjacks laugh out loud. Matvei doesn't think it's funny.

OFFICER MATVEI

This is an order. Everyone must be home by four.

PAVEL

Why?

OFFICER MATVEI

The tiger that killed Markov.

Nikolai, a strong, heavy man, raises an ax.

NIKOLAI

We'll protect ourselves with this.

OFFICER MATVEI

I'm sorry, you have to go.

Pavel takes a few steps toward him.

PAVEL

Look, Matvei, I've known you since you were a baby. I carried you. I played with you. I don't know if you've noticed all these years, but nobody gives me orders. I'll leave here whenever I want.

OFFICER MATVEI

If you don't want me to get fired, I'm asking you to go home as soon as night falls.

PAVEL

That's better. As soon as the sun sets, I'll go home.

Pavel pats Matvei on the back, who returns to his patrol car. He drives off and the lumberjacks keep drinking.

67 EXT. TOWN STREETS - AFTERNOON

67

In a patrol car with a loudspeaker, Romanov warns the population.

CAPTAIN ROMANOV (O.S.)

As of four p.m, everyone must be in their homes.

68 INT. PATROL CAR - AFTERNOON 68

Romanov surveys the streets while Vadim drives. He picks up a radio and calls.

CAPTAIN ROMANOV
R4 to R1, all clear?

POLICE OFFICER (O.S.)
R1 to R4, all clear.

69 INT. PATROL CAR - AFTERNOON 69

Matvei drives his patrol car. The radio crackles.

CAPTAIN ROMANOV (O.S.)
R4 to R2, all clear?

Matvei looks through his rearview mirror and sees the lumberjacks still drinking.

OFFICER MATVEI
R2 to R4, all clear.

He keeps heading for the town.

70 EXT. TAIGA - AFTERNOON 70

Aleksandr's Kunk is parked in the middle of the tundra. There is nothing else around. Just the snowy plain and silence.

71 INT. KUNK - AFTERNOON 71

Through a small window, Aleksandr explores the surroundings with binoculars. Mikhail does it from the other side.

ALEKSANDR
Can you see anything?

Without lowering his binoculars, Mikhail answers.

MIKHAIL
No, nothing.

Mikhail lowers his binoculars and turns to Aleksandr.

MIKHAIL (CONT'D)
Let her go.

ALEKSANDR
What are you talking about?

MIKHAIL
Sasha, let her go. Yegor is a good man. He'll treat her well.

ALEKSANDR
Who's side are you on?

MIKHAIL
Don't hurt her anymore. Either let
her go, or fight for her.

Aleksandr looks at him angrily.

ALEKSANDR
This is none of your business.

There is a silence. Mikhail picks up his binoculars and
explores the taiga again. Aleksandr calls over the radio.

ALEKSANDR (CONT'D)
Sasha... Do you copy?

SASHA (O.S.)
Go ahead.

72 EXT. HILL - DAY

72

One of the Gaz trucks is parked near the top of the hill.

73 INT. GAZ TRUCK - DAY

73

Inside are Sasha and Ivan. Through the windshield we can see
their position is ideal to study the terrain.

ALEKSANDR (O.S.)
Anything? Over.

SASHA
Nothing yet. Over.

74 INT. KUNK - DAY

74

ALEKSANDR
Ok. Over and out.

He sets down the radio. Mikhail, without ceasing to look
through his binoculars, advises him.

MIKHAIL
See, you miss her. Fight for her.

Aleksandr smiles. With his binoculars and scans the taiga.

75 EXT. TOWN STREETS - NIGHT

75

A patrol car slowly drives through the empty streets.

76 INT. PATROL CAR - NIGHT 76

Inside, Vadim and Romanov keep watch.

77 EXT. TOWN ENVIRONS - NIGHT 77

Nightfall. Pavel, Nikolai and all the other woodsmen are drinking. It starts to snow. Pavel raises his head.

PAVEL

Time to go home.

Pavel picks up his axe and gets ready to go.

PAVEL (CONT'D)

Good night.

Pavel walks toward his motorbike. He fastens his ax to the back seat. He gets in and drives off. He whistles at his dog, who runs up beside him and they head into town.

78 INT. KUNK - NIGHT 78

Mikhail drives. Despite the snow, Aleksandr is half outside the truck, scanning the taiga with a high powered flashlight.

79 EXT. TAIGA - NIGHT 79

The Kunk drives on. The beam moves from one side of the forest to another, from the forest to the edge of the road.

80 INT. KUNK - NIGHT 80

Soon, Aleksandr bangs on the dashboard.

ALEKSANDR

Stop, stop...

He opens the door and gets out.

81 EXT. TAIGA - NIGHT 81

With a flashlight, Aleksandr carefully surveys the terrain. He discovers some tracks in the snow. He checks where they're coming from and where they're going.

Mikhail gets out and approaches.

MIKHAIL

What is it?

82 INT. PATROL CAR - NIGHT 82

Vadim and Romanov keep patrolling. The radio crackles.

ALEKSANDR (O.S.)
Romanov, do you copy?

CAPTAIN ROMANOV
I copy, Aleksandr. Over.

ALEKSANDR (O.S.)
The tiger is heading into town.
Repeat: the tiger is heading into
town. Nobody should be outside. Over.

CAPTAIN ROMANOV
Copy. Over and out.

Romanov picks up the loudspeaker and opens the window.

CAPTAIN ROMANOV (CONT'D)
Everyone go home. If anyone is outside
get back in now. Attention: everyone
go home.

83 EXT. TOWN ENVIRONS - NIGHT

83

Pavel drives through the taiga on his motorcycle. He turns
on a road but the snow is so thick the motorcycle gets stuck.
Pavel gets out and struggles to push the bike.

Suddenly, his dog starts barking. Pavel, drunk, tries to
shut it up.

PAVEL
Shhh...

In the dark, Pavel manages to see how the dog runs away,
terrified. In the distance, he hears several dogs also start
to bark.

Instinctively, Pavel takes out his axe and lifts it. It's no
use: the tiger jumps on his back and knocks him into the
snow. The motorbike falls on its side. The shouts last very
little and the tiger drags its prey through the thickening
snowstorm.

The motorcycle lies in the snow.

84 EXT. TOWN ENVIRONS - DAY

84

Romanov, Vadim, Matvei and some police officers are standing
around Pavel's motorcycle. A Kunk pulls up and parks.
Aleksandr gets out of the truck and heads straight for
Romanov. Mikhail is behind him.

ALEKSANDR
I asked you specifically not to let
anyone out.

CAPTAIN ROMANOV
 Pavel wouldn't take orders from
 Matvei.

ALEKSANDR
 It was a curfew. And if anyone refused
 to go home, they were to be arrested.

Matvei takes a step forward.

OFFICER MATVEI
 It was my fault.

Aleksandr looks disdainfully at the young officer.

ALEKSANDR
 You should be arrested for being so
 stupid.

Aleksandr turns to Romanov.

ALEKSANDR (CONT'D)
 From four in the afternoon, till ten
 in the morning, no one leaves their
 home. Understood?

Aleksandr and Romanov exchange a look. Romanov assents.

85

INT. FOREST AND WILDLIFE PROTECTION OFFICES - AFTERNOON

85

All of Aleksandr's team has gathered in the office. They are
 all sitting in a circle. Aleksandr stands.

ALEKSANDR
 Moscow called. We have orders to
 hunt the tiger.

SASHA
 Why can't we put it to sleep and
 move it to another region?

Sergei, usually reserved, interrupts angrily.

SERGEI
 We have to kill that tiger now. He's
 got a taste for human meat and he'll
 come for more.

Aleksandr seems upset by the interruption. He continues.

ALEKSANDR
 We'll start the hunt tomorrow. Ivan
 and I are heading for Pushkin's peak.
 Yegor and Sergei, I want you to look
 around the sawmill.

He turns to Sasha.

ALEKSANDR (CONT'D)

You and Mikhail, I want you to set up as snipers on the telecommunications tower.

SASHA

I'd like to go with Yegor.

ALEKSANDR

You and Mikhail are the best snipers. You're going with him to the tower.

Aleksandr's orders leave no room for response.

ALEKSANDR (CONT'D)

We'll meet here at six a.m. No garlic, no drinking. Take a shower and wear clean clothes. I don't want the tiger catching your scent.

Sasha stares at him. Aleksandr feels her looking at him and he looks up at her. Their eyes meet for a moment and then she looks away. Aleksandr continues.

ALEKSANDR (CONT'D)

And put your radio on channel eight.

86 INT. ALEKSANDR'S HOUSE - NIGHT

86

Again, Aleksandr is doing several sit ups. The instant he's finished, he rolls onto the floor and starts doing push ups. Once he's finished those, he gets up, grabs a rifle and aims. He practices controlling his breathing despite being agitated.

He puts the rifle on the floor again. He repeats his routine and grabs the rifle again. He aims, breathing calmly.

87 EXT. SMALL CABIN, TAIGA - NIGHT

87

Dawn breaks behind the forest. Aleksandr's truck is parked outside Markov's cabin. Aleksandr and Ivan survey the area. Misha sniffs from one place to the next.

ALEKSANDR

We'll pick up the trail from here.

Aleksandr looks around and then turns toward Ivan.

ALEKSANDR (CONT'D)

If he attacks, don't run. Try to aim at his head. And as soon as you shoot, reload and shoot again, no matter where you hit him.

IVAN

Ok.

ALEKSANDR

Are you afraid?

IVAN

I don't know.

ALEKSANDR

I am.

They exchange a look. Then Aleksandr starts to follow the trail. Ahead of them, Misha hurries through the taiga sniffing the ground.

88 EXT. SAWMILL - MORNING

88

Sergei and Yegor are each next to their trucks, parked beside the sawmill. Dozens of tree trunks lie in the snow, between wood chippers and electric saws. Some dump trucks are parked under the trees with their hoods and roofs covered in snow.

Both are loading their rifles. Sergei checks the chamber of his rifle over and over again: a Sako .458 Winchester Magnum, his countenance full of some kind of rage. He turns to Yegor.

SERGEI

All my life I've studied tigers and defended tigers, for what? For one of them to eat one of my best friends?

YEGOR

It was an accident.

SERGEI

No tiger kills by accident.

Without another word, he walks down the path between the dead trees and the machinery.

89 EXT. TOWER - MORNING

89

Dawn. The sun has peaked through the top of the pine trees. The snow at this hour of the morning looks orange and yellow.

Sasha and Mikhail climb up the huge tower's structure. It is over thirty meters tall. It is difficult to scale, but they do so with catlike agility.

Mikhail reaches the top of the tower and settles into one of the poles. One false step could mean death. He tightly ties a rope and throws it down at her.

MIKHAIL

Tie it to yourself.

She fastens it to his waist and climbs to the top. She sits on the pole and they both secure themselves with ropes to protect themselves from a fall.

She points far off at the immense siberian tundra.

SASHA

The tiger must be around there.

She picks up a scope and starts to explore the taiga.

90 EXT. TAIGA - MORNING

90

Misha runs from one place to the next trying to locate the tiger's scent. Aleksandr checks the prints pressed into the snow. Ivan is behind him, nervously checking out every corner of the forest.

Aleksandr points out a slight depression in the snow.

ALEKSANDR

He slept here.

IVAN

Do you think it's close?

ALEKSANDR

I don't know, but when Misha starts barking, we'll know it's close.

Aleksandr checks the direction of the tracks and starts to follow them.

91 EXT. TOWER - MORNING

91

A strong wind blows. Sasha is still surveying with the scope. Mikhail also explores with a pair of binoculars.

MIKHAIL

See anything?

SASHA

No. Nothing.

