A sunset over a body of water with mountains in the background and a boat in the foreground. The sky is a gradient of orange and red, and the water is a golden yellow. A small boat is visible in the distance on the left, and a larger boat is in the center foreground.

CHILDREN OF THE SUN

GATE THEATRE DEVELOPMENT 2021

VISUAL NOTEBOOK

FROM THE PLAY BY
/MAXIM GORKY\

ADAPTED BY
/MATT MINNICINO\

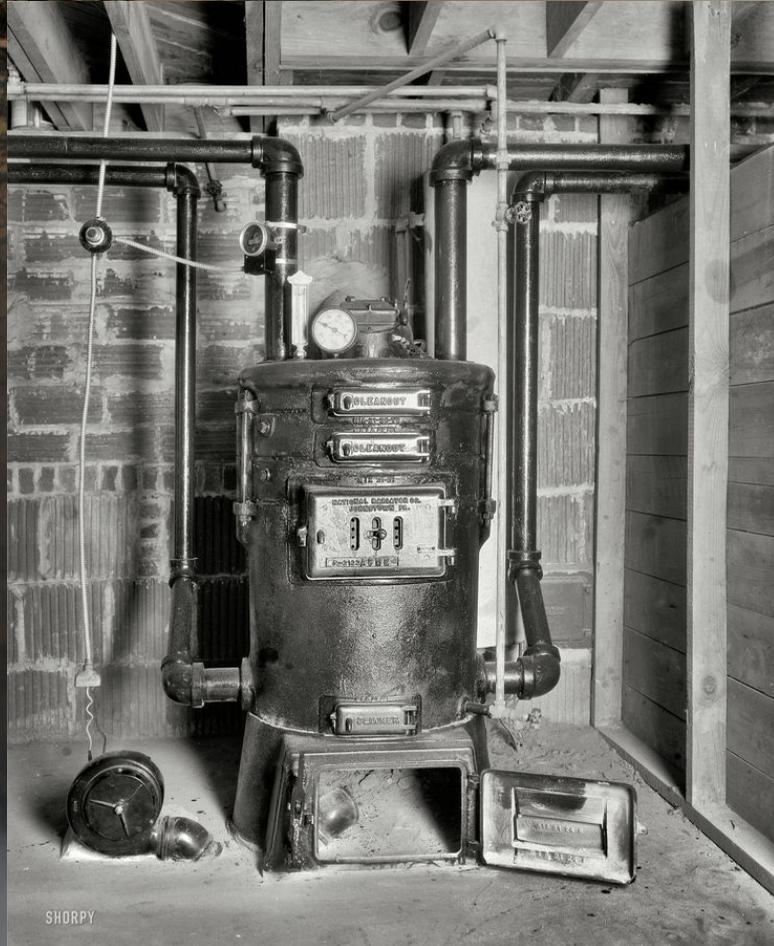
DIRECTED BY
/MARC ATKINSON BORRULL\



FOREWORD

*FROM WRITER MATT MINNICINO
AND DIRECTOR MARC ATKINSON BORRULL*

*IT IS CHOLERA TO BLAME
PAVEL FEDOTOV 1848*



Soviet Boiler from 1906.

Yegor, the Protasov's handyman, works on the boiler throughout the play.

In 1905, Maxim Gorky penned a play from his prison cell in St. Petersburg while revolution boiled over in the streets outside and Russia hovered on the brink of radical change. The result, a historical tragicomedy about a cluster of aloof bourgeoisie ecstatically oblivious to a powder keg of civil unrest on their doorstep, was initially banned by the Tsarist government. When it premiered later that year, the sounds of a riot onstage almost ignited panic in an audience still grappling with national revolt. Over the next 100 years, *Children of the Sun* has seldom been performed, eclipsed by Gorky's other socially-conscious work like *The Lower Depths*. A century later, we invite you to a radically new adaptation which excavates and explodes Gorky's original to illuminate our own moment on the precipice.

