

life and fate

**a radio drama series
adapted for BBC Radio 4
from the novel by Vasili Grossman
by Jonathan Myerson**

broadcast September 2011

about the research process and content:

This adaptation of *Life and Fate* was commissioned by BBC for broadcast in 2011. On a 50-50 basis, I worked to adapt it with one other dramatist, Mike Walker. The original novel is not written to a standard Dickensian or even Tolstoyan format. We therefore decided to break the narrative into what we called 'Chekhovian short stories'. So the script which follows features 'plays' which cumulatively tell the story by taking discrete groups of characters and relating the narrative only as it concerns them. Mike Walker and I then divided the plays between us – what follows is only the episodes which wrote alone.

The critical research problem was that the novel was written (though never published) for a Russian readership in the 1960s which would have known considerably more about the Great Patriotic War than a Western audience in 2011. This necessitated considerable background research into the Battle of Stalingrad, the NKVD, the Lubyanka and daily life during wartime Russia. This research was a vital part of fleshing out the story and building the necessary depth into the scenes.

This prompted our decision to pepper the adaptation with 'mockumentary'-style interviews – as though to Grossman himself, for example. This explains the scenes in the script which are described only as 'Interview' and feature only bullet points of information: to give the actor enough information to sound spontaneous, unscripted and as real as possible.

Above all, the aim of the adaptation was bring to life a novel which was virtually unknown to British readership at the time.

The adaptation was broadcast in September 2011, on BBC Radio 4, spread across a single week – thus making use of the range of different length drama slots –15, 45 and 60 minutes – that happen to exist in the schedule.

“we were lovers once”

episode by jonathan myerson

cast

in Stalingrad:

NIKOLAI KRYMOV
SERYOZHA SHAPOSHNIKOV
RODIMTSEV, General
BYEROZKIN, Major
VAVILOV, staff officer
BELSKY, staff officer
GLUSHKOV, Byerozkin’s orderly
MOVSHOVICH, sapper officer
PODCHUFAROV, infantry officer
KATYA, radio operator

in Kuibyshev:

ZHENYA SHAPOSHNIKOVA
JENNI, former governess
GLAFIRA, house resident
DRAGIN, house resident
GRISHIN, police inspector
RIZIN, office manager
LIMONOV, poet

and

SCHUBERT, Jenni’s tabby cat

**the play takes place entirely in Kuibyshev (aka Samara) and Stalingrad,
during September 1942**

SCENE 1. KUIBYSHEV: A FORMER MERCHANT'S HOUSE.
STAIRCASE.

THE BUILDING HAS BEEN BRUTALLY SUBDIVIDED – EACH ROOM NOW HOUSING A FAMILY OR MORE.

JENNI IS LEADING ZHENYA UP THE STAIRS AND THROUGH THE WARREN OF ROOMS. JENNI HAS NEVER LOST HER GERMAN ACCENT, LET ALONE LEARNED PERFECT RUSSIAN (AKA ENGLISH).

JENNI Come on, Zhenechka, here along.

ZHENYA Are you really sure about this?

JENNI Not to be stupid. Plenty much room here for everyone.

ZHENYA But you hardly –

JENNI The kitchen in there. Ceiling is very much full of soot. No longer we use the stove, but plenty of oil fire.

ZHENYA That'll be fine.

JENNI And only the small walk from new working, yes?

ZHENYA The office is just - yes.

JENNI You have the residence permit?

ZHENYA Not yet, any day.

JENNI No matter, you make to share my rations. I am so happy you come to live here.

ZHENYA I'll eat at the canteen. I can fill up once a - [*day*]

JENNI Here, you meet Comrade Glafira. She takecare the building.

GLAFIRA (LOWER MIDDLE CLASS MADE GOOD) You moving in?
Where?

JENNI Mademoiselle Shaposhnikova will be sharing my living space.

GLAFIRA Residence Permit?

ZHENYA I am waiting for it to be issued.

GLAFIRA Our common spaces are under severe strain. Half the government departments are in Kuibyshev now.

ZHENYA That's why I'm -

JENNI She bring the permit tomorrow.

ZHENYA I'm not sure I - [*can get it that soon*]

GLAFIRA (GOING) You know where to find me, Comrade.

GLAFIRA'S HEELS CLICK OFF DOWN THE HALL.

JENNI She is very worry about us all.

ZHENYA I don't think my permit will actually – I don't want you to get into –

JENNI (ONLY SEMI-WHISPERING AS THEY NOW WALK ON PAST THE ROOMS) In there is family of one dockman – but he not here, he fighting, his family only.

ZHENYA (TENTATIVE, TO THE FACES IN THERE) Hello.

JENNI In library is one gynaecologist. He share with one man of munition factory, behind green blanket. Next, behind screen is woman with child, the cashier in the shop.

ZHENYA (TO EACH) Sorry to disturb you.

JENNI Husband hairdresser – but he killed in battle. (NEXT:) Behind chimney breast, is Post Office manager.

ZHENYA I'm just moving in with -

JENNI (SEMI-WHISPERED) Stay away from him. Every village have one madman. He has the puppy eyes but he is the madman.

DRAGIN (STANDING THERE) She's right.