A gust of wind shakes the tower. Mikhail and Sasha put down their devices and hang on as best they can. When Sasha does, she knocks over a backpack that drops downward.

They both watch as it bounces off the scaffolding.

MIKHAIL

Are you ok?

She answers by gripping the pole tighter.

SASHA

Yes.

Mikhail double checks Sasha's ropes, then his.

SASHA (CONT'D)

So this is what war is like?

MIKHAIL

No, nothing is like war. War is a nightmare come true.

SASHA

Why did you give up the army?

MIKHAIL

When Aleksandr quit, I wasn't comfortable there anymore. He was always my commanding officer.

Sasha remains pensive for a moment.

SASHA

Can I ask you something? You don't have to answer if you don't want to.

MIKHAIL

What is it?

SASHA

Is it true he killed women?

Mikhail thinks his answer over.

MIKHAIL

When the Chechen rebels took the Moscow theater, Aleksandr led the elite forces. First they pumped the gas, and after 20 minutes they went in. The Chechen women who had bombs strapped to their bodies were still awake and armed. Aleksandr was the first to shoot; he killed several. In his own soldier's code, you can't kill women. He couldn't deal with the guilt. For him, killing women was an act of cowardice. He quit, and started to drink. A year later, he came here for his grandfather's funeral. He saw a tiger on the road over here, and something happened inside him. Since then, tigers have been his life.

SASHA

Why did you come with him?

MIKHAIL

Because he saved my life.

They remain silent for a moment.

MIKHAIL (CONT'D)

At war, we do things we don't like.
Aleksandr has always been a good
man.

They exchange a glance. Sasha doesn't know what else to say.
She looks toward the taiga and gets back to her scope.

92 EXT. TAIGA - MORNING

92

Aleksandr and Ivan follow the trail. Suddenly Misha starts
to bark and run with her nose stuck to the snowy ground.

ALEKSANDR

She found a fresh trail. Move forty
meters that way to cover more ground.

Ivan hesitates.

ALEKSANDR (CONT'D)

Go.

IVAN

Are you sure?

ALEKSANDR

Hurry, he might be close.

Ivan starts to walk away, nervously. Aleksandr takes out his
radio.

ALEKSANDR (CONT'D)

Mikhail, Sergei, do you copy...

93 EXT. TOWER - MORNING

93

Mikhail's radio crackles. He lowers his binoculars and
immediately answers.

MIKHAIL

Mikhail here, over.

ALEKSANDR

We have a fresh trail three kilometers
away, four o'clock from your position.

MIKHAIL

We'll check from here. Over.

He puts down the radio and he and Sasha scan the area. They try to see through the thick forest, but see nothing.

94 EXT. TAIGA - MORNING

94

Aleksandr puts the radio away and lowers the volume. Misha barks some seventy yards away. Ivan, unconvinced, begins to pull away from Aleksandr.

Aleksandr, with his weapon ready, starts to walk over to where Misha is.

95 EXT. SAWMILL - MORNING

95

Sergei and Yegor put the radio away. Yegor turns to look at where the tower is.

YEGOR

They must be south, two kilometers away. Better we catch up with them in the truck.

Sergei and Yegor start to walk back.

96 EXT. TAIGA - MORNING

96

Misha keeps barking, penetrating more and more into the forest. Aleksandr walks with his rifle poised to fire. Every now and again, he glances at Ivan.

Suddenly Misha darts, terrified, toward Aleksandr and trembles between his legs.

Aleksandr raises his hand toward Ivan, then points toward a cluster of trees. Aleksandr starts to walk in that direction, but Misha refuses to move on. She runs a few steps back and stops with her tail between her legs.

Ivan starts to shake. The rifle bounces in his hands. He is out of breath. Pallid.

We hear a roar. Misha runs a few yards further away and stops to see what her master is doing. Aleksandr doesn't flinch and keeps on.

Ivan starts to lag. He can't stop shaking. Aleksandr turns every now and again to look at him, then looks ahead again.

Behind him, Misha starts to whine. Aleksandr raises his rifle: he knows the tiger is there close by.

Suddenly something moves to his right. He turns and fifteen yards away he sees the tiger crouching, ready to attack, swishing his tail in the air.

Aleksandr turns toward him. The tiger glares at him. They stare at each other for a moment.

Aleksandr raises his rifle and aims exactly between the tiger's eyes. Ivan, in the distance, terrified watches the scene and steps back to take refuge behind a tree.

Aleksandr keeps the rifle aimed. He doesn't shoot, the tiger doesn't pounce. The tiger stands up and Aleksandr doesn't take his eyes off him.

Ivan, trembling, keeps watching the scene from his hideout.

Slowly, the tiger turns around and starts to limp away. Aleksandr does not lower his rifle. The tiger stops to look at him one last time and then leaps into the darkness of the forest. They have each spared each other's life.

Aleksandr lowers his weapon and breathes deeply. Ivan, incredulous, leaves his hideout and looks at Aleksandr from a distance.

97 EXT. TOWER - DAY

97

From the tower, Mikhail watches how the tiger in the distance trots away among the trees.

98 EXT. PATH, TAIGA - DAY

98

The Kunk and the Gaz trucks are parked together. All of Aleksandr's team is sitting on tree stumps or rocks. Leaning his foot on one of the trucks, Aleksandr thinks with his head hung, Misha lying beside him.

SERGEI

Why didn't you shoot him?

Aleksandr turns to look at him and doesn't answer. Sergei gets up to confront him.

SERGEI (CONT'D)

Why didn't you kill it? Ivan says you had it in your sights.

ALEKSANDR

This tiger won't attack again.

SERGEI

How do you know that?

ALEKSANDR

He could've killed me if he wanted.

Nobody else intervenes: what has happened is beyond them.

SERGEI

Why didn't you fucking kill it?

Aleksandr gets in Sergei face.

ALEKSANDR

I didn't kill him, because I didn't want to.

SERGEI

Is that what I'm supposed to tell Markov's kids? Pavel's wife?

Furious, Sergei, without another word heads for his truck. Aleksandr only follows him with his eyes.

99 EXT. TOWN STREETS - EVENING 99

Nightfall. A patrol car drives down the empty streets of the town, warning the people.

POLICE OFFICER (O.S.)

Do not leave your homes between 4 in the afternoon, and ten in the morning.

100 EXT. TOWN - NIGHT 100

The town lights shine from afar. The tiger walks through the snow, lit by the light of the moon. He stops to gaze at the faraway houses.

101 INT. ALEKSANDR'S HOUSE - NIGHT 101

Aleksandr is sitting on a couch, staring into space. Misha jumps on him and bites his sleeve. He wants to play, but Aleksandr is in no mood.

He pushes Misha to the floor and she jumps on him again. She won't leave him alone. Aleksandr gives up and throws her up in the air. When she lands, Misha bites him playfully. Aleksandr looks uneasy. He's thought of something.

102 INT. SASHA'S HOUSE - NIGHT 102

Olga (68), Sasha's aunt - is laying some firewood in the chimney. Sasha makes dinner in the kitchen. Someone knocks on the door, and Sasha goes to open it.

She opens the door and finds Aleksandr. Outside, it's snowing.

SASHA
What are you doing here?

ALEKSANDR
I can't sleep. I need to talk to
somebody.

She looks at him suspiciously. He notices her look, and
explains himself.

ALEKSANDR (CONT'D)
I think I made a mistake. I should've
killed the tiger.

She opens the door and lets him in.

SASHA
Come in.

103 INT. SASHA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

103

He comes in, takes off his coat. Olga is excited to see him.

OLGA
Colonel, how good to see you.

ALEKSANDR
It's my pleasure. But I'm no colonel
anymore, ma'am.

OLGA
(flirtatious)
Well, you'll always be a colonel to
me. Good night.

Olga discreetly walks away to her room. Aleksandr and Sasha
remain silent for a while. He looks at her in the eyes. She
sits at the dining room. He follows.

ALEKSANDR
I just couldn't kill it.

SASHA
It wasn't an easy choice.

ALEKSANDR
When I was a boy, I used to come
here on vacation to visit my
grandfather. He lived in a cabin far
away. We used to stay there, just me
and him. He taught me to hunt, to
fish, to survive in the taiga.

He remains silent, remembering. She looks at him attentively.

ALEKSANDR (CONT'D)

One day, when we were hunting, we heard dogs barking. On a hill, further off, we saw a pack of 40 dogs following a trail. Suddenly, ten meters away, there was a tiger. I raised my rifle, terrified. My grandfather pushed it down. "Amba," he said, "we're not your enemies." The tiger looked me in the eyes. He could've pounced on me. Killed us both. But he just turned and left.

(A beat)

The next day, when I came into town, we saw the tiger, dead, lying in the mud, it's tongue sticking out. My grandfather faced the hunters. They told him the tiger had attacked a woman. "Nothing justifies killing a tiger," he said. "Amba is the mirror of man."

Aleksandr grows silent and repeats in a low voice.

ALEKSANDR (CONT'D)

The mirror of man.

SASHA

I don't know if I would've been able to shoot it.

Again, silence. He reaches out and caresses her hand with the tip of his index finger. She doesn't say anything for a moment. He leans in to kiss her, but she pulls back.

SASHA (CONT'D)

No, I can't.

She remains pensive for a moment.

SASHA (CONT'D)

I made love to Yegor for the first time today.

Sasha's words weigh on Aleksandr.

SASHA (CONT'D)

I'm asking you to respect my relationship with Yegor. Please stop trying. Unless you want me to quit my job.

He stands up. He goes to the coat rack to pick up his coat.

ALEKSANDR

Thank you for listening. Good night.

He leaves the house. Sasha watches him go and remains pensive.

104 EXT. SASHA'S HOUSE - NIGHT 104

Aleksandr shuts the door. He takes two steps and then furiously punches a wooden beam repeatedly. Sore, he withdraws his hand. He turns and starts to walk down the snowy street.

105 EXT. TOWN STREETS - MORNING 105

The people have left their homes. Two women carry pails of milk. A man stacks firewood on his lawn. An old woman smokes, leaning on a car.

106 EXT. TOWN ENVIRONS - MORNING 106

Tolya, Anatoly's son, is hunting rabbits with Vladimir (10), his younger brother. We can see the town in the distance, the chimney's smoking, cars driving down muddy streets.

They both stumble in the snow chasing rabbits. Tolya fires at one jumping through some bushes and kills it. They both go to pick it up.

Tolya lifts it up and looks at it. He puts his kill in a game bag he carries on his back. As he does, his younger brother points under a tree.

VLADIMIR

There's another one.

Tolya hurries to load the shotgun. He aims and fires. The shot misses and the rabbit scampers toward some bushes.

Tolya runs toward the bushes as he reloads his shotgun. Suddenly he feels something to his left. He turns around and sees the tiger crouching, stalking his brother who is distracted, reshuffling the dead rabbit in the bag.

Nervously, Tolya tries to load the shotgun, but drops the shell in the snow. He crouches down to pick it up, and when he does he sees how the tiger slowly creeps toward Vladimir.

Tolya observes the scene almost hypnotized. Suddenly the tiger bounds toward Vladimir in two humongous strides. Tolya takes a step forward and shouts at his brother.

TOLYA

Vladimir, watch out...

Vladimir turns only to catch the tiger's claw face on.

107 INT. ROOM ALEKSANDR'S HOUSE - MORNING

107

Aleksandr is asleep on his bed. There is an empty bottle of vodka on the blankets. There is some blood on his fist. We hear knocking at the door. Aleksandr doesn't answer. The knocking grows louder.

Aleksandr wakes up and shouts from his bed.

ALEKSANDR

Coming.

108 INT. ALEKSANDR'S HOUSE - MORNING

108

Aleksandr stumbles to the door. He opens the door and runs in to Yegor, who looks serious. Yegor's presence surprises Aleksandr.

