

LALA, MY REDHEAD by *Nellie K. and Deniz Nala*

On St. Todor's day, also known as Horse Easter, the Kalaidzhi Roma celebrate the health of the horse and trade their daughters.

EXCERPTS FROM THE SCRIPT

EXT. ST. TODOR'S FAIR - OUTSIDE THE BRIDES' TENT - CONTINUOUS

...

Vano shoves Lela to the stand in front of them, holding his umbrella over her.

The YOUNGER MAN steps forward and looks at Lela. She looks away. The Others are silently watching.

YOUNGER MAN

Not very polite, eh?

He turns with a smirk to his party.

YOUNGER MAN (CONT'D)

(to Lela)

Say 'hello?'

Lela looks into his eyes with defiance and doesn't respond. The man turns his eyes away under her straightforward stare.

YOUNGER MAN (CONT'D)

Hmm. To hell with your attitude.

Turn around.

Vano pushes her to turn.

She is burning with anger and humiliation.

The OLDER MAN (60) comes up to her and takes her by the chin. He turns her face to one side, then to the other, closely examining it.

Lela looks infuriated, but complies. She doesn't turn away her eyes from the man and keeps looking straight into his with disdain.

OLDER MAN

What an unbridled horse you have, Vano!

(beat)

Mitko likes obedience. We all do, right?

He turns to Lela.

OLDER MAN (CONT'D)

Open your mouth.

Lela pierces him with a cold look of refusal.

Vano, who is behind her all this time, whispers, hissing angrily in her ear.

VANO

Don't you dare do this to me right now!

Open your fucking mouth! If we lose this deal,
we'll all go begging. Think of your sister!

Lela opens her mouth, keeping the look of defiance.

The Older Man looks into her mouth, the Younger Man comes closer to inspect it too.

The Older Man nods approvingly.

...

EXT. VILLAGE - BY LELA'S HOUSE - EARLY MORNING - CONTINUOUS

... He whistles softly. A dog barks, but recognizes Velcho and stops. Lela shows up on the threshold, covered with a blanket.

LELA

Are you crazy? What are you doing here? Go before papa sees you.

VELCHO

Come with me, Lela. We'll leave and never come back here.

LELA

No. I was sold yesterday and you... you left.

INT. BARN - NIGHT - SEVERAL MONTHS LATER

A horse snorts in its stall in a dimly lit barn.

The horse is looking at Donka, who is HEAVILY PREGNANT, and lying on blankets that are thrown on top of hay on the floor in a faraway corner of the barn. It's eerily quiet.

An old MIDWIFE woman is snoring, half-seated, asleep next to Donka.

Donka is in labor. She is drenched in sweat from the pain of contractions. Her teeth are clenched; she bites her lip to not make a sound.

She clenches the blankets and hay in her fists.

She is wearing the bracelet of plastic beads (Dana's gift).

She can barely hold herself back from screaming in pain, but doesn't make a sound.

She looks at the Midwife every now and then- she doesn't want the Midwife to wake up and help her birth the baby.

Donka looks at the horse as if pleading the horse not to make a sound.

The horse looks back at Donka. The horse starts to clatter its front hoof, more alert now.

Donka senses something has changed. Her eyes become alert, then spaced out.

Her body stretches out in convulsion, BLOOD soaking the blanket around her hips.

She moans; a moan of relief. She stops moving.

Her fists unclench, a faint smile on her face and her big blue eyes wide open. Blood continues to flow from her.

The horse whinnies loudly and rears.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - BULGARIA - DAY - (1960'S)

LELA

I don't like different, mama.

ANA

I know, sweetheart. But we are. We are Roma.

(beat)

But back to the story, papa didn't quite like that the old lady gave me so much attention... but he didn't mind it. He just kept saying, "You're a Roma, don't build illusions."

Ana gets emotional and swallows hard.

LELA

What's illusions, mama?

ANA

When we expect something we cannot have.

LELA

Because we are Roma?

ANA

Maybe.

Ana shuffles Lela's hair cheerfully.

ANA (CONT'D)

So, one day, she took me to the theatre. *La Traviata*, by Giuseppe Verdi. The fallen woman.

LELA

Who? The old lady? Did she fall off the horse?

ANA

No, silly! Violetta! The lady in the opera.