JENNI (OLD ENEMY) And this is Comrade Dragin.

DRAGIN You seen Comrade Glafira about this?

JENNI Two beds in my room. Wrong if only one person in two-bed bedroom.

DRAGIN Surprised you didn't invite your other friend to stay.

JENNI (BAFFLED) My other friend?

DRAGIN Adolf.

JENNI (IMMEDIATE) Hitler is never my friend. I am anti-Fascist.

DRAGIN Still, he's one of yours.

JENNI He is cannibal.

DRAGIN (TO ZHENYA) Sold yourself to the Germans then, have you, comrade?

ZHENYA Comrade Ghenrikhovna was my – was with my family, when I was young.

DRAGIN She's told us all about her governessing days, no need to be coy about your posh past, comrade.

ZHENYA She has invited me to share her living space.

DRAGIN (STROLLING OFF) Sold yourself to the Fascists, for a bed.

JENNI Ignore him. Always he make noise. (AS SHE DRAWS BACK A CURTAIN) And here is home.

ZHENYA CANNOT HOLD IN A DISAPPOINTED NOISE AT THE SMALLNESS.

ZHENYA Jenni, I'll find somewhere of my own, really soon.

JENNI All day I am out, to care after my old lady – sometimes, I stay all the night, when lady son go out on the house calls, hardly you will know I am here.

ZHENYA It's me who should be – I'll make sure I stay late at work.

JENNI And leave me lonely? Sit down. Tell me about your brother, your sisters? How is Lyudmila and Marusya, my little Marusya?

ZHENYA You don't know?

JENNI Please don't.

ZHENYA Her barge was hit, getting out of Stalingrad. My sister drowned.

JENNI My God. (THE TEARS) Marusya, Marusychka.

ZHENYA TAKES HOLD OF HER, HUGS HER, AS SHE WEEPS

JENNI My little, little Marusychka. She's truly gone?

ZHENYA She's gone. She's gone.

AND MIX TO:

SCENE 2.INTERVIEW.

My name is Leonid Rizin. I was a Lieutenant-Colonel, honorary rank, air force, in the Design Department.

- Kuibyshev, it's on the Volga, about nine hundred kilometres east of Moscow.
- All the ministries, commissariats, secretariats evacuated from Moscow.
- It was a town of half a million. In the space of a week, suddenly over a million people living there.
- Never thought the Germans could get that close to Moscow. They invaded on 22nd June 1941 – by then no-one except Stalin was surprised. By October '41, Moscow was panicking. Everything was packed up, shipped out. There were bonfires all over the city as departments burned what couldn't be taken.
- Everyone had to cram into little rooms and hotels.
- It was called Samara before the Civil War.
- Even the Bolshoi was sent out to us. International news agencies. Molotov, Mikhailov, Khrushchev.
- Embassies – you could see the wife of the British ambassador eating supper in a hotel restaurant – had to sue a meal-coupon like all of us – saw her wrap the bread and sugar-lumps in newspaper, take them up to her room.
- Except now we all had to push through the crowds of wounded at the market, make do with home-grown tobacco, queue for the baths; a glass of home-distilled vodka and a ration of black bread.
- Seven hundred kilometres to the south, Stalingrad was surrounded. If it fell, Germany would cut the Volga in two and Russia was finished.

SCENE 3. STALINGRAD: RODIMTSEV'S COMMAND POST.

A CONSTANT BACKDROP OF MACHINE-GUN FIRE, MORTARS, HAND-GRENADES, LONG-RANGE ARTILLERY, KATYUSHA ROCKETS AND SINGLE SHOTS.

DURING WHICH KRYMOV RUNS UP AND INTO THE ENTRANCE TO COMMAND POST. HE WALKS INTO RODIMTSEV'S BUNKER, WHICH IS A HUGE, CONCRETE CONDUIT – A GIANT WATER PIPE. IT ECHOES.

KRYMOV General Rodimtsev?

VAVILOV Over there.

THERE ARE MAYBE THIRTY PEOPLE IN THE SPACE: TYPING, ON RADIOS, DISCUSSING THINGS. RODIMTSEV STANDS IN THE CENTRE, HIS STAFF OFFICERS ROUND HIM.

KRYMOV STRIDES ACROSS AND COMES TO ATTENTION

KRYMOV Comrade General. Political Lecturer Krymov reporting.

BELSKY I was just thinking, what we really need is a good lecture.

KRYMOV (POLITELY REPEATING) Staff Lecturer Krymov, reporting, sir.

RODIMTSEV (NOTICING HIS GREEN STRIPES) You're a Battalion Commissar.

KRYMOV (HUMILIATION) On lecture and morale duties at present.

VAVILOV (APPROACHING) Oy Belsky, remember the last one they sent us? Not a hair on his head to be touched.

KRYMOV I have been instructed to – the dispute between the Colonel and Commissar in the 39th –

RODIMTSEV That's settled.

KRYMOV We rarely find that these matters are satisfactorily resolved without –

RODIMTSEV Half-tonner on the command post. Lost eighteen officers.

BELSKY That's sixteen good men plus those two.

KRYMOV (CHASTENED) Comrade.

VAVILOV Will there be a lecture tonight? Comrade Lecturer?