YEGOR

It attacked.

109 INT. GAZ TRUCK - MORNING

109

Yegor is driving. Beside him, Aleksandr looks through the window pensively. Behind them are Mikhail and Ivan.

ALEKSANDR

At what time was the attack?

YEGOR

Some forty minutes ago. At eleven.

ALEKSANDR

Did Tolya see the whole thing?

Yegor nods. In the distance is Anatoly's house. The Romanov trucks are parked outside the house. Another Gaz truck, from Aleksandr's team, is also parked there.

110 EXT. ANATOLY'S HOUSE - MORNING

110

They stop behind the police vehicles. The four get out and head toward the house.

Two officers guard the entrance. When they see them come, one goes in the house and comes out with Vadim and two other police officers.

VADIM

(to Aleksandr)

You're under arrest.

ALEKSANDR

I'm here to speak with Tolya.

VADIM
Don't go in there.

Aleksandr pushes him aside. He opens the door and suddenly Sergei flies out in a rage. He sees Aleksandr and starts throwing punches. Aleksandr blocks the blows, but doesn't respond. Mikhail and Yegor grab Sergei and pull him off.

SERGEI
I told you to kill it...

MIKHAIL
(to Sergei)
Calm down...

Lena opens the door and starts berating Aleksandr.

LENA
Murderer.

Fyodor and two other men step out and head directly for Aleksandr. Aleksandr steps back and skillfully parries the blows, but again does not answer them.

FYODOR
You son of a fucking bitch...

Romanov steps out and orders two of his men.

CAPTAIN ROMANOV
Stop them.

The police officers try to contain the fighters, but they keep trying to punch Aleksandr. Lena keeps screaming at him.

LENA
You bastard...

Romanov orders Vadim.

CAPTAIN ROMANOV
Take him away.

Vadim tries to grab his arm, but he yanks it back.

ALEKSANDR
Don't you dare touch me.

Romanov faces him.

CAPTAIN ROMANOV
Everyone knows you let the tiger get away.

Romanov drags him toward one of the trucks.

ALEKSANDR

I have to speak to Lena and Tolya...

Romanov opens the door and forces Aleksandr in.

CAPTAIN ROMANOV

Get in now, god dammit!

Aleksandr gets in. Vadim, two police officers and Romanov get in the truck and drive off at full speed.

111 INT. POLICE VAN - DAY

111

Vadim drives and Romanov rides in the passenger seat. Aleksandr sits in the back between both police officers.

They pass a group of people. A man recognizes Aleksandr. He reaches for a bottle and smashes it against the window. The others, once they notice it's Aleksandr, chase the van throwing whatever they can at it: ice, stones, bottles.

Vadim accelerates to leave them behind.

112 EXT. TOWN - DAY

112

The truck leaves the town and takes one of the straight roads that cut across the Taiga. A light snow begins to fall and fog begins to descend upon the road.

113 INT. POLICE TRUCK - DAY

113

All are quiet in the truck. Aleksandr rides pensively. He sees they are leaving the town.

ALEKSANDR

Where are we going now?

CAPTAIN ROMANOV

We're taking you to Vladivostok.

ALEKSANDR

I want to stay here.

CAPTAIN ROMANOV

It's not safe for you here.

ALEKSANDR

I don't care. Let me go.

Romanov turns to him.

CAPTAIN ROMANOV

This mess is your fault. They want to lynch you, you know that?

ALEKSANDR

That's my problem.

CAPTAIN ROMANOV

No, now it's our problem.

Aleksandr grows silent and looks at the snowy tundra.

114 EXT. ROAD, TAIGA - DAY 114

The truck comes upon three dump trucks that are advancing very slowly.

115 INT. POLICE TRUCK - DAY 115

Vadim brakes. He seems to have lost patience with the slowness of the dump trucks. He leans on the gas and passes them. And he runs into another one.

VADIM

God dammit.

The truck advances slowly. Vadim does not have complete visibility. He wants to risk passing them but can't see ahead.

He slows down and decides to ride between the two trucks. Aleksandr lowers his head.

Suddenly he leaps over the police officer on his right, opens the door of the still moving truck and tries to jump out.

The police officer manages to catch his arm, but Aleksandr clings to the roof and pushes himself out into the snow.

116 EXT. ROAD, TAIGA - DAY 116

He lands on the snow and rolls from the speed. Vadim brakes and the officer that was to the right of Aleksandr runs after him. He gets up and runs away, tripping through the snow.

The other police officer gets out and starts to raise his gun to aim at Aleksandr, but Romanov holds him by the forearm.

CAPTAIN ROMANOV

What are you doing?

POLICE OFFICER

The prisoner...

CAPTAIN ROMANOV

He is no prisoner. Let him go...

Aleksandr runs. The first officer reaches him, but Aleksandr suddenly turns around and throws a punch to his chin and lays him out.

He again runs until he loses them in the foggy road.

117 EXT. FOREST AND WILDLIFE PROTECTION OFFICES - DAY 117

Mikhail and the others arrive at the office and find that they have been utterly destroyed. Glass everywhere, the front door pulled off.

Mikhail stops to observe the catastrophe. He enters the office. Yegor and Ivan follow him.

118 INT. FOREST AND WILDLIFE PROTECTION OFFICES - CONTINUOUS 118

The desks are upturned. The photographs of the tigers have been pulled off and torn apart. Paper strewn on the floor. The chairs splintered.

119 EXT. TAIGA - AFTERNOON 119

Dusk. Aleksandr walks through the snow, breathing agitatedly. He looks back again to make sure nobody is following him. He leans on a tree to catch his breath.

120 EXT. TAIGA - EVENING 120

Aleksandr walks through the snow that gets deeper and deeper. Things are barely discernible in the dusk's declining light.

He stops before an enormous pine that is lying in the snow. Aleksandr squats down: the fallen tree provides a great burrow. He digs snow out with his hands and lays moss around the inside.

He pulls off some branches and lays them over the trunk for protection. He crawls in the hole, closes off his hiding place with the branches and curls up.

121 EXT. TOWN ENVIRONS - NIGHT 121

Several villagers have gathered in an empty lot. In the midst of them all is a little white coffin, open and empty.

At the fore are Lena and her children, completely devastated. Especially Tolya who can't stop crying. Beside him, Sergei attempt to console him.

A priest, dressed in a thick coat and covered in a worn tunic, performs a service.

PRIEST

Let us pray to the Lord for our little
Vladimir so he will reunite with God
in his kingdom...

In the distance, from a corner, Sasha watches the people listening to the priest.

122 INT. ALEKSANDR'S HOUSE - NIGHT 122

Sasha opens the door to Aleksandr's house. Misha runs out toward her, wagging her tail. Sasha picks her up in her arms and leaves, shutting the door again.

123 EXT. FOREST AND WILDLIFE PROTECTION OFFICES - MORNING 123

Mikhail, Yegor, Sasha and Ivan are in front of their trucks, preparing their weapons. Mikhail is now ahead of the group.

MIKHAIL

You know the drill: radios on channel eight and as soon as you find a fresh trail, call it in.

They are about to get into their vehicles when five run down cars surround them. Several armed villagers get out, led by Fyodor, who addresses them, giving orders.

FYODOR

Give us your rifles and the keys to your trucks.

MIKHAIL

We're going to hunt the tiger.

FYODOR

We're in charge now. Keys and rifles.

Ivan takes a step forward.

IVAN

You're not authorized to hunt it.

Fyodor lifts his shotgun and puts it in Ivan's face. The others are ready to fire as well.

FYODOR

You shut up.

Yegor intervenes, trying to calm things down.

YEGOR

Fyodor, take it easy.

FYODOR

Give us your guns and the keys, now.

Yegor is about to say something but Mikhail stops him. He hands his rifle over to Fyodor and turns to the others and gesture with his head that they hand their guns over.

The townspeople take the weapons, get in the trucks and leave. Mikhail and the others watch them go.

124 EXT. TAIGA - DAY

124

Several villagers are armed with whatever they have found: shotguns, sickles, rifles, and pistols. They advance in a semicircle led by Fyodor with several dogs on frayed leashes barking ceaselessly, anxious to be released.

Several of them carry torches. The column advances headstrong through the forest. Among the villagers is Sergei, who does not seem to share the rest of the column's enthusiasm.

125 EXT. TAIGA - DAY

125

Aleksandr is sitting on a mound of snow. With his knife he carves a long stick: he is making a spear. As he does, his eyes are fixed on the taiga.

He finishes and balances the spear in his hand. He tears a strip off his shirt and ties the fabric around the center of the spear, to make a handle.

126 EXT. TAIGA - DAY

126

Aleksandr walks through the taiga with his handmade spear. In the distance he sees a column of smoke. He picks a pine tree. He jumps to reach a higher branch. He pushes himself up and climbs all the way up to the top.

Sitting at the treetop, he scans the horizon: In the distance columns of smoke rise up over the forest. He slowly studies each hill, each possible escape route of the tiger. Further off, shouts and the barking of dogs.

127 EXT. TAIGA - MORNING

127

The villagers advance setting fire to the forest. Rage, blind rage. Some wolves run off and the villagers hurry to shoot at them. Two wolves drop dead while the rest of the pack tries desperately to flee. The villagers run, trying to shoot the rest of the wolves that are zigzagging through the trees.

Sergei, who is some hundred yards away, watches how they kill the wolves. He sees his companions trying to set fire to some trees. Sergei turns around and heads back to town.

One of the villagers stops him.

VILLAGER

Where are you going?

SERGEI

I'm leaving. There's too much blood.

He hands the villager his rifle and walks off.

128 EXT. TAIGA - DAY

128

A large part of the forest has caught fire. A terrified deer tries to flee, but runs into the flames and tries to find another way out.

The tiger crouches. He hears the close barking of the dogs, feels the fire near him. He watches the deer scamper, looking for a way out.

The voices come closer. The fire burns him. The tiger, without hesitating, jumps into the flames. He crosses it in two great bounds and safely reaches the snow on the other side.

Los dogs bark furiously. The tiger looks behind him and sees the pack far off, skirting the blaze. He contemplates them for a moment, then limps off.

129 EXT. TOWN - DAY

129

Mikhail, Yegor and Ivan watch the columns of smoke rise over the horizon.

130 EXT. TAIGA - DAY

130

The tiger has left. The voices and fire are now very distant. The tiger walks painfully. The soles of its paws are burnt.

131 EXT. TAIGA - DAY

131

From his position, Aleksandr sees the tiger wandering through the taiga far away. The columns of smoke and destruction can be seen far away.

132 EXT. TOWN STREETS - NIGHT

132

Lit by the fire of their torches, the villagers return from their hunt. On their sticks they carry wolves, lynxes and bears, which they drop onto some wooden beams.

Men, women, and children surround the spectacle of the massacred animals. Among them are Sasha and her aunt.

Suddenly, from a truck, a group of people unload the carcasses of the tigress and her two cubs. They throw them into the muddy street and illuminate them with lamps and torches.

Fyodor steps into the fore.

FYODOR

We have killed the murderers of
Markov, Pavel and Vladimir.

Sasha looks on, horrified. She walks through the frenzied multitude and stands squarely before Fyodor.

SASHA

This is not the tiger that killed them. These are cubs.

Fyodor glares at her angrily.

FYODOR

And we won't rest until they are all completely gone from here.

SASHA

But these tigers didn't do anything.

FYODOR

Our children come first. Understand?

He rudely brushes her aside with his arm.

FYODOR (CONT'D)

Now leave, you're in the way.

One of the villagers binds the tigress's legs and they start to hoist her on a pole. Sasha moves away while the men, sullied with water, mud and blood, hang the beasts.