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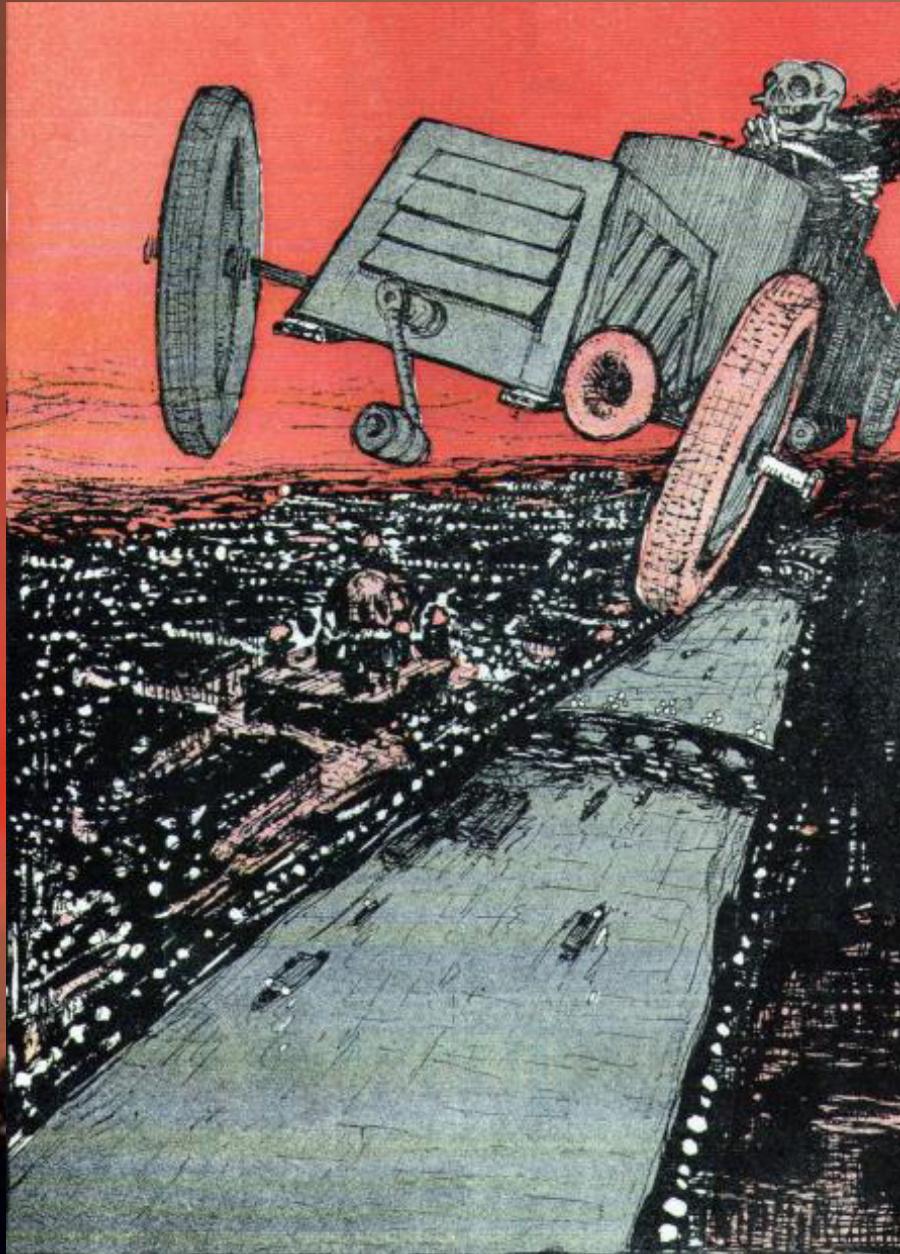
Welcome to the well-upholstered estate of the Protasovs. Yelena, a self-proclaimed philanthropist, dreams of paving the road to a New Russia with art and beauty—and her patronage of the enigmatic young artist with whom she's having an affair. Pavel, her geneticist husband, is on the brink of a scientific discovery that could change the very structure of human beings—but only his enthusiastic friend Melaniya fully believes in his big ideas. Pavel's sister Liza, afflicted with manic episodes and sheltered from the world, longs for a chance to make an impact with her compassion—supported by her gloomy physician Doctor Chepurnoy, who sees in her a truth that he struggles to find anywhere else. And all the while the Protasovs' handyman, Yegor, tries to fix the family's shuddering boiler, while their beleaguered maid Fima makes dinner, and grapples with her own place among these liberal elites in the shifting landscape.

Outside their doors, a shooting in Moscow sparks workers' riots across Russia, and a lethal cholera epidemic suddenly sweeps the town nearby. But inside, the Protasovs and their friends celebrate the dawn of a new day, full of beauty and discovery. In this, *The Children of the Sun*, 'Then' and 'Now' crash together to create a closet epic about science, class, love, revolution, and what happens when the change you want to create might mean your own destruction.