KRYMOV I had presumed that my duties included –

BELSKY Can you do us one about the second front, comrade?

KRYMOV Sorry?

VAVILOV When are the Allies going to shift their arses and open a second front?

RODIMTSEV Vavilov, Belsky, leave him alone now. There's only one question: how the hell, how the bloody hell am I supposed to launch a counter-offensive out of this pipe?

KRYMOV I noticed – all the bunkers in the hillside as I crossed over. It's like a battleship.

VAVILOV We don't build for posterity, comrade.

BELSKY We just want to see the sun come up tomorrow.

VAVILOV Supper tonight's good enough for me.

BELSKY It's the distance to the latrine, that's the only thing. Did you hear about that Staff Officer over at Chuikov's, he bursts back in, shouting "Made it, finally had a good long, slow, slippery shit!" and there's the doctor he's in love with, standing right there, doing the general's eczema.

RODIMTSEV Batyuk, you seen his bunker – that oak door? It's like the Senate.

BELSKY Seen Podchufarov's? He's got a cape for a door – what? to keep out flies?

VAVILOV (EXPLAINING HIS CARELESSNESS) I heard his wife left him just before the war.

RODIMTSEV (KICKING AT A PUDDLE) At least they haven't got water running through theirs.

BUT THIS IS INTERRUPTED BY AN OFFICER BURSTING INTO THE COMMAND POST, BREATHLESS

OFFICER Comrade General.

RODIMTSEV Report.

OFFICER We're – they've pushed me right back. They're into the ravine.

RODIMTSEV (MAP) Show me.

OFFICER Here. Came through Academy Square, over the railway lines.

RODIMTSEV (OVER THIS, IT'S IRRELEVANT) Hold them back.

OFFICER They're two, three hundred metres from the Volga, General. You have to allow me reinforcements.

A MOMENT'S SILENCE.
THEN, QUIETLY, ALMOST SADLY:

RODIMTSEV There are no reserves, Captain.

OFFICER (*Even*) Twenty men.

VAVILOV There is no-one. (MAYBE) If tonight's barges have a good crossing.

KRYMOV Let me.

VAVILOV (MOCKING) Comrade Lecturer! Such bravery.

KRYMOV For your information, I have also served as Battalion Commissar. I fought in the Civil War and eleven months ago,

I personally led two hundred men out of encirclement south of Kiev. Comrade.

- VAVILOV Somebody get Tolstoy, we need you written up.
- RODIMTSEV Off you go, Captain, halt the enemy. Yourselves. At whatever cost.
- BELSKY If they reach the landing stage, our flank is totally exposed.
- OFFICER (IT'S A DEATH SENTENCE) At whatever cost.
- RODIMTSEV Good man.
- THE OFFICER SALUTES AND GOES.
- RODIMTSEV Want to fight, do you, Comrade Lecturer?
- KRYMOV (YES!) If there's a place for me.
- VAVILOV Unhappy love affair?
- KRYMOV (TOO FAST) What makes you think that?
- BELSKY (DELIGHTED) That's a Yes!
- RODIMTSEV (TO BELSKY, GENTLE AUTHORITY) That's enough, Comrade. (TO KRYMOV, MILDLY BAFFLED) What you said – you're currently on lecture duties?
- KRYMOV Comrade General.
- RODIMTSEV Unfortunately I can't send a political forward without authorisation.
- VAVILOV Got one of Uncle Joe's favourites here, have we?
- KRYMOV (TURNING ON VAVILOV) Comrade, I –
- RODIMTSEV (TELL YOU WHAT) I'll send you over to Major Byerozkin – he's always getting into trouble without being ordered to. How does that sound?

KRYMOV Comrade General.

RODIMTSEV Right, back to work everyone, we need see how we can support these poor buggers. Come on. I need ideas. Can we take any men from the Tractor Factory, run them round the railway lines?

FADE THIS OUT TO:

SCENE 4. INTERVIEW

My name is Vyacheslav Alexandrovich Belsky. At that time I was serving as a Staff Officer at 13th Guards Divisional HQ.

- By mid-September 1942, we were barely hanging onto the city.
- Stalingrad – it’s a long thin city along the west bank of the Volga. Factories, power station, workers’ homes. Beautiful city before – before the Luftwaffe dropped a thousand tons of bombs on it. 23rd August. Forty thousand people killed that day.
- Whole streets reduced to just chimneys, a line of chimneys like lampposts, everything else piles of bricks.
- It must have looked like the right tactic. But it changed the city, made it perfect for us.
- Fought for every house, every storey of every house. We could all recite Order 227: Not One Step Back.
- Chuikov had been given command, he told all our men to get within fifty metres of the enemy – too close for the German planes to operate, you see.
- Every night, we went out, threw grenades, planted mines, kept the Fritzies on edge.
- Thing is, if the Germans got to the river – the battle was lost. All reinforcements came by barge over the Volga, from the east bank – under constant bombardment, dive bombers, artillery. Thirteen hundred metres wide, nothing you could do except hope.
- Men jumped overboard. NKVD shot them.
- Then straight into the battle, hold this house, this street. Machine guns, mortars, flame-throwers.
- Retreat was impossible. “No land for us over the Volga.”
- Life expectancy of an infantryman, about nine days. A sapper, less.