133 EXT. STREETS, TOWN - MORNING

133

Day breaks. A fog wraps the village streets. The bodies of the executed animals swing from the beams.

Suddenly, like a ghost, from the fog, appears the tiger. He walks through the carcasses and stops to look at them. He sniffs one of the cubs. A few more steps. He stops again. With his eyes he scans the rows of the dead.

He slowly turns around and again, like a specter, fades into the fog that shift slightly.

134 EXT. TOWN STREETS - DAY

134

Several townspeople are in a circle watching how they cut down the animals and put them in the backs of a rundown pickup trucks. Among them are Lena, Tolya, and his siblings.

Chinese buyers oversee the job. The villagers hurl them like sacks. Some of the animals slip from the beams falling heavily on the mud and snow. One of the buyers gestures frantically to show that they are damaging the animals by doing so.

CHINESE BUYER 1

(in Chinese)

Careful! You'll damage them.

The buyers arrange the bodies carefully in the back of the pickup truck.

135 EXT. TOWN STREETS - CONTINUOUS 135

In the distance, Romanov and Vadim watch the hubbub about the bodies. They seem displeased.

VADIM

We're not going to stop them?

CAPTAIN ROMANOV

Not even the Red army could stop this.

136 EXT. TAIGA - DAY 136

A rabbit sniffs around the snow and grazes in the occasional clearing. A few meters away, we see Aleksandr walk with slow steps, the spear in his right hand.

The rabbit hops a few times. Aleksandr squats and moves even slower. When he's some ten meters behind it, he flings the spear. The rabbit drops, mortally wounded, and Aleksandr walks toward it.

137 EXT. TAIGA - DAY 137

Aleksandr is up in a tree. With his hands, he dresses the rabbit. He cuts strips of meat and eats them raw. As he does he constantly looks around him.

138 EXT. TAIGA - DAY 138

Moving slowly through the snow, with his spear, Aleksandr finds a row of fresh tracks lead into the trees. Immediately, Aleksandr looks around. He breathes agitatedly: the tiger could attack any minute.

Despite his fear, Aleksandr trudges laboriously through the snow, following the tiger's trail. Every so often he turns to make sure the tiger isn't following him instead.

He approaches a small depression where several of the tiger's tracks become a mess of prints. Aleksandr studies the place and suddenly spots bloodstains. He crouches down to check them, sees they lead into the cluster of trees and he follows them cautiously.

Some crows caw at the top of the pines. Aleksandr sees the black birds and heads toward them.

He reaches the crows. Some of them are eating something in the snow. Aleksandr comes close and the crows flap away.

Aleksandr finds what the crows have been pecking at. They are pieces of clothing scattered in the bloodied snow: the remains of Vladimir. A shoe lies in the snow, half ripped apart. Suddenly Aleksandr feels something. He looks up and around. A shadow disappears among the trees. Aleksandr immediately hides behind the trunk of one of the pines.

A few seconds pass. Aleksandr keeps his eyes between the trees, but nothing happens. A deer steps across the snow. Aleksandr breathes, relieved.

Aleksandr looks around and spots a clearing in the trees. He crouches down to look at it. It is a slight depression in the snow protected by some rocks. He finds tiger hair. He picks some up and looks it over: it's the tiger's bedding.

He follows the trails with his eyes. There are dozens. Aleksandr pulls out his knife and marks a nearby tree.

139 INT. FOREST AND WILDLIFE PROTECTION OFFICES - DAY

139

Sasha, Yegor, Mikhail and Ivan clean up the mess. They look downcast. In a corner lies Misha, watching them.

IVAN

What are we going to do?

MIKHAIL

We have to wait for things to settle down.

IVAN

We could call Moscow for help.

Yegor smiles to himself when he hears Ivan's naive idea.

YEGOR

Moscow? This is Siberia. Nobody cares what happens here.

Lost in her thoughts, Sasha keeps picking up strewn objects. She turns to Mikhail.

SASHA

D'you think Aleksandr is ok?

MIKHAIL

Romanov told us he was ok. That he wasn't hurt when he escaped.

SASHA

So why isn't he back?

MIKHAIL

I'm sure he's trying to hunt the tiger.

Yegor comes up to her and hugs her.

YEGOR

Don't worry. Everything will be ok.

It is apparent that Sasha is uncomfortable with his embrace. She exchanges a glance with Mikhail and pulls away.

SASHA

Let's finish cleaning up, ok?

140 EXT. TAIGA - AFTERNOON 140

Aleksandr walks through the taiga with his spear. In the distance he sees Vasya's cabin. He heads over there.

141 EXT. VASYA'S CABIN - AFTERNOON 141

Aleksandr knocks on the door. The cold is in his bones. Vasya opens the door and receives him with surprise.

VASYA

Aleksandr, what are you doing here?

ALEKSANDR

Do you have some coffee?

Vasya smiles at him.

VASYA

You came all this way for coffee?

(a beat)

Come, come in.

He waves him into the cabin.

142 EXT. YEGOR'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON 142

Yegor opens the door to his house. Sasha is behind him, waiting, with Misha beside her. Yegor finishes opening, and moves aside to let her in.

143 INT. YEGOR'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS 143

Yegor's house, as opposed to Aleksandr's militarily organized one, is a mess. Filthy dishes in the sink, dirty clothes piled up in a corner, worn furniture.

Sasha enters and Misha follows her. Yegor takes off his coat, takes Sasha by the hand and leads her to one of the rooms. In the middle of the hallway, he starts to kiss her.

Sasha responds to his kisses, but after a while, she pulls away from him. Yegor tries to keep kissing her, but she softly stops him. Yegor is puzzled.

YEGOR

What's wrong?

SASHA

I can't.

YEGOR

Why? Are you worried?

SASHA

No, it's not that. I just can't go on with this.

YEGOR

What did I do wrong?

SASHA

You didn't do anything wrong. You've been very good to me. It's me.

YEGOR

It's Aleksandr, isn't it.

Sasha is surprised.

YEGOR (CONT'D)

We all know you used to be with Aleksandr.

Sasha doesn't answer: there's no point in covering up.

SASHA

Let's get through this. We'll stop for a while, and then we'll see.

Yegor takes a step forward to confront her.

YEGOR

We'll see what, Sasha? If you're in the mood to play with me again?

SASHA

I never played with you.

Yegor glares at her. Sasha holds his gaze for a moment, then lowers her head and turns to leave. Yegor catches up to her.

YEGOR

I'll take you home.

SASHA

No, thanks.

She kisses his cheek and leaves. Misha runs after her.

144 EXT. YEGOR'S HOUSE - EVENING 144

Sasha leaves the house. She walks a few steps and brings her hand to her head. She looks pained, confused.

145 EXT. TOWN ENVIRONS - AFTERNOON 145

The sun begins to drop. From a hill, the tiger watches the town from a distance. The tiger turns around and tranquilly gets lost among the trees.

146 INT. VASYA'S CABIN - EVENING 146

The chimney is on. Vasya is sitting at the table. Aleksandr sits on another chair drinking a steaming cup of coffee, covered in one of Vasya's fur coats. He seems to have recovered from the intense cold but looks upset.

ALEKSANDR

How many animals did they kill?

VASYA

Lots...lynxes, bears, wolves, a tigress and her cubs.

ALEKSANDR

The tiger cubs?

VASYA

The people are angry, Aleksandr.

ALEKSANDR

I have to kill that tiger.

Vasya stares at him for a long time.

VASYA

You can't kill a tiger that spared your life. Your spirit will never rest.

Aleksandr looks into his coffee as if there was an answer to something in there.

ALEKSANDR

My spirit won't rest anyway.

Vasya gets up and takes down a rifle from a corner. It's a double barreled .375 Holland and Holland.

VASYA

This is my best rifle. A Soviet Army General gave it to me when they exiled him here.

He walks toward Aleksandr and holds it out to him.

VASYA (CONT'D)

It's yours now. I think it'll be better than a spear.

Vasya laughs at his own joke. Aleksandr takes the rifle and runs his fingers over it: it's a fine weapon.

ALEKSANDR

Thanks.

147 EXT. TOWN STREETS - EVENING

147

Darkness begins to fall. Sasha walks toward her house, followed by Misha who every now and again stops to sniff a post. Dogs barking everywhere. Sasha stops to listen.

Suddenly Misha pricks up her ears. Something has caught her attention. She takes two steps forward and barks twice.

Misha's hackles raise and she runs back to hide. Out of sheer instinct Sasha does the same. She hides behind a fence.

Sixty yards away from her, the tiger walks through the houses. Sasha takes Misha, squeezes her snout and crouches as low as she can so the tiger won't see her.

Sasha trembles, and Misha shivers in her arms. The tiger roams beside them.

148 INT. POLICE TRUCK - EVENING

148

Vadim and Matvei patrol the streets when they suddenly spot the tiger in the distance.

OFFICER MATVEI

The tiger.

Vadim sees it, and immediately picks up his radio.

VADIM

Captain, the tiger is in town.

Nobody answers. He opens the door, flings the radio on the seat and grabs a rifle. His hands shake.

149 EXT. TOWN STREETS - EVENING

149

Vadim gets out and aims at the tiger, who keeps on, surely, fearlessly, serene. He fires, but the bullet is far off its mark. The tiger, unfazed, just turns. Vadim and Matvei lose sight of it.

Sasha sees the tiger is now headed in her direction. She starts to breathe agitated. Misha wriggles free and tries to run away. Sasha reaches out to grab her, and barely catches hold of one of her hind legs. She pulls Misha toward her. Misha won't stop shivering.

The tiger spots the movement and starts to trot toward them. Sasha drags herself behind the fence.

Vadim gets in the patrol car.

150 INT. POLICE TRUCK - EVENING

150

VADIM
Turn on the siren.

Matvei tries repeatedly to turn it on.

OFFICER MATVEI
It's not working.

VADIM
Honk the horn. Follow it.

151 EXT. TOWN STREETS - EVENING

151

The patrol car drives full speed honking its horn desperately. Sasha, crouching with Misha in her arms, watches the tiger come nearer and nearer.

152 INT. PATROL CAR - EVENING

152

Vadim spots the tiger.

VADIM
There it is. Drive toward it.

Matvei heads straight for the tiger. The tiger sees them come, but doesn't move. The patrol car drives full speed toward it. When it looks like it is about to run into the tiger, it leaps and disappears like a ghost.

Vadim and Matvei look for it.

VADIM (CONT'D)
Where did it go?

153 EXT. TOWN STREETS - EVENING 153

Sasha watches the tiger disappear, gets up, and slowly, without panicking, starts to walk backwards down the street, looking every which way.

The tiger is nowhere to be seen. Sasha lets Misha down and starts to run. Misha follows her.

154 INT. PATROL CAR - EVENING 154

Vadim turns on the loudspeaker and starts to call out the window as the patrol car advances.

VADIM

The tiger is in town. Stay indoors.
The tiger is in town. Stay indoors.

He lowers the loudspeaker and turns toward Matvei.

VADIM (CONT'D)

Can you see it?

Matvei shakes his head. They drive quickly down the streets, honking their horn. Vadim holds his rifle in hand.

155 EXT. TOWN STREETS - EVENING 155

Sasha runs when she sees the tiger strolling calmly a hundred yards away. His breath is visible in the air.

Sasha stops. She picks up Misha, and slowly, and without turning her back to it, starts to step toward her home.

The tiger hasn't noticed her, busy with the patrol car that keeps honking its horn.

The tiger turns a corner and Sasha bolts toward her home. The honks and barking dogs have become a din. We also hear shouting further off.

Sasha reaches her home, and quickly opens the door. She enters, followed by Misha. The tiger notices they have entered the house, and approaches decisively.