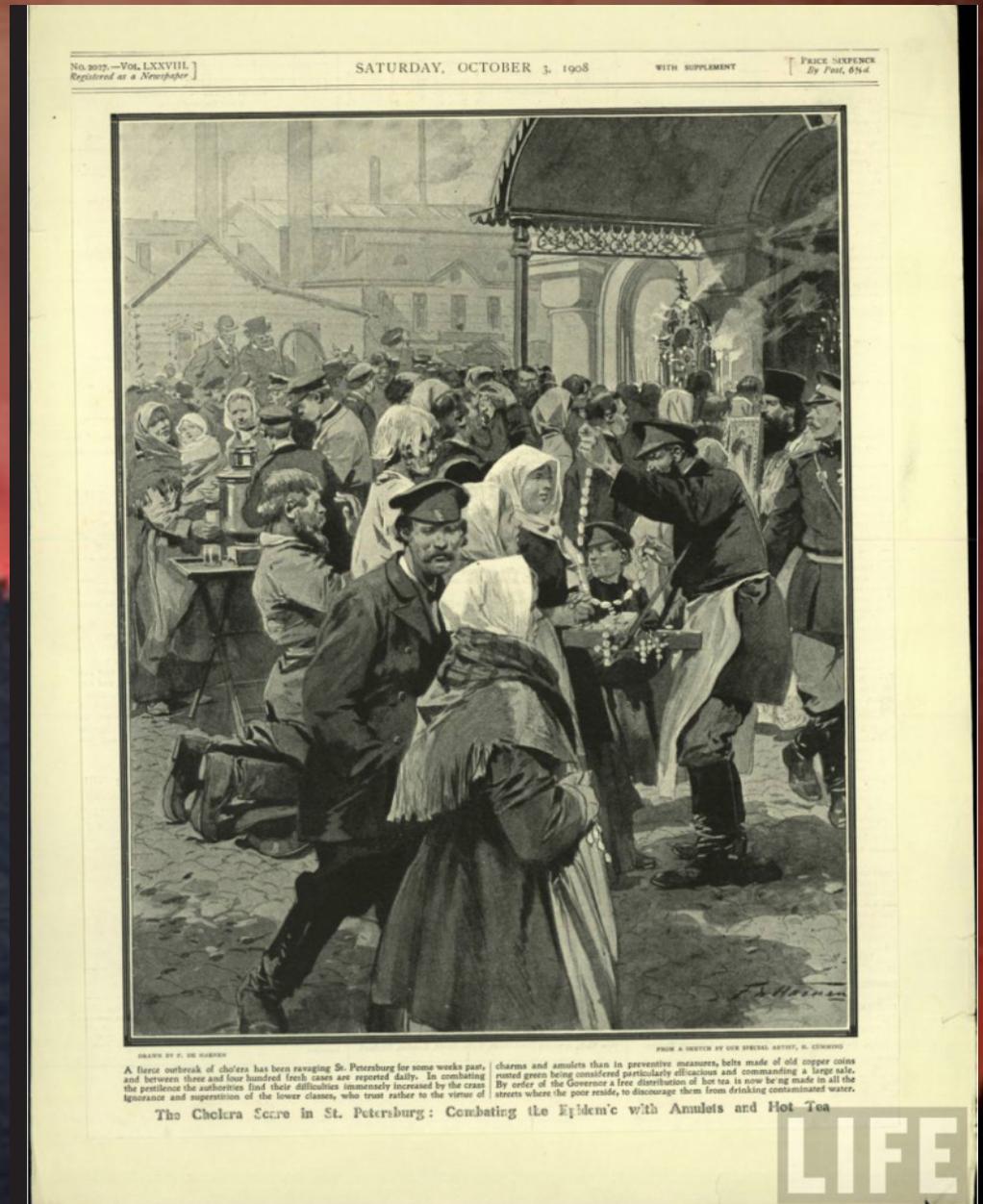




THE EPIDEMIC



The nightmare of Petersburg (1908)
Drawing by Re-Mi. Satirikon magazine, 1908.



St. Petersburg – Combating Cholera with Amulets and Hot Tea –
Cholera Epidemic, Russia. October 3, 1908.