SCENE 5. KUIBYSHEV: POLICE STATION: PASSPORT SECTION:
SITTING IN THE QUEUE.

A BARE CORRIDOR
PEOPLE ARE TALKING, BUT REALLY QUIETLY:

ZHENYA My boss goes on every day about how he's taking such a risk, using someone without a Certified Kuibyshev Residence Permit.

QUEUER It's my sister, she's paralysed. Who else is she going to live with? She had to come here.

ZHENYA I've been here three weeks already. Almost. I can't pretend I was getting round to it.

OVER THIS, FROM THE END OF THE HALL:

GRISHIN (NEXT!) Y.N.Shaposhnikova.

ZHENYA Oh dear.

QUEUER Go on, love. Inspector'll sort it for you. Go on.

ZHENYA WALKS ALONG THE CORRIDOR AND ENTERS THE OFFICE.
SHE SHUTS THE DOOR BEHIND HER.
IT IS COLD AND ANTISEPTIC, STILL.

ZHENYA My papers. (SHE LAYS THEM ON THE DESK)

GRISHIN Sit there.

ZHENYA SITS

GRISHIN (FLIPPING THROUGH PAPERS) What can I do for you?

ZHENYA Comrade Grishin, please, I beg you to understand – all this time, I have had no ration card.

GRISHIN (MATTER-OF-FACT) Your residence application has been refused.

ZHENYA Comrade, please, think, do you know Shaposhnikov Street, by the Market Square?

GRISHIN Mmmm.

ZHENYA It's named after my father, a hero of the revolution, right here.

GRISHIN Mmmm.

ZHENYA I work in a military establishment. I am a qualified draughtsman.

GRISHIN (SOFTENING) Mmmm. You need a statement on your behalf. Without that, I am powerless.

ZHENYA It's military aircraft design.

GRISHIN Not clear from the documents. Alright? Get me an official statement. Understand?

SMASH CUT TO:

THE DESIGN OFFICE: BUSTLING, BUSY, NOISY

ZHENYA Comrade, it's simple, I only need an official letter saying that this office falls under the People's Commissariat for Defence Industries.

RIZIN This is idiotic.

ZHENYA Just write it out for me. I'll take it back to the police station this evening.

RIZIN You're indispensable to us here.

ZHENYA Thank you, comrade.

RIZIN So you need to get the police to send me a request. Alright? Without that, I can't write any letter. Can you just do that?

SMASH CUT BACK TO GRISHIN'S OFFICE AT THE POLICE STATION:

ZHENYA So if you just request the document, he'll be quite happy to furnish you with the paperwork.

GRISHIN Mmmm.

ZHENYA Is that....yes?

GRISHIN I have no intention of sending any such request.

ZHENYA Sorry?

GRISHIN I am not empowered to send any request of that nature.

ZHENYA But –

GRISHIN Absolutely not.

SMASH CUT BACK TO:

RIZIN Alright, yes, alright, yes, alright, I do understand his position. Yes.

ZHENYA It's just a piece of paper which says what we do in this office.

RIZIN I know! Alright, get him to ring me. He can ask me for the document over the telephone.

ZHENYA Do you think – ?

RIZIN Ask him to ring me, please, Comrade. Alright?

SMASH CUT BACK TO:

ZHENYA But Comrade Rizin will write it out beginning, you know “In answer to your telephone inquiry of such and such a day and blah-blah-blah.”

GRISHIN Mmmmm.

ZHENYA So I've written it all here. (PAPER) His name and rank and that's his number and also, you know, just in case, he takes his lunch from one till two.

GRISHIN Why are you telling me this?

ZHENYA So you can ring him. Ask him to –

GRISHIN I have no intention of ringing anyone.

ZHENYA Why not?

GRISHIN It's not my responsibility.

ZHENYA But Comrade Rizin, he says that unless he receives a request, even over the phone, he is not permitted to write the letter.

GRISHIN Then he most certainly shouldn't write one.

ZHENYA So what do I do?

GRISHIN Mmmmm.

ZHENYA Comrade, look at me.

GRISHIN Why would I do that?

ZHENYA (TEARING) I am a woman, alone in this city.

GRISHIN SAYS NOTHING, NOT EVEN 'MMMM'

ZHENYA (STANDING) Thank you, comrade.

CUT TO:

SCENE 6. KUIBYSHEV: ZHENYA AND JENNI'S ROOM. EVENING.

THEY ARE EATING. THIN SOUP.

JENNI Forget him. Policemen – not even real man.

ZHENYA Wish I bloody could. (WHEN JENNI GIVES A STARTLED NOISE) Sorry. He just – how am I supposed to eat if they won't even –

JENNI Your new Colonel, liebchen. Never you talk about him. You have not told me even what regiment he lives in.

ZHENYA Tanks. He's a tank commander.

JENNI Must be very stuffy.

ZHENYA He's not. (DEFENSIVE) He's really very –

JENNI Inside, all shut inside one of those tanks, all breathing same stuffy air.

ZHENYA Ah.

JENNI One of my boys once got a terrible case of whooping cough after he locked himself up inside a – [*wardrobe*]

ZHENYA That's the least of their worries.