156 INT. SASHA'S HOUSE - EVENING 156

Sasha quickly shuts the door. Olga is standing there, worried.

OLGA

What's happening?

SASHA

The tiger.

Without another word, Sasha pulls her into the bathroom. Misha runs in with them.

157 INT. BATHROOM SASHA'S HOUSE - EVENING 157

They lock themselves in the bathroom. Olga starts to get nervous.

OLGA

Is it going to come in here? Tell me.

Sasha tries to calm her down.

SASHA

Shhh. Calm down.

Sasha picks up Misha, who squirms in Sasha's arms, terrified.

158 EXT. SASHA'S HOUSE - EVENING 158

The tiger stands before the house, and jumps easily up onto the roof.

159 INT. BATHROOM SASHA'S HOUSE - EVENING 159

Sasha and Olga hear how the tiger jumps on the roof. Its steps make the wood creak. Olga starts to cry uncontrollably.

OLGA

It's going to kill us.

Sasha tries to calm her down.

SASHA

Calm down.

The tiger starts to scratch on the roof. His claws are audible on the wood. Sasha starts to scream with everything she has.

SASHA (CONT'D)

Get out... Go away...

Her aunt sobs, horrified. The roof beams buckle.

SASHA (CONT'D)

Aunt Olga, stay here and don't talk.

Sasha leaves the bathroom and closes the door.

160 INT. LIVING ROOM, SASHA'S HOUSE - NIGHT 160

Sasha leaves and starts to shout at the tiger to draw it away from her aunt.

SASHA
Get out god dammit...

We hear the tiger move away from the bathroom and start to run toward where Sasha is shouting. The roof starts to splinter. One of the boards on the ceiling gives way.

161 INT. PATROL CAR - EVENING 161

In the patrol car, Matvei and Vadim drive down the streets. Vadim carries a lamp and shines it outside Sasha's house. They see the tiger on top of the roof.

Matvei starts to honk the horn. Vadim opens the door and pulls out his rifle and aims. The tiger sees them and, with one bound, jumps off the roof and disappears.

Vadim lights the streets with his lamp. Nothing: the tiger has disappeared.

162 INT. SASHA'S HOUSE - EVENING 162

Sasha can no longer hear the tiger on the roof, and she drops onto a couch, agitated.

163 EXT. TAIGA - MORNING 163

Day breaks over the taiga. The sunlight filters through the firs. A heavy layer of snow covers the entire landscape. A river trickles down the mountains. A trio of deer drink from the river. A fox appears from afar and looks at them.

164 EXT. VASYA'S CABIN - DAY 164

Aleksandr, completely naked, rubs his body with a handful of herbs. The cold is terrible: thick billows flow from Aleksandr's breath and his skin is red.

165 INT. VASYA'S CABIN - DAY 165

From his cabin, Vasya watches how Aleksandr cleans his body.

166 EXT. VASYA'S CABIN - DAY 166

Aleksandr finishes rubbing his body with the herbs, then takes a few of them and chews them. The flavor is awful and Aleksandr grimaces with disgust, but he keeps chewing.

167 INT. VASYA'S CABIN - DAY 167

Aleksandr is putting on several layers of Vasya's rawhide coats over his clothes. Vasya watches him from a chair while he sips from his coffee. Aleksandr finishes and walks toward where Vasya keeps his provisions.

ALEKSANDR
Do you have any bread you can spare?

VASYA
What for?

ALEKSANDR
Crows.

VASYA
So they caw and fly away whenever
anything comes close.

Vasya smiles his gummy smile and gestures toward some bags.

VASYA (CONT'D)
There.

Aleksandr picks up the bag.

ALEKSANDR
I'll see you later.

He picks up the rifle Vasya gave him and leaves the cabin.

168 EXT. FYODOR'S HOUSE - DAY

168

Fyodor's house is a modest wooden cabin on the edge of town.

Fyodor leaves his house and walks to the back. In a large pen are several dogs that jump against the gate when they see him approach, barking and wagging their tails.

Fyodor walks into the cage and starts to leash the dogs.

169 EXT. TOWN STREETS - DAY

169

Leading his dogs on leash, Fyodor meets with the other villagers, far fewer than the first time.

The dogs bark desperately trying to break free of their harnesses to follow the tiger's scent.

170 EXT. TAIGA - DAY

170

Aleksandr reaches the place where he marked the tree. He looks around. He squats down and studies the terrain.

171 EXT. ARBOLEDA TAIGA - DAY

171

A deer walks tranquilly through the trees. A shot rings out and the deer drops. Rifle in hand, Aleksandr approaches it.

172 EXT. TAIGA - DAY

172

Aleksandr drags the split-open deer carcass in circles near the marked tree. The blood paints the snow like a red maze.

Then Aleksandr struggles to hang up the deer from a branch with his belt.

Once he's done, from a leather satchel he takes out the bread and starts to crumble it over the ground around the circle of blood.

173 EXT. TOWN ENVIRONS - DAY

173

The hunting party is about to set off on their expedition. Fyodor lets the dogs loose and they immediately dart out to scenting the taiga.

The group begins to disperse in a crescent.

174 EXT. TAIGA - LATER

174

The crows are eating the bread crumbs Aleksandr laid out for them. There is nothing else visible nearby, except a pair of eyes watching vigilantly.

Completely fused with the snow and branches, buried under the snow and some bushes, Aleksandr looks on with his rifle hidden outside in his hand.

Ahead of him hangs the deer, softly swinging in the wind. The circles of blood lie marked in the snow. The surrounding crows peck at the breadcrumbs.

175 EXT. TAIGA - DAY

175

The dogs sniff. They seem to have found the tiger's trail and they start howling. Fyodor and three other villagers stop to listen.

FYODOR

Looks like they found the trail.

The four run out after the barking.

176 EXT. TAIGA - DAY

176

The tiger prowls around the taiga. He hears the distant barking and stops. He pricks up his ears. The barking is coming closer. The tiger leaps over a stream and slinks off.

177 EXT. TAIGA - DAY

177

Aleksandr spies from his lookout. The cold seems to be getting to him, since he shifts around trying to get warm.

Suddenly the crows begin to caw and nervously look up. From his hideout Aleksandr tries to see what is happening, but cannot see a thing.

The frightened crow caws increase. Aleksandr clutches his rifle and pulls it toward him. He removes the safety catch.

The crows fly off, swirling among the trees. We hear their caws grow fainter and fainter.

Silence. In his position, Aleksandr can see nothing. He tries to sit up a bit in the snow. He hears a roar echo through the taiga.

He remains still. Again, the roar. Slowly, with the rifle on his shoulder, Aleksandr sits up. He turns toward the roars, but sees nothing.

He looks every which way. He quickly turns and looks behind him. Nothing. He breathes agitated. Nothing.

He walks a few steps forward and squints through the trees. He sees the crows scare again almost 400 yards away. Their caws sound out clearly on the vast plain.

Suddenly, Aleksandr spots the tiger bounding through the pines. He hides behind a tree and settles in to better support his rifle. He aims, but the tiger keeps getting lost amid the pine trunks.

Aleksandr runs through the forest, trying to find his shot. He spots the tiger as it gets lost behind some trees. Aleksandr runs and runs through the snow, stumbling.

He hears the barking dogs approach. He stops to catch his breath. He hears the dogs fighting with the tiger. The dogs yelp and start to whimper.

Aleksandr hurries to reach the scene of the fight. More whining. A shot rings out. Aleksandr runs even faster. More yelping, then anguished squeals. Then silence. Utter silence.

178 EXT. TAIGA - MOMENTS LATER

178

Aleksandr keeps trudging heavily through the snow. Suddenly a wounded dog runs past him, trailing blood behind it. Aleksandr whistles at it, but the terrified dog keeps running. He picks up his rifle and slowly walks on, ready to fire.

In a clearing, Aleksandr comes upon a dantesque scene. Six dead dogs, splayed out and gutted, and beside them, also dead are three men.

Aleksandr slowly approaches, constantly turning around to make sure the tiger is nowhere near.

One of the bodies lies face up: it's Fyodor. The other's lie face down, their backs torn apart.

Aleksandr looks around carefully and finds one more man, an 18 year old boy, moaning in the snow, badly hurt. Aleksandr comes up to him, and when he touches him, the boy drags himself away like frightened, injured animal. Aleksandr kneels down and touches his shoulder.

ALEKSANDR

Easy... easy...

The boy looks him in the eyes. He has a brutal claw mark on his leg and another on his head.

ALEKSANDR (CONT'D)

What happened?

The boy can barely speak, more from the fear than the wounds.

BOY

It's the devil...

Aleksandr takes off his coat, lays it out on the snow and leans the boy upon it. He wraps him in it, leans down and carries the boy on his shoulders.

The boy moans in pain. Aleksandr sits up and looks around. The crows fly in the distance, cawing.

179 EXT. TAIGA - DAY

179

Aleksandr carries the boy on his back. He has trouble advancing through the snow. The boy, limp and unconscious, covers Aleksandr in blood.

180 EXT. TOWN ENVIRONS - DAY

180

Aleksandr walks down a hill with the boy in his arms. Some children see him in the distance and point at him. They run to their homes to call the adults.

The people come out to watch his arrival. Aleksandr pays no heed and follows his path to the center of the village.

181 EXT. TAIGA - AFTERNOON

181

Sasha, Ivan, Yegor, Mikhail and Romanov and his men are at the site of the attack. Two officers carry a dead body in a stretcher. The other bodies are covered by blankets.

Everyone looks deeply moved. Despite Fyodor's and the other villagers' abuse, they seem saddened by their death.

Aleksandr approaches Sasha.

ALEKSANDR
Did you tell their families?

Sasha nods.

SASHA
Fyodor had two teenage daughters.
They remain silent for a moment. Sasha looks him in the eyes.

SASHA (CONT'D)
I was really worried about you.
Aleksandr doesn't answer. He just looks into her eyes.

SASHA (CONT'D)
I don't like it when you're far away.
Aleksandr raises his hand and barely caresses her face.
Mikhail, squatting over one of the bodies, calls out to him.

MIKHAIL
Aleksandr, can you come for a minute?
Aleksandr goes over to Mikhail. Sasha follows him with her eyes. Yegor watches her, and lowers his head.

182 EXT. PATH - DAY

182

The trucks from Aleksandr's team and the police trucks are parked on a muddy, snow-covered road. Both teams are gathered.

ALEKSANDR
We have to evacuate the village. The women and children at least.

CAPTAIN ROMANOV
People started to leave today. They're very scared.

SASHA
The tiger dared to come into town two nights ago.

ALEKSANDR
We have to come up with a plan to hunt him.

He turns toward Romanov.

ALEKSANDR (CONT'D)
Are you in?

Romanov smiles his big cossack smile.

CAPTAIN ROMANOV

What did you expect?

ALEKSANDR

I'm going to go get Vasya, you start evacuating people.

183 EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

183

Aleksandr walks through the snowy taiga. He arrives at the cemetery with his rifle and satchel hanging from his shoulder.

The cemetery gets lost in a crop of trees far from the town. The graves are surrounded by chicken wire.

Aleksandr walks over to Markov, Pavel, and Vladimir's graves. Each one has a black marble tombstone with their photographs.

From his satchel, he pulls out a bottle of vodka, two small glasses, a loaf of bread, and a toy car carved out of wood.

Aleksandr pours vodka in both glasses and cuts some thin slices of bread. He goes over to Markov's grave and sets one of the glasses on the stone. He sets a slice of bread over the glass. He does the same with Pavel's grave.

Then he places the small wooden car on Vladimir's grave. He touches the photograph, and takes two steps back. He remains silent for a moment.