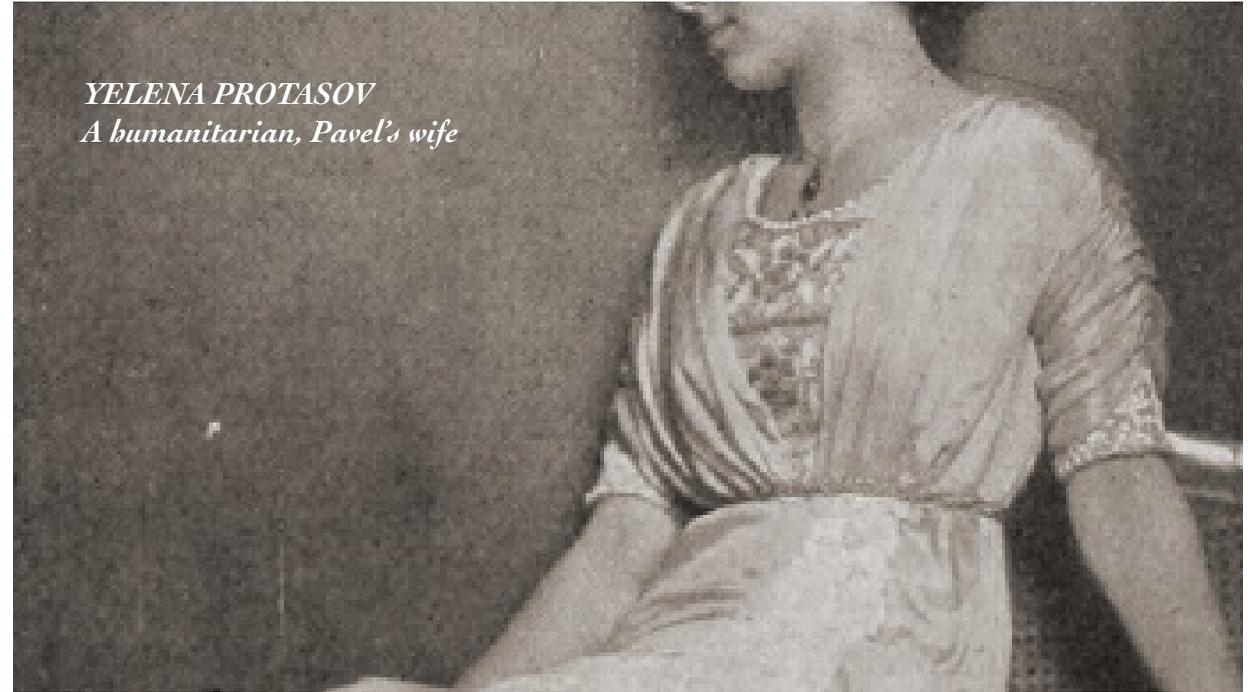


THE PEOPLE

17 OCTOBER 1905
ILYA REPIN



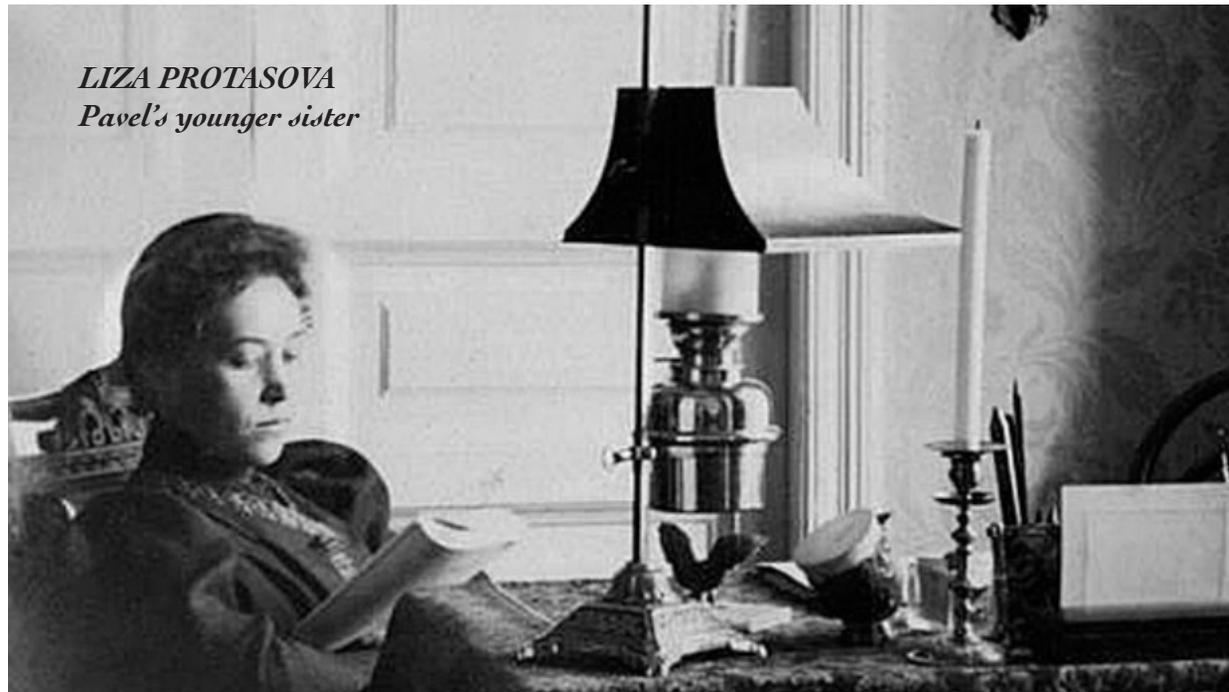
MELANIYA CHEPURNAYA
A single woman from a
well-to-do-background, friend of
the Protasovs