JENNI You must miss him especially. Always you were the one who was worrying – chewing your little plaits.

ZHENYA No, no, no, that's not - I feel free. I have never felt so light. That's the thing, I'm free of it all, I am totally alone.

JENNI You have me.

ZHENYA I mean the people asking something from me. It's a liberation. None of my sisters, no Krymov –

JENNI But him you mention again. Always the man Krymov. To him you were not even proper married.

ZHENYA I'm just so glad he's not here, pestering me.

THEN, EXPLAINING TOO MUCH:

ZHENYA That's all I mean. I'm released. It's a release.

JENNI Sorry, many times I say the wrong thing. (THEN SUDDENLY JUMPING UP) Schubert, Schubert, my little pumpkin. (STOPPING HERSELF) May I to open the window?

ZHENYA It's your room.

JENNI We share the room. (AS SHE OPENS THE CASEMENT) Come in, Little Schubinka.

SHE PULLS THE PURRING CAT INTO THE ROOM AND ON HER LAP.

JENNI (TO SCHUBERT) Look, look, it's Zhenechka. Yes, she lives here now, you know that.

ZHENYA He's still not used to me.

JENNI Here, little Schubie, I save you this.

ZHENYA That's herring!

JENNI He loves it so. (THE CAT IS PURRING MANIACALLY)

ZHENYA Don't let Comrade Glafira see, she'll have you for undermining the war effort.

JENNI Schubie is fine anti-fascist. He fight the invader mice all along the road. He bring them, show me dead fascist mice. Don't you, you little frontovik?

CUT TO:

SCENE 7. STALINGRAD: BYEROZKIN'S BUNKER. 6AM.

GUNFIRE ACROSS THE CITY.
HIS ORDERLY IS WAKING HIM.

GLUSHKOV (AN ORDERLY, OF THE WATER) Nice and cold, just how you like it, Comrade Major.

BYEROZKIN Very funny.

GLUSHKOV Barber's outside, got a new razor, says Major Byerozkin's got to be first up - if you wants a shave?

BYEROZKIN Comrade Lecturer can go first.

KRYMOV (ALSO WAKING UP) Thank you, no.

BYEROZKIN SETS ABOUT WASHING HIMSELF. AS:

BYEROZKIN It's probably already snowing in the Ural Mountains.

GLUSHKOV Got to be.

BYEROZKIN (TO KRYMOV) That's where my wife and daughter are. Still haven't heard from them.

KRYMOV Would you like me to speak to someone back at - ?

BYEROZKIN Overnight report, please, Comrade Orderly.

GLUSHKOV Shell on the kitchen block, killed the storeman. Chief of Staff, Second Battalion, on his way for a slash, splinter in the shoulder. And the sappers caught a five kilo pike – stunned by a grenade.

BYEROZKIN Five kilo?

GLUSHKOV Maybe six.

BYEROZKIN And?

GLUSHKOV Gave it to young Captain Movshovich.

BYEROZKIN Then I think we should tour the lines, what do you say, Comrade Lecturer?

KRYMOV Those are my orders, review dispositions, fortify Bolshevik morale.

BYEROZKIN Tell the Chief of Staff what we're doing. Come on, Comrade.

KRYMOV AND BYEROZKIN STEP OUT ONTO THE SLOPE.

BYEROZKIN Looks much the same, wouldn't you say?

KRYMOV I don't know how you tell.

BYEROZKIN What?

KRYMOV Which of the houses are our men, which contain Fascists.

BYEROZKIN (JOKEY) Can't you smell the schnapps, the speck?

BUT THEY ARE INTERRUPTED BY THE WHINE OF AN INCOMING MORTAR.
THEN ANOTHER. THEY EXPLODE. A RAINFALL OF DUST.

BYEROZKIN (UTTERLY UNTROUBLED) Come on then.

THEY STEP DOWN THE SCREE – IT IS ARDUOUS, LITTERED.
DURING WHICH:

BYEROZKIN What is it about General Rodimtsev and the newspapers? They always write about him – you'd think he was defending Stalingrad all on his own.

KRYMOV I'm sure you will be –

BYEROZKIN Do you know how many times we've lost and retaken this hill?

KRYMOV WAITS FOR HIM TO TELL HIM

BYEROZKIN I don't know. That's how many times. Germans take it. We take it back. We won't let them keep it. Right, you have to watch it along here. Once they've had their breakfast, they'll shoot at anything. They don't have to save ammunition. Stop!

KRYMOV STOPS

BYEROZKIN Their snipers love this gap – you go first.

KRYMOV (NO, YOU – IT'S SAFER TO GO FIRST) Major, I have been in combat.

BYEROZKIN You're Army Political. Go on, before he's ready.

KRYMOV If you're ordering me.

BYEROZKIN You're heading for that corner. See the Queue Here sign?

KRYMOV TAKES A BIG BREATH IN AND SPEEDS OFF ACROSS THE SCREE. RUNNING HARD [WE GO WITH HIM].
AND JUST AS HE GETS TO THE CORNER, AN EXPLOSIVE BULLET SLAMS INTO THE BRICKWORK BEHIND HIS HEAD.
KRYMOV BREATHES HEAVILY.