184 EXT. TOWN STREETS - AFTERNOON

184

A villager is loading his things into a rundown blue Lada. His wife and four small children help him.

Once they've finished, the villager goes to close the door to his house with a padlock. He gets into his car. One of Romanov's men watches the action.

185 EXT. TOWN STREETS - AFTERNOON

185

Six or seven old cars, even some horse drawn carts, ride down the road that leads out of the town. Armed men supervise the evacuation.

186 EXT. SASHA'S HOUSE - DAY

186

Olga is next to a car with an open trunk. Sasha is helping her load in some suitcases.

A townsman, with a scrawny woman, wait for her to finish. Olga turns to Sasha.

OLGA

You should come with us.

SASHA
I'm fine, don't worry.

They give each other a long hug. Aunt Olga pulls away and goes to get in the car.

187 EXT. STREETS, TOWN - DAY 187

Sasha watches as her aunt leaves. She raises her hand to say goodbye. Olga does the same.

188 EXT. VASYA'S CABIN - DAY 188

Aleksandr goes back to the cabin. He looks cold and exhausted. Vasya is waiting for him, sitting in his rocking chair, with a rifle in his lap. He smiles when he sees him.

VASYA
Coffee?

189 INT. VASYA'S CABIN - EVENING 189

The chimney is lit. Aleksandr warms his hands with the cup of coffee. Vasya scrapes the fat off a deerskin with his knife. He lifts the deerskin and shows it to Aleksandr.

VASYA
Does it look clean?

Aleksandr comes close to examine it. He points out an edge.

ALEKSANDR
There's still some meat there.

Vasya takes the knife and scrapes that edge.

ALEKSANDR (CONT'D)
You should come to the village.

VASYA
What for? I've been living alone in this house for fifty years.

ALEKSANDR
You can't stay here. The tiger could be around and attack you.

VASYA
I don't think he likes rotten meat.

Vasya laughs at his joke. His infected gums make it seem as if he might be right. Aleksandr smiles and Vasya goes back to cleaning the hide. Vasya raises his head, serious.

VASYA (CONT'D)

This tiger already knows men. He's learned to think like us.

Aleksandr looks at him attentively.

VASYA (CONT'D)

If you want to hunt him, you have to think like a tiger. Go to his territory. Challenge him. Call him. Shout. Ask him to come to you. Let him know that you're willing to die.

190 EXT. TAIGA - EVENING

190

The tiger appears on a hill near the village. In the distance he sees the line of headlights from the cars leaving town.

He lifts his head and slowly heads to the cluster of trees.

191 INT. VASYA'S CABIN - NIGHT

191

Vasya snores deeply in his bed. Sitting on a chair, looking through one of the windows, Aleksandr watches the taiga with his rifle in his lap.

192 EXT. VASYA'S CABIN - MORNING

192

Aleksandr gets ready to leave. Sitting outside the cabin, on a rickety rocking chair, with a rifle in his hands, Vasya watches him.

ALEKSANDR

Thank you for everything.

Vasya answers with a military salute.

ALEKSANDR (CONT'D)

Are you sure you want to stay here?

Vasya nods.

ALEKSANDR (CONT'D)

I'll leave you this radio, in case you need something, or see the tiger.

He sets the radio beside him.

ALEKSANDR (CONT'D)

Keep it on channel eight.

Vasya nods.

VASYA

Take care.

Aleksandr sets off down a path. Vasya watches him disappear.

193 EXT. TAIGA - DAY

193

Aleksandr is walking down a path. The plains are all covered in snow. He watchfully follows the tiger's tracks near the village.

He reaches the hill where the tiger stops to look at the town. There are several prints that come and go.

Aleksandr follows them and steps down the side of the hill leads to one of streets that marks the village limit.

194 EXT. STREAM, TAIGA - DAY

194

The tiger paces down the bank of the stream. He stops to drink. He sees a fish swimming in the current. He tries to claw at it, but the fish gets away.

The tiger jumps from one place to the next. He looks like a cat playing. He tries one more time, but the fish manages to quickly swim upstream.

Wet, the tiger steps out of the stream. He shakes off the water and walks toward the taiga.

195 INT. FOREST AND WILDLIFE PROTECTION OFFICES - AFTERNOON

195

Everyone is sitting around the table drinking coffee. Sasha sits beside Aleksandr. Misha on his lap. In the middle of the table is a topographical map.

Aleksandr points at several different locations with a pencil.

ALEKSANDR

I saw some of his beddings near Vanic's crossing. I've also seen his trails around town. He comes in through the north and leaves through the east.

There is a pause. Aleksandr turns to Sasha.

ALEKSANDR (CONT'D)

Did you notice anything when you saw him?

SASHA

This tiger's not afraid of anything.

ALEKSANDR

Then you're going to have to explain what you were doing alone in the street after curfew.

Yegor and Sasha exchange a fleeting glance. With a red pencil, Aleksandr traces four lines.

ALEKSANDR (CONT'D)

We'll split up into three groups to hunt it. Sasha and Mikhail, go to the tower. Yegor and I will go to Vanic's crossing.

He turns to Romanov.

ALEKSANDR (CONT'D)

Ivan, you and your men can set up on the roofs for whenever it tries to come into town.

CAPTAIN ROMANOV

I'll go with you. Let Yegor stay.

Aleksandr looks up. Yegor discreetly assents.

ALEKSANDR

Ok, you and me then.

(A beat)

Tonight we'll all sleep together. Matvei, Ivan: you'll keep watch over the town. Set up on the northern roofs. Vadim and Ivan, guard the east. Does anyone have anything to else to say?

Nobody says anything. Aleksandr continues.

ALEKSANDR (CONT'D)

Tomorrow we'll leave at 8 a.m.

196 INT. ALEKSANDR'S HOUSE - NIGHT

196

The group prepares to sleep. Some of Romanov's men set sleeping bags down in the living room. Romanov, Mikhail and Yegor have greater privileges: they have a cot, and are laying out some blankets.

Sasha is on her feet without knowing what to do. Aleksandr points at his room.

ALEKSANDR

You sleep alone in the room.

She remains motionless, without knowing what to do.

ALEKSANDR (CONT'D)

Go on. Go.

She goes into the room. Aleksandr stands in the middle of the living room.

ALEKSANDR (CONT'D)

Gentlemen. When you go piss in the bathroom, raise the seat, and when you're done put it down. There's a lady in the house.

Everybody laughs. Aleksandr walks over to a cot. He sits down and starts to arrange his things methodically. Misha settles under Aleksandr's cot.

Everyone starts to lay down. Yegor, still sitting on his bed, won't take his eyes off Aleksandr. They exchange a look. Aleksandr looks at him fixedly, and Yegor finally turns away. He looks down and gets ready for bed. Aleksandr looks at him for another moment, then goes back to arranging his things.

197 EXT. TOWN - NIGHT

197

Vadim, up on the roof with the rifle in his hand, watches the dark taiga. Every now and again he lights the surroundings with a flashlight.

He shines his light on the roof of another house and makes a sign. The signal is returned.

198 EXT. TOWN - NIGHT

198

From the other roof, it is Ivan who returns the signal to Vadim. Then he shines his light around him and sits on the roof wrapped in a blanket.

199 INT. ALEKSANDR'S HOUSE - NIGHT

199

Everyone is lying down. We hear the sonorous snores of Romanov. Aleksandr is lying down with his eyes open. He gets up quietly and goes to the room. He opens the door and enters.

200 INT. ROOM ALEKSANDR'S HOUSE - NIGHT

200

Aleksandr stands next to the bed and looks at Sasha, sleeping. He watches her for a few moments. She seems to feel his gaze upon her, and she opens her eyes.

They look at each other in the dark. Aleksandr sits on the bed. She caresses his face. Aleksandr leans over and starts to kiss her. She pulls away, moves over in the bed, and gives him some room. He crawls into bed and keeps kissing her.

We hear a loud snore. Both laugh, then keep kissing.

201 EXT. TOWN - NIGHT 201

The town is dark. From the rooftops, every now and then we can see the watchmens' beams of light.

202 EXT. TOWN ENVIRONS - NIGHT 202

From a hill, the tiger watches the beams of light. His breath expands in the cold night.

With vigilant eyes, the tiger scans the town buildings. He spots Ivan and Vadim up on the roof.

The tiger seems bothered by something. He turns around and vanishes like a ghost into the taiga.

203 INT. ROOM ALEKSANDR'S HOUSE - MORNING 203

Dawn. Aleksandr is dressing, on his feet. Sasha wakes up and looks at him. Aleksandr finishes dressing.

ALEKSANDR

(whispering)

See you later.

She nods. Aleksandr turns and leaves.

204 INT. ALEKSANDR'S HOUSE - MORNING 204

Almost everyone is awake. They watch Aleksandr leave the room, but say nothing. Aleksandr and Yegor look at each other. Mikhail looks at both men with a strange complicity.

Aleksandr heads for Romanov's cot, who is sitting down, putting on his socks.

ALEKSANDR

Come with me.

205 EXT. ALEKSANDR'S HOUSE - DAY 205

We hear Romanov shouting from behind Aleksandr's house.

CAPTAIN ROMANOV (O.S.)

You're fucking crazy.

Aleksandr and Romanov are naked in the middle of the intense cold, rubbing their bodies with some herbs.

CAPTAIN ROMANOV (CONT'D)

Why the hell are we doing this?

ALEKSANDR

Now your clothes.

Aleksandr picks up his clothes and rubs them with the herbs. He doesn't miss a spot: armpits, knees, back. Romanov follows reluctantly.

Aleksandr hands him a little twig.

ALEKSANDR (CONT'D)
Chew on this.

Romanov looks at him as if Aleksandr were making fun of him.

ALEKSANDR (CONT'D)
Come on, chew.

Romanov spits it out.

CAPTAIN ROMANOV
What is this?

ALEKSANDR
It gets rid of bad breath. That way
the tiger won't smell you.

Romanov takes the twig and starts to chew on it with disgust.

206 EXT. TOWN ENVIRONS - MORNING

206

The group gets ready to leave. A canteen full of vodka is being passed around. Romanov is about to have a sip, but Aleksandr holds his arm.

ALEKSANDR
Nope, you will smell like vodka.

CAPTAIN ROMANOV
God dammit, I don't know why I said
I'd go with you.

ALEKSANDR
Ok, good luck everybody.

They get ready to leave. Aleksandr approaches Sasha.

ALEKSANDR (CONT'D)
Take care, please.

She smiles. Romanov and Aleksandr head right, and Mikhail and Sasha left. Aleksandr apprehensively watches her go.

207 EXT. TOWER - MORNING

207

As before, Mikhail and Sasha scale the tower. A light snow falls, which makes the crossbars even more slippery.

Even so, Sasha and Mikhail climb with good speed. Once on top, Mikhail ties himself by the waist, then helps Sasha.

MIKHAIL

- Tie it tight.

They make sure the knots are tight.

208 EXT. STREETS, TOWN - MORNING

208

Yegor, Ivan, Matvei, Vadim and the other two officers climb the roofs of five separate houses.

The slight snow starts to carpet the roofs of the houses in white. Yegor pulls his coat over to protect himself from the cold. Vadim signals Yegor to tell him everything is ok. Yegor grabs his radio.

YEGOR

Yegor here. We're in position. Over.

209 EXT. TAIGA - MORNING

209

Aleksandr and Romanov advance through the thick snow with difficulty. They stop to receive the call.

ALEKSANDR

Copy Yegor. Over. Mikhail and Sasha are you in position?

SASHA (O.S.)

In position. Over.

Aleksandr turns to Romanov.

ALEKSANDR

Can you keep going?

CAPTAIN ROMANOV

You're going to get tired first.