YELENA PROTASOV
A humanitarian, Pavel's wife



PAVEL PROTASOV
A geneticist, Yelena's husband



LIZA PROTASOVA
Pavel's younger sister



MITRI VAGHIN
An emerging artist, Yelena's lover

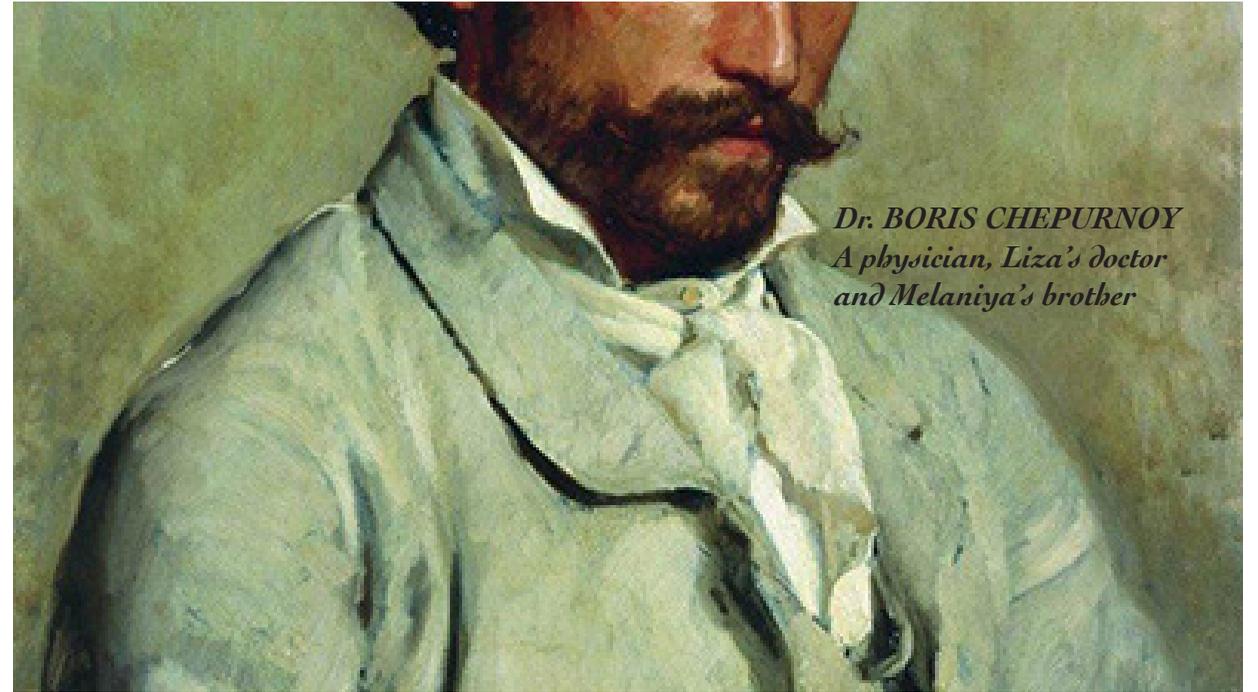


YEGOR
A working class laborer,
the Protasovs' handyman

FIMA
The Protasovs' young maid

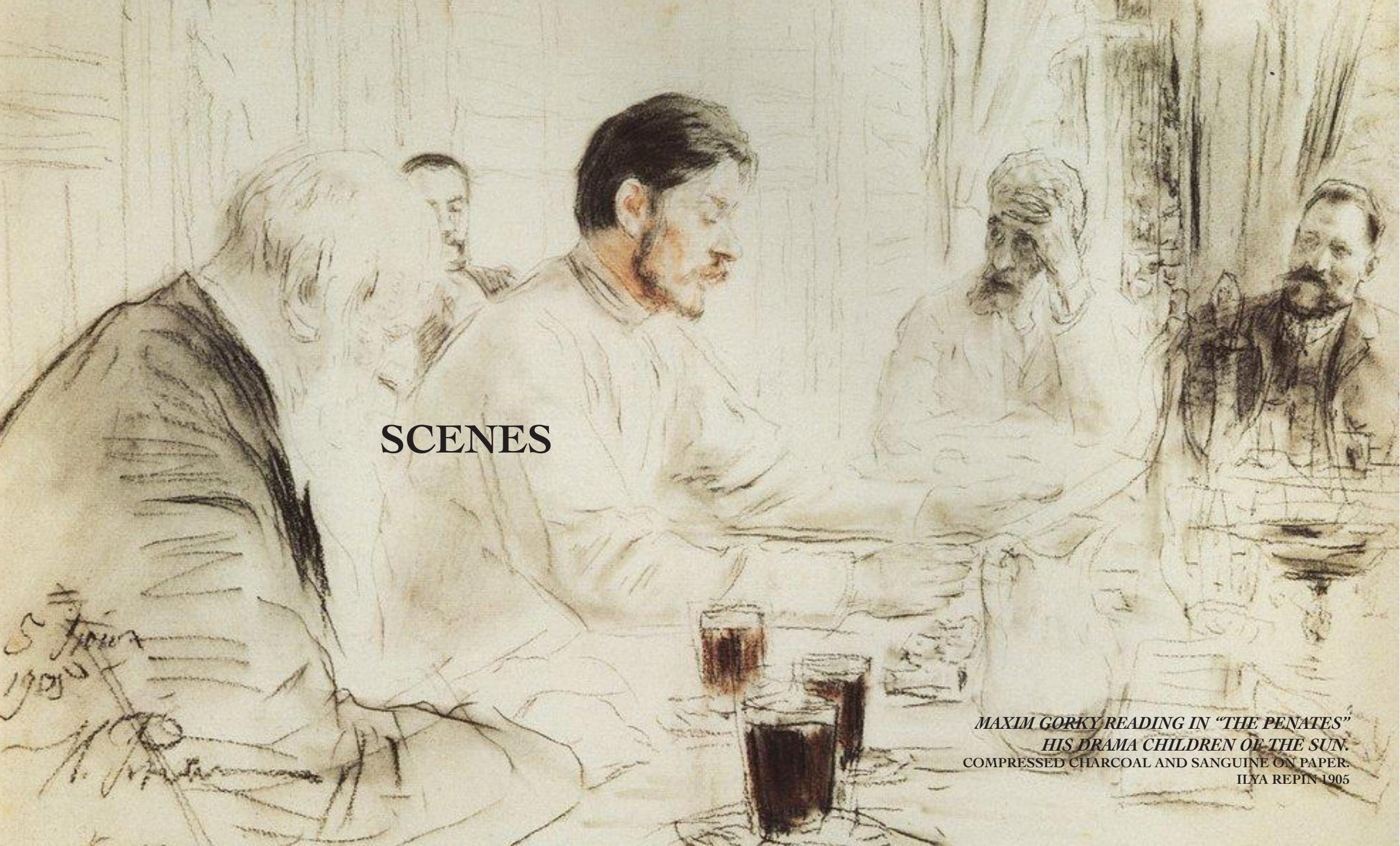


Dr. BORIS CHEPURNOY
A physician, Liza's doctor
and Melaniya's brother



MISHA
Son of a local property manager,
in love with Fima





SCENES

*MAXIM GORKY READING IN "THE PENATES"
HIS DRAMA CHILDREN OF THE SUN.
COMPRESSED CHARCOAL AND SANGUINE ON PAPER.
ILYA REPIN 1905*

**Protasov and Melaniya, in the lab.
In the middle of an intense elucidation**

MELANIYA
Can I see?

PROTASOV
See um?

Melaniya gestures at the microscope

MELANIYA
See your work.

PROTASOV
Oh sure yes? Just. Just come on over.
He shepherds her towards the microscope
Just pop those peepers on the eyepiece—great, and then you
Oh you're doing it.

MELANIYA
I've been looking at a lot of like catalogues and diagrams and things
Is this one of those new Austro-Hungarian ones?

PROTASOV
No um this is one of those—ones that I have.

MELANIYA
Ooooh okay so what am I looking at?

PROTASOV
Well now obviously this isn't going to be quite as exciting to you
But what you're looking at here, the big globby thing
That's a bacterium, singular of bacteria
It's a cholera bacterium, vibrio cholerae
And actually, if we just
If we just adjust this, you can look closer—
He reaches over and around her to adjust the levels of the microscope
They are very close. Protasov sort of behind Melaniya, guiding her.
So that's a blood sample from one of my best breeders
(named him Nikolas, after the Tsar)

MELANIYA
Right (Funny.)