BYEROZKIN (SHOUTING OVER FROM A DISTANCE) Start queuing then. I'll have a currant bun.

AND THEN HE SETS OFF.
THERE IS A HAIL OF MACHINE GUN FIRE, SKITTERING UP THE DIRT.
BYEROZKIN SLAMS INTO THE WALL ALONGSIDE KRYMOV.

BYEROZKIN I banked on him being pissed off after you got through, stopping for a cigarette. Bugger clearly doesn't smoke.

ONE MORE BREATH IN AND THEN THEY SET OFF

BYEROZKIN Look. The Health Fanatic clipped the heel of my boot.

KRYMOV You're a lucky man.

BYEROZKIN Right. (LEADING THE WAY) Cellar's over there. Steps behind that bit of corrugated.

THEY GO ACROSS AND DOWN STEPS INTO CELLAR, WHERE THERE IS MUSIC ('CHINESE SERENADE') PLAYING ON A WIND-UP GRAMOPHONE. AS THEY CLIMB DOWN

BYEROZKIN Got my sapper company nicely hidden down here. Should soon be able to smell that fish.

FROM INSIDE THE BUNKER, AS THEY ENTER:

PODCHUFAROV If there's one thing that pisses me off, 'swhen they water it down. 'Drather go sober.

AS BYEROZKIN AND KRYMOV WALK INTO THE ROOM, THE TWO OFFICERS JUMP TO ATTENTION AND ORDERLIES MOVE TO (A) TURN OFF THE RECORD AND (B) HIDE THE PIKE. THE TURNTABLE CONTINUES REVOLVING (UNTIL IT WINDS DOWN).

ALL Comrade Major.

BYEROZKIN At ease. Sit down, carry on. This is Staff Lecturer Krymov, from Political.

MOVSHOVICH Comrade.

BYEROZKIN Don't look so sad. He's here to lift morale.

KRYMOV Don't worry, no lectures.

BYEROZKIN So show me this pike, then, whole division's talking about it.

MOVSHOVICH (REGRET) The fish, please, Comrade Cook.

COOK Captain here wanted it stuffed, kosher style. I've got pepper, I've got two bay leaves, except now I've got to find him horseradish.

BYEROZKIN Had it like that once, in Bobruysk. To be honest, didn't think much of it.

COOK Me neither. But you know these sappers.

BYEROZKIN Put it away then.

MOVSHOVICH (SURPRISE) Really?

BYEROZKIN You caught it, Movshovich, you eat it.

KRYMOV (BUSINESS) What's to report, Captain? Overnight?

PODCHUFAROV German attack but we -

KRYMOV Fascist attack.

PODCHUFAROV Yes. Beat them back. Then a shell blew out the slope, got myself buried up to here (LIPS).

COOK I had to dig him out.

MOVSHOVICH We laid mines, Comrade Major. Chess-board, along that road out there. Here. (PAPER) Ready for if they bring up tanks.

BYEROZKIN I'll take that as a souvenir.

MOVSHOVICH Major.

BYEROZKIN TURNS TO GO AND THEN STOPS.

BYEROZKIN Division have been on to me. The Germans are withdrawing forces from round the Red October and concentrating them against us here.

PODCHUFAROV We can tell.

BYEROZKIN A large number of tanks. Tigers. Do you understand?

MOVSHOVICH Won't let you down.

BYEROZKIN Better have a look at your lines then, Podchufarov.

PODCHUFAROV Comrade Major.

PODCHUFAROV GRABS HIS JACKET AND THE THREE OF THEM WALK BACK UP THE STAIRS. DURING WHICH:

BYEROZKIN Do you know, I still haven't heard from my wife. It's weeks.

PODCHUFAROV I'm sure they're safe.

BYEROZKIN All I know is she and my daughter were heading for the Urals.

PODCHUFAROV (TO BYEROZKIN) This is our rear. (BENDING, POINTING) Wounded down there, in the basement.

BYEROZKIN (I) See them.

PODCHUFAROV Waiting for evacuation. Front line's up here.

BYEROZKIN Let's go.

THEY WALK OVER RUBBLE AND CARTRIDGE CASES. AND INTO THE SHATTERED LOWER FLOOR OF A BUILDING. DURING:

PODCHUFAROV Germans took that ruin over there, last night. It's a sod. My whole left flank's exposed now.

BYEROZKIN We'll have to do something about that.

PODCHUFAROV And a softening-up attack on Building 6/1¹. Bang on nine o'clock.

KRYMOV Which one?

PODCHUFAROV (POINTING) That one, the apartment block. Used to be – now its four storeys of holes.

BYEROZKIN (TAKING IT IN) Good defensive position, good gun

¹ pronounced 'six-point-one' [дом номер шесть дробь один]

emplacements.

PODCHUFAROV They've taken out every other house in the street.

BYEROZKIN Teutonic thoroughness.

PODCHUFAROV 6/1's got no hidden approaches – not any more – and good thick walls. Fritzie's tried everything – mortars, torpedo bombs, flamethrowers. So every morning, our boys come back out the cellar and set their machine guns up again.

KRYMOV Have you contact?