Aleksandr smiles and they both keep on.

210 EXT. HOUSES, TOWN - DAY

210

Sitting on the roof, Yegor, Vadim, Ivan and the other two take refuge from the snow that is falling on them.

Vadim puts on his hood while he eats some bread. Yegor leans close to a water tank which more or less protects him.

Ivan, walks nervously from one side of the roof to the other, scanning the taiga and the village streets. He hugs himself to keep warm.

211 EXT. TAIGA - MORNING

211

Romanov and Aleksandr arrive at the cluster of trees where the tiger usually sleeps.

ALEKSANDR
(whispering)
He sleeps around here.

Aleksandr takes out a piece of bread breaks it apart. He gives a half to Romanov and whispers to him.

ALEKSANDR (CONT'D)
For the crows.

Romanov knows what Aleksandr is talking about. He grabs the bread and puts it away in his rawhide satchel.

Aleksandr points out some bushes two hundred meters away.

ALEKSANDR (CONT'D)
(in a low voice)
Crawl in the snow there. I'll watch this side, you watch the other.

CAPTAIN ROMANOV
Ok. Good luck.

Romanov turns and leaves. Aleksandr grabs the radio.

ALEKSANDR
(quietly)
Romanov and I are in position. Over.

MIKHAIL (O.S.)
Copy. Over.

212 EXT. TOWER - MORNING

212

From the tower, Sasha carefully explores the terrain with the scope. She sees Aleksandr in the distance and picks up the radio.

SASHA
Aleksandr. Do you copy? We can see your position.

Through the scope we can see the tiny figure of Aleksandr pick up his radio.

ALEKSANDR (O.S.)
I copy you, Sasha.

213 EXT. TAIGA - MORNING 213

Aleksandr raises his head and looks toward the tower poking out through the trees in the distance.

The figures of Mikhail and Sasha can barely be distinguished as small dots. Aleksandr raises his arm to indicate his position and raises his binoculars to look at them.

214 EXT. TOWER - MORNING 214

Sasha sees through the scope that Aleksandr raises his arm and she does the same. She grabs the radio.

SASHA

We'll cover you from here. Over.

ALEKSANDR (O.S.)

Thanks. Call only if its an emergency.
Over and out.

215 EXT. TAIGA - MOMENTS LATER 215

Romanov is perfectly buried in the snow, with his rifle by his side and his camouflaged binoculars on his chest. A murder of crows pecks the bread before him.

Two hundred meters ahead, looking in the other direction, Aleksandr is also buried, and another murder of crows feeds some five yards away from him.

216 EXT. TOWER - DAY 216

It is snowing more. Sasha keeps exploring. All of a sudden, something grabs her attention. She fixes the scope and observes: in the distance the tiger roams among the trees.

SASHA

(quietly)

He's there... He's there...

Mikhail tries to look for him with his binoculars.

SASHA (CONT'D)

(quietly)

Two o'clock. Eight hundred meters,
more or less.

He looks and far away in the distance spots the giant tiger.

MIKHAIL

It's heading for Aleksandr.

Immediately Sasha grabs her radio and calls.

SASHA
Aleksandr. Do you copy?

217 EXT. TAIGA - DAY

217

Aleksandr, buried, grabs the radio.

ALEKSANDR
(Whispering)
Copy. Over.

SASHA (O.S.)
The tiger is heading toward your
position. Two o'clock.

Aleksandr turns to his right, trying to look.

ALEKSANDR
I can't see it. Where is it?

218 EXT. TOWER - DAY

218

Sasha and Mikhail explore the taiga and see that the tiger has walked into a crop of trees near Aleksandr. Sasha picks up her radio.

SASHA
He's in the trees, three o'clock.

219 EXT. TAIGA - DAY

219

Aleksandr sits up. He looks into the crop of trees: 150 meters away, the tiger walks, hidden by the foliage. Aleksandr hides further in his burrow.

Suddenly, the tiger appears. Aleksandr raises his head to see where it went, but can't see it. He grabs his radio.

ALEKSANDR
Romanov, do you copy? Do you see the
tiger?

220 EXT. TAIGA - DAY

220

Romanov has exposed half his body from his hiding place. With his rifle sights, he looks in the midst of the trees.

CAPTAIN ROMANOV
I can't see it. Sasha, do you see
it?

221 EXT. TOWER - DAY

221

Sasha and Mikhail keep exploring. Suddenly, Mikhail touches Sasha's arm.

MIKHAIL

It's coming round the back, behind Romanov.

Sasha immediately picks up the radio.

SASHA

Romanov, it's behind you!

222 EXT. TAIGA - DAY

222

Romanov turns around completely and looks behind him. He spots the tiger fifty yards away. He brings his rifle to his shoulder, but the tiger bounds away and gets lost in the trees. Nervous, Romanov searches for it.

223 EXT. TAIGA - DAY

223

Aleksandr gets up completely. He spots the tiger rounding the crop of trees. He raises his rifle and fires.

The bullet hits a tree and the tiger runs into the thick of the forest. Aleksandr picks up the radio.

ALEKSANDR

Sasha, where is it?

224 EXT. TOWER - DAY

224

The snowfall thickens. It makes it harder for Mikhail and Sasha to see.

They both scan the forest where the tiger disappeared, with their binoculars. They can't see anything.

SASHA

I can't see it.

225 EXT. TAIGA - DAY

225

Standing in the middle of the taiga, Aleksandr turns from one side to the other. The tiger is driving him crazy. He suddenly spots the tiger crouching some thirty yards behind Romanov, stalking toward him.

Aleksandr grabs the radio.

ALEKSANDR

Romanov, behind you. Behind you!

Aleksandr tries to aim, but the tiger is crouching so low, that it gets lost in the snow.

Romanov turns and turns, trying to see it. In the distance, Aleksandr realizes he can't see it.

He runs toward Romanov as he shouts over the radio.

ALEKSANDR (CONT'D)

Behind you... behind you...

The snowfall intensifies. Aleksandr won't stop running.

226 EXT. TOWER - DAY

226

From the tower, Mikhail and Sasha keep looking through their binoculars. Sasha sees it crouching, as it suddenly jumps and again disappears into the trees. She picks up her radio.

SASHA

Aleksandr, in the trees.

227 EXT. TAIGA - DAY

227

Radio in hand, Aleksandr runs through the snow until he reaches Romanov.

ALEKSANDR

Back to back.

Romanov and Aleksandr stand back to back.

CAPTAIN ROMANOV

Can you see it?

ALEKSANDR

No.

They both scan the taiga, desperate. The tiger is playing with them. Aleksandr grabs his radio.

ALEKSANDR (CONT'D)

Where is he?

228 INT. VASYA'S CABIN - DAY

228

Sitting at his table, with his radio by his side, Vasya listens to the frantic conversation on the radio.

SASHA (O.S.)

I don't know.

ALEKSANDR (O.S.)

Look toward six o'clock.

YEGOR (O.S.)

Aleksandr, what do we do? Should we head over there?

ALEKSANDR (O.S.)

Yegor, maintain position. Over.

Vasya grabs his radio, worried, and brings it to his ear to hear better.

229 EXT. TAIGA - DAY

229

Romanov and Aleksandr are still together. The snowfall intensifies. Romanov breathes agitatedly.

ALEKSANDR

Romanov, breathe easy. Steady your pulse.

Romanov can't. He keeps breathing through his mouth, his rifle shaking in his hands.

230 EXT. TOWER - DAY

230

Sasha and Mikhail keep searching through their binoculars. Mikhail spots the tiger in a nearby clearing. The tiger is moving away from Aleksandr and Romanov.

SASHA

Aleksandr, the tiger is moving away from you. It's three hundred meters away, at six o'clock.

ALEKSANDR (O.S.)

Are you sure?

SASHA

Positive.

Sasha looks through the binoculars a little more, and turns toward Mikhail.

SASHA (CONT'D)

I think I can hit it.

MIKHAIL

Do you have a clean shot?

Sasha now searches through her rifle sights.

SASHA

It's far away. I have to wait for it to come a little closer.

231 EXT. TAIGA - DAY

231

Romanov pulls away from Aleksandr. He can barely breathe.

CAPTAIN ROMANOV

That was close.

The radio crackles.

SASHA (O.S.)
Aleksandr, I'm going to try to shoot.

ALEKSANDR
Shoot. Over.

232 EXT. TOWER - DAY

232

Sasha takes out a small tripod from her backpack. She puts it on the pole. She puts the barrel of the rifle on the tripod and her shoulder into the butt.

She tries to control her breathing, lowers the rifle and gets the tiger in her sights. She fires, but the shot is high. When it hears the shot, the tiger jumps into the forest. She frantically tries to aim again. The tiger moves fast.

SASHA
I can't get him.

She kneels and tries to turn. As she does, she slips into the hole in the center of the tower. Mikhail sees this and tries to catch her before she falls, but Sasha drops bringing him down with her.

The rifle, the scope, the binoculars, the radios and their backpacks crash into the snow and break apart.

The rope to which they are fastened stops them from falling all the way to the ground. Sasha swings and hits his head on one of the bars and remains unconscious.

Mikhail hangs face down. It is impossible to grab hold of anything. He shouts at her.

MIKHAIL
Sasha... are you ok? Sasha..

Sasha doesn't answer. A thin line of blood runs down her head and drips down to the snow fifteen meters below them.

233 EXT. TAIGA - DAY

233

The snow intensifies. Aleksandr grabs his radio and calls.

ALEKSANDR
Sasha, did you hit him?

No answer.

ALEKSANDR (CONT'D)
Sasha, what happened?

Nothing. Romanov keep his eye on the taiga. The snow makes it harder and harder to see.

CAPTAIN ROMANOV

The storm must be jamming the radios.

Aleksandr turns to look at him. He grabs the radio again.

ALEKSANDR

Sasha, do you copy?

No answer. Aleksandr turns to Romanov.

ALEKSANDR (CONT'D)

Something must've happened. We have to go check.

CAPTAIN ROMANOV

They're fine. It's probably just interference.

The snow intensifies even more. Aleksandr, nervous and worried, insists on the radio.

ALEKSANDR

Sasha, Mikhail, do you copy?

234 EXT. TOWER - DAY

234

Hanging face down, Mikhail tries to pull himself up by the rope, but the way he has tied himself makes it difficult.

Sasha hangs inert, his forehead open and bleeding. Mikhail swings on his rope to try to reach her, but cannot. The snow thickens and both hang fifteen meters above the floor.

235 EXT. TOWER - DAY

235

On the floor, under the tower, buried in the snow, the radio crackles.

RADIO VOICE ALEKSANDR (O.S.)

Mikhail... Sasha, do you copy?...

Mikhail. Sasha. Answer...

236 EXT. TAIGA - DAY

236

Romanov grabs Aleksandr's arm to call his attention.

CAPTAIN ROMANOV

We've got to get out of here. We're blind and totally exposed.

Aleksandr calls over radio again.

237 EXT. TOWN - DAY

237

On one of the roofs, under the increasingly intense snowfall, Yegor watches.

ALEKSANDR (O.S.)
Yegor, do you copy?

YEGOR
Affirmative. Over.

ALEKSANDR (O.S.)
Have you heard from Mikhail and Sasha?

YEGOR
Negative.

238 EXT. TAIGA - DAY

238

Aleksandr turns to Romanov.

ALEKSANDR
Something's wrong. I know it.

CAPTAIN ROMANOV
Let's go, Vasya's house is close by.

Aleksandr looks hesitant about whether to head for the tower or a safer place. He picks up the radio.

ALEKSANDR
Yegor, Vadim, get in the trucks and head for the tower. I'm on my way.

YEGOR (O.S.)
Roger. Heading for the tower.