PROTASOV

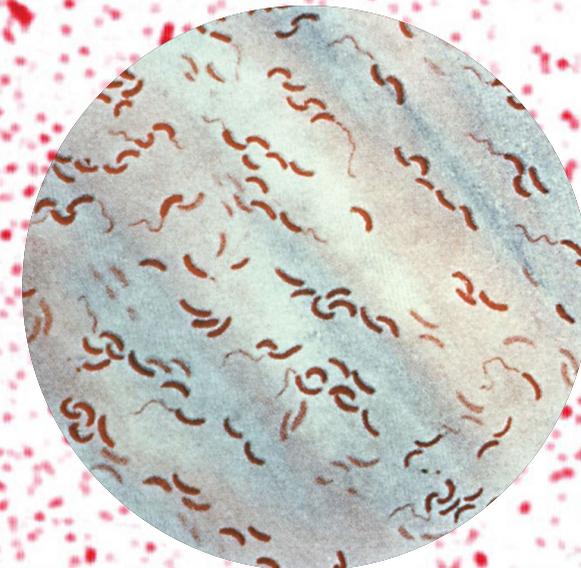
We're living in The Age of Possibility here
And she's still calling me Sir or Your Excellency or whatever
Fima you understand that you and I, we're equals
We're all human, you just work for us

FIMA

Yes . . . Doctor.

PROTASOV

Stellar effort. What's up?



/ 5

Liza and Chepurnoy

CHEPURNOY

Two days ago.

A woman came in with this little schnauzer
Huge gash in its left side from gardening equipment
I told her I don't really do animals anymore
But she was blubbering like a whale
And so I stitched it up, gave it a treat I still had
And she was ecstatic, beaming, glorious
She added a 20% gratuity to the *medical bill*
And then she went out into the street
With the schnauzer of course /
And I was watching through the window
And she turned around to wave at me
And just, wham.

LIZA

Wham?

CHEPURNOY

A grain cart.
Went right over the schnauzer.
Dead in the street.
Isn't that funny?

LIZA

Nooooo?

LIZA

Of Course

LIZA

If you know the dog's going to die someday
Why do you treat it at all?

Pause. Chepurnoy says nothing.

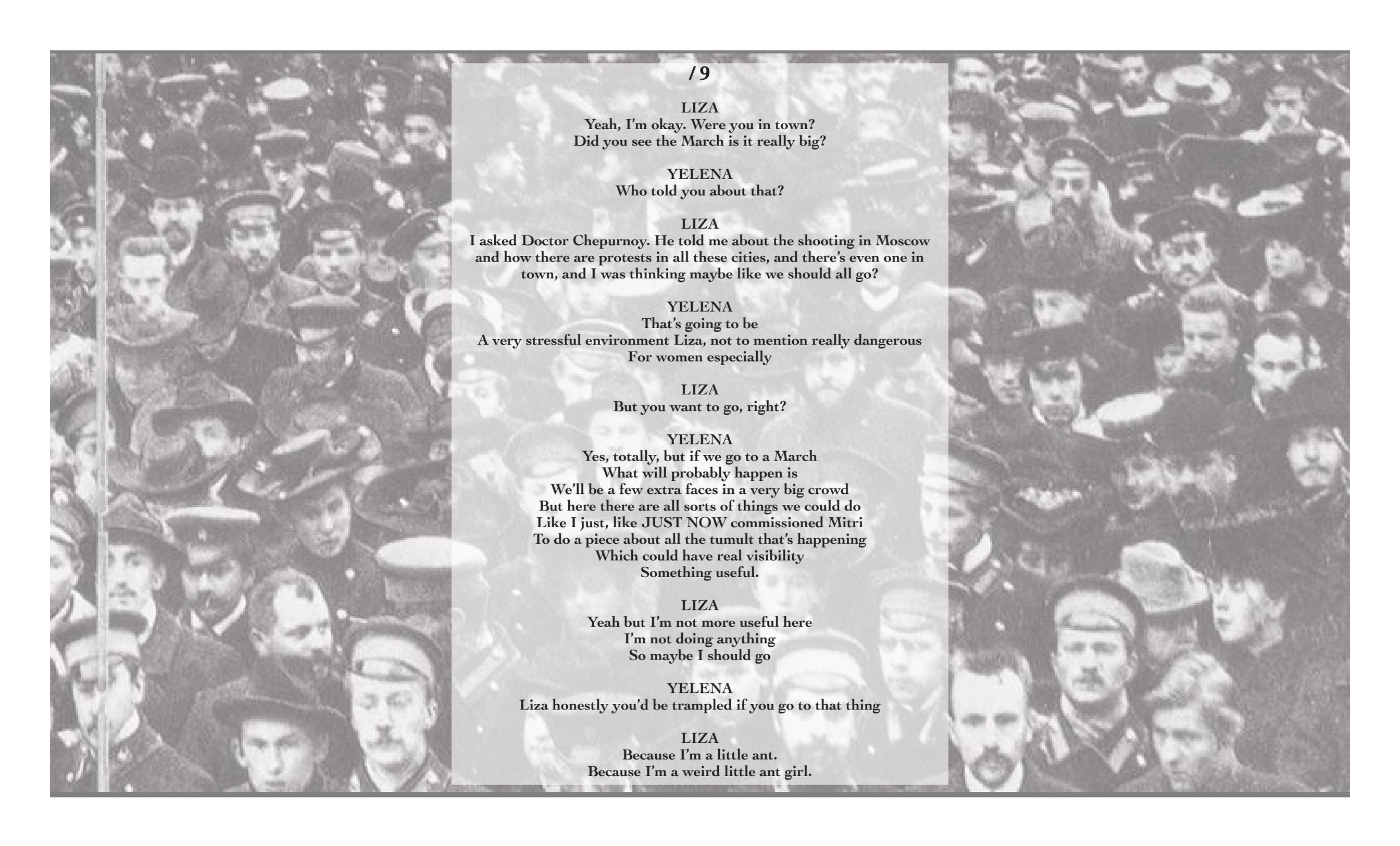
Why do you treat me
If you know I'm going to die someday?
At least people with ulcers
Are maybe gonna get better, right?
Or die sooner.