PODCHUFAROV Telephone lines keep getting blown.

BYEROZKIN Didn't I ask for a radio operator?

PODCHUFAROV She's here. (CALLING HER) Vengrova!

KATYA COMES UP.

BYEROZKIN You're going in there for us?

KATYA If that's orders, Comrade Major.

BYEROZKIN What's your name?

KATYA Katya. Sorry, Operator First Class Katya Vengrova.

BYEROZKIN They'll get you through tonight. (TO PODCHUFAROV)
Tunnels still open?

PODCHUFAROV They're re-blasting today. Or she can go overground.

BYEROZKIN Be careful, alright?

SOLDIER Down! Down!

THE WHINE APPROACHES WITH TERRIFYING SPEED, FOLLOWED BY
THUNDEROUS EXPLOSIONS
EVERYONE – EXCEPT BYEROZKIN – HAS DROPPED TO THE FLOOR

THEY GET UP AND BRUSH THEMSELVES DOWN.

BYEROZKIN (TO KATYA) Here, my dear, let me help you.

KATYA I'm alright. (GOING) I'll just – I'll check my equipment.

KRYMOV You really ought to take cover.

BYEROZKIN Without quiet in your soul, comrade, you won't last long – however brave you are.

KRYMOV I'm not saying we want cowards.

BYEROZKIN Cowardice is temporary. Thoroughly curable.

PODCHUFAROV From here and over there, we're laying down intermittent machine-gunfire, bugger up their plans to attack 6/1.

BYEROZKIN (BRISK) Right, Captain Podchufarov, what have I seen? I don't like the way you treat your wounded – we've got divans at the command post but your men are lying on bricks.

PODCHUFAROV Major.

BYEROZKIN You could have sent for fresh bread but your men are eating dry husks. Third, your political instructor, he was blind drunk. Fourth, your platoon commander was wearing German trousers. His subaltern was wearing two watches.

PODCHUFAROV I'll see to it.

BYEROZKIN (TO KRYMOV) Anything to add, Comrade?

KRYMOV (SURPRISED AT BYEROZKIN'S ACUITY) No. Except if you want someone to take over from the Political Instructor?

BYEROZKIN He's a good man, it's just a moment of...

KRYMOV In addition to him then.

BYEROZKIN What's this about, Comrade Lecturer? Troubles back at the political section?

KRYMOV It's nothing to do with – I want another chance.

BYEROZKIN To get yourself killed?

KRYMOV I want another chance to prove something. (THIS ISN'T EASY) To myself.

BYEROZKIN (GENTLE PROMPT) And to...?

KRYMOV And maybe a woman. I was married.

BYEROZKIN I see.

THEN:

BYEROZKIN Come on, apparently Dyrkin's fitted a sniper's sights to an anti-tank rifle, takes out machine-guns with a single shot. Shouldn't be possible.

CUT TO:

SCENE 8. KUIBYSHEV: LIMONOV'S FLAT. EVENING.

LIMONOV IS TOUCHING FIFTY, STOUT, A 'MAN OF LETTERS' (WHO UNFORTUNATELY KNOWS IT).

LIMONOV Those days I used to visit your parents. In Moscow. Every Thursday evening. Don't know who chose Thursdays. And we'd sit and talk and talk and talk. All night sometimes.

ZHENYA What about?

LIMONOV I was only a student, a callow youth, sighing like a furnace, all that. But your mother, I would sit there, watching her, so beautiful, so....

ZHENYA She has suffered.

LIMONOV That's what I mean, she's the image of indomitable – (STOPS HIMSELF) What is it, Yevgenia Nikolaevna? You seem a little...?

ZHENYA It's that man.

LIMONOV Is there someone...?

ZHENYA At the police station, District Inspector Grishin, they way he looks at you. You're not even a human being. You're another petition.

LIMONOV When in fact, you're a very beautiful woman.

ZHENYA SAYS NOTHING. THEN:

ZHENYA It's my fault, maybe I did want him to – maybe I am used to men behaving in a certain way.

LIMONOV You really can't blame us.

ZHENYA (NEW START) Let's talk about something else.

LIMONOV (DETERMINED TO CONTINUE THIS SEDUCTION) You mustn't be so scared of yourself.

ZHENYA Please.

A CHARGED MOMENT, AND THEN:

LIMONOV Would you like an omelette?

ZHENYA You have eggs?

LIMONOV Tricky without. But arguably not impossible. However, I have three, (AND HE STARTS TO PREPARE IT AS HE TALKS:) this pan, this electric stove and – I doubt you knew this – the proud boast that I taught the chef at the National in Moscow, I taught him how to make omelettes.

ZHENYA Alexei Yefimovich.

LIMONOV One hundred percent true – I may well be – nonsense, I am the finest omelette maker in the country. Prepare to be astounded.

ZHENYA Aux fines herbes?

LIMONOV Indeed. Though today, those herbs are represented by a few carrot tops. That man Hitler has much to answer for.

ZHENYA This surely is the worst of his crimes.

LIMONOV Men have hanged for less. (SUDDENLY REMEMBERING, AS HE WHISKS) Have you seen the new Picassos?

ZHENYA Where?

