

D M I T R I A N A

by Daryl Henry

Fade In:

EXT. WILDERNESS - NORTHERN BRITISH COLUMBIA - DAY

Snow-dusted purple mountains thrust into a cobalt sky. Luxuriant forests, beckoning and austere, stretch unbroken to the northern horizon. Beneath the trees is a road.

DIRT ROAD

Pockmarked by hard winters, no beginning and no end. The road accompanies a fragile copper TELEGRAPH LINE across an emerald plateau. Towering above the road, tall firs scatter autumn sunshine.

IN THE DISTANCE

Somebody approaching, on foot.

CLOSER

It is a YOUNG WOMAN, walking resolutely down the middle of the road, ignoring a slight limp, her footsteps echoing on the crisp, cool gravel.

MOVING WITH HER

She is hauntingly beautiful: untended flaxen hair, vigilant slate-blue eyes, guarded smile. She wears old-world clothing-- a swirling woolen skirt, linen shirt, three patched sweaters, a knitted shawl and ragged shoes of soiled canvas, bound in cloth.

She stops to massage her feet, glances up. Her piercing eyes follow the:

TELEGRAPH LINE - HER POV

The thin copper strand glistens in the sun, drooping from pole to pole, northbound, beckoning. It is the only mark of man or civilization besides the endless road.

THE WOMAN

Silently resumes her trek. The stillness is gradually broken by off-key SINGING, not far away. Alert, she cocks her head. Visible now under the trees ahead is a:

FORD TRUCK, PARKED

A 1925 pickup, in need of paint, swaybacked from hard use. Its bed is weighed down with a heavy spool of copper wire.

(CONTINUED)

Painted on both doors are the words: *Yukon Telegraph Company*.

The SOUND of singing is coming from somewhere else.

THE WOMAN

Approaches, wary, seeing nothing yet.

ATOP A TELEGRAPH POLE

A YOUNG MAN sings the current hit: *I'm Sittin' On Top Of The World*, as he hammers a wooden insulator block into place. Lusty voice, devilish dark eyes, tenacious jaw.

Belted and spurred snugly to the pole, he wears a shapeless fedora, baggy pants stiff with waterproofing wax and no shirt.

YOUNG MAN

(singing)

*I'm sittin' on top o' the world,
just rollin' along, just rollin'
along. I'm quittin' the blues o'
the world, just singin' a song, just
singin' a song...*

THE WOMAN

Sees him now.

THE LINEMAN

His singing stops at the sight of her.

THE WOMAN - HIS POV

She lowers her eyes, continues on.

ALTERNATING

LINEMAN

... Hey.

Her privacy invaded, the woman throws him a frown, moves past in stony silence.

LINEMAN (CONT'D)

Well, excuse me.

THE LINEMAN

Quickly twists a white glass insulator onto the block, takes a turn of glistening copper wire around it then rappels down the pole in two graceful bounds.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - FARTHER AHEAD - DAY

The woman glances back to see the truck catching up, rattling and swaying on the rutted road. She fixes her eyes firmly ahead. The lineman pulls alongside, slows to her pace.

LINEMAN

Good afternoon.

She ignores him, keeps walking. He stays even with her.

LINEMAN (CONT'D)

Name's MacQuire. Alexander. What's yours?

(nothing)

Tell me where you're going. I might give you a lift.

MacQuire doesn't expect anyone so self-possessed to look up out of that shawl. With an accent that sounds like the gravel underfoot:

WOMAN

Novobirosk.

MACQUIRE

-- Huh?

WOMAN

No-vo-bir-osk.

MACQUIRE

(shaking his head)

You gotta be lost. There's no such place around here.

WOMAN

Not here. Small town near Moscow.

MACQUIRE

Moscow, *Russia*?

(scoffing)

Lady, you can't get to Russia from here.

She lifts her chin toward his worn-out truck, slight grin.

WOMAN

Not in that.

MacQuire, laughing alone, trails off. She enjoys his laugh, but turns away, keeps walking. He stays even with her.