Pause.

CHEPURNOY

I like you more than them.

*Ilya Repin -
portrait study of a reclining woman*



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LIZA

Yeah, I'm okay. Were you in town?
Did you see the March is it really big?

YELENA

Who told you about that?

LIZA

I asked Doctor Chepurnoy. He told me about the shooting in Moscow
and how there are protests in all these cities, and there's even one in
town, and I was thinking maybe like we should all go?

YELENA

That's going to be
A very stressful environment Liza, not to mention really dangerous
For women especially

LIZA

But you want to go, right?

YELENA

Yes, totally, but if we go to a March
What will probably happen is
We'll be a few extra faces in a very big crowd
But here there are all sorts of things we could do
Like I just, like JUST NOW commissioned Mitri
To do a piece about all the tumult that's happening
Which could have real visibility
Something useful.

LIZA

Yeah but I'm not more useful here
I'm not doing anything
So maybe I should go

YELENA

Liza honestly you'd be trampled if you go to that thing

LIZA

Because I'm a little ant.
Because I'm a weird little ant girl.



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MELANIYA

Maybe it'll go well.
Maybe everyone will just
Magically, get what they want.
And stop complaining about things
they can't change.
Wouldn't that be
So nice?

CHEPURNOY

Since when have things in Russia
been nice.

MELANIYA

Since never but don't be such a poop
about it.
What Pavel discovered, Boris:
Could give people what they want.

MELANIYA

The gene that makes you sad for no reason
When you just wake up in the morning so heavy
Like an anchor dropped out of your back and got stuck
And you can't move—like that.

Pause.

CHEPURNOY

I wouldn't um
want them to take out my sadness, I think.

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MISHA

You hate it, you hate this, Fima please I mean fuck how / much can I

FIMA

I don't hate it.

I told the Doctor about Yegor today and he's gonna do something.

So that's eighty rubles, bed, meals, and they listen to me.

Sorry about your dad.

MISHA

He's past the life expectancy in this town anyway, so

Frankly it's a miracle he hasn't just spontaneously died already

Just to keep the statistics balanced.

FIMA

You're horrible sometimes.

MISHA

This is what he wanted.

To live just longer than his father did

To do nothing great, and nothing terrible,

and be buried in box of wood just nice enough

For the neighbors to say What a lovely coffin wish I could be buried in that

And he'll get that, he'll get all of it.

It's too bad for me that I'd like a little more

I'd like you.

FIMA

Please go home Misha.

Misha cracks a little.

MISHA

Do I get

Fima do I not, can we not, just

He goes to her, for a kiss

She is unresponsive



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LIZA

You're my doctor
You should tell me to get better.
I want to get better.
There are a lot of other people who don't feel human and
I want to be better so I can help them.

CHEPURNOY

You are better.

LIZA

I think I gave him a good hug.
A great hug, if I'm being honest!
I don't have very strong arms but
I could feel him
Getting softer, as I touched him
I thought I was curing him
I thought I was taking away his sadness

After the revolution
After the end of the world
In the New Russia
That's what I'll do
I'll take people's sadness away.
Do you think that's a good idea, Boris?

She gets lost in it

CHEPURNOY

I love you.



Pavel Chbiatiakov, "Jovanniana Sitting at the Window Sill," 1864.

FIMA

I'll marry you.
I want to marry you.

A moment.
Misha laughs.

Why uh, why are you laughing like that

MISHA

That sounded so fake.
Perfectly fake.
Like a knockoff purse or something

FIMA

It wasn't fake.
There's blood in the streets
Russia is going to explode tomorrow

MISHA

It might.

FIMA

And if it does, I want to be with you.
Do you know I save nine of every ten kopeks I get
I don't buy food, I just eat what they leave
Did you know Miss Yelena doesn't like bread crusts
So I've actually managed
To develop a taste for them.
When they do cheese plates
I eat the rind
I don't buy clothes
The last thing I bought, just for me
Was this

She tears off the apron she is wearing
Still stained with blood.

I save nine of every ten kopeks
In a dented, rusted tin
Because someday I was going to be
Not a mutt with crusts and rind and secondhand but
A real person

That's what was supposed to be
I was saving myself for that waiting for **that**

If Russia ends if everything ends
what was I
what the FUCK
was I waiting for
why did I wait, so so so so fucking long my whole life
for **nothing**

Does that does any of that
Seem fake to you?

MISHA

No.

He goes to her
He kisses her
It is a sad, long kiss



FUTURE PLANS

SCENIC MOOD BOARD 1

AN INITIAL SKETCH SHOWING AN INDUSTRIAL BOILER CENTERED ON TOP OF A PRISTINE SHAG CARPET
THE JUXTAPOSITION BETWEEN THE LOUD AND DANGEROUS BOILER AND SOFT TEXTURE SEEMS RIGHT FOR A PLAY WHERE THE MAIN CHARACTERS ARE OBLIVIOUS AND SHELTERED FROM THE TERRORS OUTSIDE THEIR WALLS
THEMES OF LABOR AND REVOLUTION
ARE ENCAPSULATED BY YEGOR CONSTANTLY TRYING TO FIX THE FAMILY BOILER THROUGH THE PLAY. IT SHUDDERS, RATTLES, EMITS STEAM. THE RUMBLING OF DISCONTENT THAT IS AT THE HEART OF THE PLAY.