Romanov can't seem to believe what he just heard.

CAPTAIN ROMANOV
Are you crazy? We can't go there.

Aleksandr pays no attention and leaves for the tower. Romanov has no choice but to follow.

239 EXT. TOWN - DAY

239

Vadim, Matvei, Ivan and other officials load up three trucks. Yegor has some long rope with him.

They finish loading the vehicles and leave in the storm.

240 EXT. TAIGA - DAY 240

Aleksandr and Romanov trek through the taiga. The snowfall is intense and they find it difficult to advance. Romanov stumbles frequently. Aleksandr helps him every now and again as he keeps a lookout.

241 INT. GAZ TRUCK - DAY 241

Yegor drives the the Gaz truck down a path bouncing all over the place. Visibility through the windshield is almost null. A white wall descends upon them. It almost looks like night.

242 EXT. PATH, TAIGA - DAY 242

The truck gets stuck, then unstuck after a series of accelerations. The path is full of snow and mud.

Behind them, following, the two police trucks also bounce along the road.

243 EXT. TAIGA - DAY 243

Aleksandr and Romanov keep advancing with difficulty. Through the intense snowfall, Romanov sees something move near him, then disappear from his field of vision.

He picks up his rifle and starts firing wildly. After three shots, Aleksandr stops him.

ALEKSANDR

What are you doing?

CAPTAIN ROMANOV

The tiger.

ALEKSANDR

Where?

Romanov points to his right. There is absolutely nothing visible. The curtain of snow forbids them to see anything more than ten yards away.

ALEKSANDR (CONT'D)

Are you sure?

Romanov shakes his head.

CAPTAIN ROMANOV

I don't know.

ALEKSANDR

You walk ahead, I'll walk backward behind you.

Romanov marches ahead. Aleksandr, with his back to Romanov's, walks guarding the rear.

244 INT. GAZ TRUCK - NIGHT 244

Yegor is still driving in the midst of the snowstorm. Ivan's head is out the window trying to see the road.

IVAN

Go left...

The lights vaguely illuminate the road. To see through the is close to impossible. Ivan guides as best he can.

IVAN (CONT'D)

Now to the right...

245 EXT. PATH, TAIGA - DAY 245

The trucks plows through the path, skidding and jamming.

246 EXT. TAIGA - DAY 246

Aleksandr hears the truck's motors. Aleksandr hurries ahead and doubles his pace through the thickening snow.

Romanov has trouble following him.

247 INT. GAZ TRUCK - DAY 247

Through the windshield they can barely see the ghostly tower in the midst of the white mantle falling upon them.

IVAN

There it is.

Ivan points it out and Yegor hurries to park.

248 EXT. TOWER - DAY 248

The three trucks park and everyone gets out. They look around the surroundings in search of Mikhail and Sasha. Yegor sees at the base of the tower the broken rifles, backpacks and radios almost entirely covered in snow.

YEGOR

Ivan, over here.

Ivan approaches. He sheds some light on the ground.

IVAN

No footprints.

He walks some paces around the tower. Nothing. Yegor looks up toward the tower, but the intense snow doesn't let him see more than three meters above him.

YEGOR

Mikhail, Sasha, where are you?

No answer.

249 EXT. TAIGA - DAY

249

Aleksandr is almost jumping through the snow, and when he sees the tower close by he rushes toward it. He runs all the way over to Yegor and Ivan.

ALEKSANDR

What happened?

Yegor points under the tower.

YEGOR

We found their things here. They're smashed.

Romanov reaches the place out of breath. Aleksandr looks up.

ALEKSANDR

They must be up there still. Something must have happened.

He puts down his rifle and starts to climb. Yegor and Ivan also drop their rifles and follow him. Romanov remains below, and immediately gives orders.

CAPTAIN ROMANOV

Keep watch for the tiger.

The police officers set up under the tower.

It is extremely hard to climb in the snowfall. Several times Aleksandr is about to slip and fall into the void.

The three stop every now and then to shine their flashlights on the structure, but see nothing.

They keep climbing. Aleksandr stops on one of the crossbars. The snowflakes drop heavily and it is almost impossible to see, but Aleksandr makes out a shape amid the snow.

He moves laterally along the structure. He discovers Mikhail hanging in the center of the tower.

ALEKSANDR

(shouting)

They're here.

Yegor, Vadim and Ivan climb up to where Aleksandr is.

ALEKSANDR (CONT'D)
Mikhail, are you all right?

Mikhail raises his hand weakly and shows them a 'thumbs up'.
Aleksandr turns to Vadim.

ALEKSANDR (CONT'D)
Bring ropes.

Vadim quickly gets out.

ALEKSANDR (CONT'D)
Where's Sasha?

Mikhail points to his left.

ALEKSANDR (CONT'D)
Hold... Mikhail... Hold...

Aleksandr moves to the other side of the tower. He lights the snow with his flashlight. The beam penetrates the white curtain and he sees Sasha's bleeding face. He shouts at the others.

ALEKSANDR (CONT'D)
She's here, she's wounded.

Sasha hangs unconscious. Her hair is full of snow, her face pale, blood completely frozen on her face. Aleksandr shouts at her desperately.

ALEKSANDR (CONT'D)
Sasha, Sasha...

She doesn't answer. Vadim arrives with the rope. Aleksandr turns to Yegor.

ALEKSANDR (CONT'D)
Climb to the top and swing her.

Yegor runs up. As he does, Aleksandr ties the rope to one of the bars of the structure.

Yegor reaches the top. He gets hold of Sasha's rope and starts to swing it. After three tries, Aleksandr reaches her and holds her. He puts his finger on her neck. There is a pulse.

ALEKSANDR (CONT'D)
She's alive.

He turns to Vadim.

ALEKSANDR (CONT'D)

Tie her.

As Aleksandr holds her, Vadim ties her.

VADIM

Ready.

Aleksandr shouts at Romanov and Matvei to wait below.

ALEKSANDR

We're going to lower her.

Slowly letting the rope go, Yegor, Aleksandr, Vadim and Ivan start to lower her. With all their strength, they try to control the swaying rope that is about to pull them down into the hole with it. They have a lot of trouble controlling the ropes in the midst of the intense snowstorm.

Matvei and Romanov receive her. As soon as Sasha is free, Romanov wraps her in a blanket and carries her all the way to the police truck.

He lays her on the back. Sasha barely breathes. She is pale. The two police officers stand behind them. Romanov turns to one of them.

CAPTAIN ROMANOV

Turn on the heat.

Aleksandr quickly climbs down the tower and runs to see Sasha, who languishes on the back seat of the truck.

ALEKSANDR

(To Romanov)

How is she?

CAPTAIN ROMANOV

She has hypothermia.

He addresses the police officer in the truck.

CAPTAIN ROMANOV (CONT'D)

Take her to Vladivostock hospital,
now.

Romanov closes the back door of the truck, and the officer drives off. Aleksandr watches them leave, anxious.

The truck is suddenly lost in the snowstorm. Aleksandr turns toward Romanov.

ALEKSANDR

Take care of Mikhail.

Aleksandr turns around, picks up his rifle which was leaning on one of the pillars of the tower's structure and starts to walk into the taiga in the middle of the storm.

Romanov catches up to him.

CAPTAIN ROMANOV

Where are you going?

Aleksandr doesn't answer and enters deeper and deeper into the taiga.

250 EXT. TAIGA - DAY

250

The snow has worsened. Aleksandr advances with immense difficulty. He can barely see a few steps ahead of him.

Aleksandr walks holding on to trees and shrubs. He is about to fall a number of times.

He reaches the place where he saw the tiger for the last time. He squats to find fresh tiger tracks. There are none.

Only the wind. He walks through the snow with the rifle in his hands. The snow won't let him see more than ten yards away. Everything around him is a white cloud.

He looks around. Nothing. It is almost impossible to see. He ducks to keep looking for tracks. He finds some fresh ones that lead into the cluster of trees.

Aleksandr follows them a few paces, then turns around. He looks for an open space and starts waving his arms.

Aleksandr screams with all his force.

ALEKSANDR

I'm here you fucker, come get me.
Come get me... I'm waiting. Kill me
if you can...

Nothing. Snow and silence. Aleksandr looks everywhere. He breathes agitated. He shouts again.

ALEKSANDR (CONT'D)

I'm not afraid of you... I'm here...
Come kill me...

Again, silence. Aleksandr walks around in circles following fresh tracks in the snow: the tiger has been stalking him and he never even saw it. The tracks surround him.

Aleksandr screams at the tiger with all his strength.

ALEKSANDR (CONT'D)

Are you scared? Come... Don't be
afraid... I'm here... Come...

Aleksandr turns and turns, squatting, trying to see where the tiger is going. The tracks coil like a concentric labyrinth. Again, the tiger is playing with him.

Like Romanov, Aleksandr sees a shadow that comes in and out of the white curtain. Aleksandr aims and walks toward where he saw the shadow. He trips on the snow, but doesn't lower his weapon.

He reaches a spot and finds more tiger prints. There is no doubt. The tiger is walking in circles around him.

Aleksandr turns fully around and screams:

ALEKSANDR (CONT'D)

Come on... Come...

Suddenly, from within the solid white, the tiger emerges ten yards away.

They exchange a look that seems to last forever.

Aleksandr takes off the safety catch from his rifle and starts to slowly lift it. The tiger watches him fixedly. When Aleksandr is about to hold the rifle butt to his shoulder, the tiger sets off toward him.

Aleksandr shoots. The tiger leaps and knocks him over with his paw. The two fall into the snow.

251 EXT. TAIGA - DAY

251

The sky is cloudy and a light snow falls. The crows caw in the branches. Deer try to graze amid the snowy taiga.

Vasya walks with a rifle in his hand. His snowshoes trudge heavily through the snow.

He stops to look at the horizon, then keeps going. He stops again and sees the tiger lying in the middle of a snowy plain.

Vasya takes off the safety catch on his rifle and cautiously advances with the rifle ready.

He slowly reaches the place. The tiger is dead, covered by a thick layer of snow. He is enormous. His giant claws are out. There is a pool of frozen blood surrounding him.

Aleksandr is nowhere to be seen. Vasya sees a trail of blood: red drops around Aleksandr's footprints.

Vasya follows the trail and seventy yards away sees Aleksandr sitting under a tree. Vasya hurries toward him.

Aleksandr is leaning on a trunk with his eyes closed. Some snow has accumulated on his face.

Vasya crouches before him.

 VASYA
 Aleksandr... Aleksandr...

Aleksandr heavily opens his eyes and looks at him.

 ALEKSANDR
 I hunted him.

He smiles. Vasya leaves his rifle to one side and tries to lift him by the shoulders.

 VASYA
 Come, I'll help you up.

Aleksandr shakes his head. He doesn't look well. Vasya picks up the radio and is about to call the others, but Aleksandr turns to look at him.

 ALEKSANDR
 Don't call them.

Aleksandr opens his coat and shows Vasya his torso. The clothes on his chest are torn by a claw mark. We can see the how the claws have torn his flesh. On his neck is a deep wound, a fatal bite, and the blood flows freely onto his frozen clothes.

Vasya lowers the radio. With great difficulty, Aleksandr signals for Vasya to sit next to him.

 ALEKSANDR (CONT'D)
 Sit with me.

Vasya nods and sits beside him.

Aleksandr turns to look at him and leans his head on the trunk. He closes his eyes. Vasya starts to sing an old Russian song. While he sings, Aleksandr's head starts to slowly tilt. Aleksandr dies.

Vasya realizes Aleksandr is dead but keeps singing for another while. He finishes his song and remains silent, looking at the taiga and the tiger lying in the plains.

Mexico City, December 28, 2010