SCENIC MOOD BOARD 2

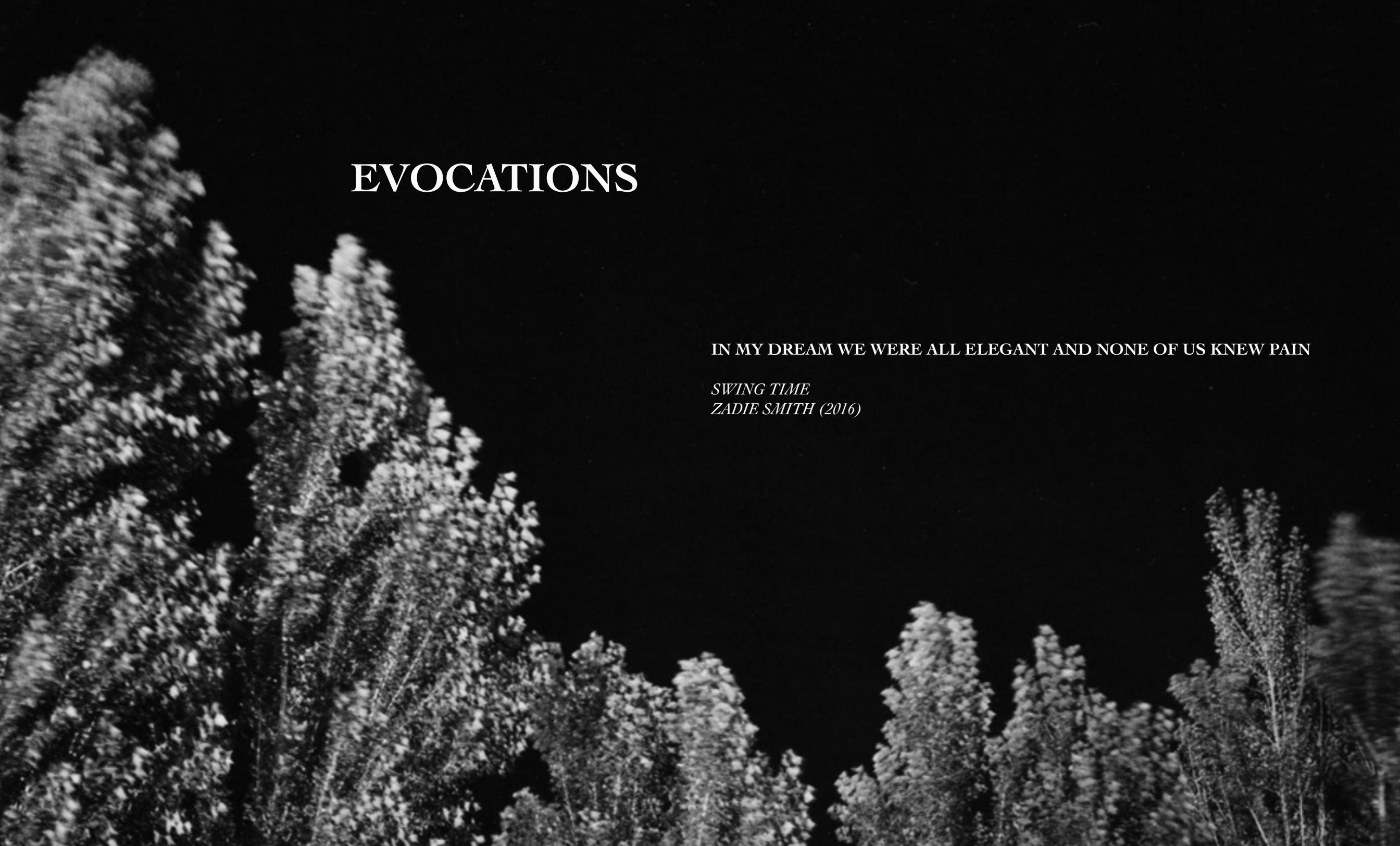
AN INITIAL SKETCH SHOWING THE POTENTIAL SCALE OF THE SPACE.

THE PLAY DEMANDS VARIOUS LOCATIONS WITH SEAMLESS TRANSITIONS AND THE VASTNESS OF THE CONTAINER WILL AID IN CREATING THESE SPACES.

IN THIS PARTICULAR SKETCH, WE ENVISION A WAREHOUSE / BASEMENT SPACE WITH MULTIPLE PILLARS THAT CAN BE USED TO DIFFERENTIATE THE VARIOUS LOCATIONS.

THE INDUSTRIAL ATMOSPHERE ALSO EVOKES THE STRUGGLES OF THE WORKING CLASS AT THAT TIME, AND TO SEE THESE CHARACTERS BEING AMBIVALENT TO THEIR SURROUNDINGS WILL ALSO ADD TO THE PLAY.





EVOCATIONS

IN MY DREAM WE WERE ALL ELEGANT AND NONE OF US KNEW PAIN

SWING TIME
ZADIE SMITH (2016)



FALL OF THE RUSSIAN ARISTOCRACY



MOUNTING DEATHS FROM THE CHOLERA PANDEMIC



STRANGE TIMES....



ISOLATION AND SURVIVAL



THE NEW GENERATION, TRAPPED IN OLD WAYS.





THE UNKNOWN FUTURE AND VAST HOPELESSNESS