LIMONOV (AS HE RUSHES TO FIND THE PERIODICAL IN QUESTION) They're in here. (FLICKING THROUGH) No, it was the August edition, where is it? Is it over there, under those dreary old Akhmatovas?

ZHENYA (AS SHE MOVES ACROSS TO LOOK) Your butter's burning.

LIMONOV I wish. Margarine.

ZHENYA It's burning.

LIMONOV Now you know my secret.

ZHENYA This one? August edition?

LIMONOV Somewhere in the middle, extraordinary work.

ZHENYA (READING) "Femme Assise Au Chapeau Poisson."

LIMONOV Remarkable, isn't it?

ZHENYA What's a – what's a fish hat?

LIMONOV (HALF-TEASING) Really, my dear, does it matter? Turn over, look, the Still Life with Cow's Head or whatever it is.

ZHENYA It's – he's reinventing everything.

LIMONOV You must borrow it. I can come round and pick it up in a few days.

ZHENYA I can't take it, there's a woman.

LIMONOV Sorry?

ZHENYA Glafira, our House Manager. She snoops around when we're both at work. Takes things.

LIMONOV I don't see why anyone would want to –

ZHENYA She knows I haven't got a residence permit – knows I can't complain.

LIMONOV Why would she care?

ZHENYA People like her, they want to get at anyone. She's got eyes like mouldy olives.

LIMONOV (MILD SURPRISE) You've been here over a month without a permit?

ZHENYA And once your application has been refused, they come round, the police, make you sign a statement undertaking to leave within three days.

LIMONOV They really bother with that kind of thing?

ZHENYA I'm giving up. I'm going back to Kazan.

LIMONOV Don't. Please, don't. Please have one more try. Then if they really won't give you one, let me know - the Secretary of the local party committee is always at concerts and things. I'll talk to him about you.

ZHENYA (NO HOPE) That's very kind.

LIMONOV (AS HE COMES ACROSS) Come on, it's ready, must eat it hot, too-hot-to-touch hot.

ZHENYA (GETTING PLATES) These?

LIMONOV Smell that. I can't deny it – I genuinely love eating.
(SERVING) Quick. Here, ever seen such a fluffy one? One bite and I apologise, you will fall in love with me forever. Quick, taste it, how is it? Is it? It is, isn't it?

CUT TO:

SCENE 9. RODIMTSEV'S COMMAND POST: THE CONDUIT.

A CONSTANT ARTILLERY BARRAGE.
 ABOVE THEM THE EARTH IS THROWN UP AND THEN RAINS DOWN.
 STAFF ARE FURIOUSLY TRYING TO GET THE TELEPHONE LINES
 WORKING

RODIMTSEV Come on, give me one basic line. Must be one.

TELEPHONIST None of them. All shot to hell.

BELSKY Nothing.

RODIMTSEV I have to do something.

KRYMOV Shall I run a message?

BELSKY Out in that?

RODIMTSEV What's one message? I have a whole division to command.

VAVILOV How about another lecture, comrade?

KRYMOV (NETTLED) I wouldn't mind, if you meant it.

RODIMTSEV This is agony.

VAVILOV The men know what they're doing.

BELSKY It's not like we have any reinforcements to deploy.

VAVILOV No ammunition to send up.

KRYMOV Shall I go down to the Volga, get a message to Army
 Command?

BELSKY Feel you're missing all the fun, Comrade Lecturer?

KRYMOV General, there must be something I could –

HE GETS NO FURTHER BECAUSE SOLDIERS BURST IN

AND SUDDENLY CLOSER, MACHINE GUNFIRE AND EXPLODING GRENADES

SOLDIER Comrade General, the enemy have broken through to the command post.

HALF A MOMENT AND THEN:

RODIMTSEV Divisional Staff. (HE BLOWS A PIERCING BLAST ON HIS WHISTLE) All Divisional staff. Check your personal weapons, take as many grenades as you can, follow me.

BELSKY Everyone, move it.

THE ENTIRE STAFF MOVES (AT LEAST TWENTY STAFF OFFICERS, TELEPHONISTS, CLERKS, SIGNALLERS)

KRYMOV Is that gun - ?

VAVILOV Take it. Ammunition stack over there.

KRYMOV GRABS THE TOMMY GUN AND RUNS OUT INTO THE RAVINE WITH EVERYONE ELSE.
HE FIRES A BURST FROM THE GUN AND RUNS FORWARD AGAIN.

ALL AROUND, A CLOSE QUARTERS FIREFIGHT

AND THEN OVER THIS, QUITE CALMLY, BUT TALKING TO SOMEONE:

KRYMOV You know, you have to trust the soldier's intuition. He might be deafened, he might be isolated, but often he knows more than his divisional commander, staring at a map. He knows everything – about that isolated artillery piece, that stranded enemy soldier, that machine gun emplacement. That's when he becomes himself, that's what enables him to truly understand, sense himself, his worth, his purpose. The only thing he has no sense of is time. It might be ten seconds, it might be ten weeks. There's just the suddenness of that explosion, the length of the trench, the field of fire.

BELSKY (TIRED, GENTLE) Why aren't you tired, like the rest of us? We were fighting all night.

- KRYMOV Time, it's transparent, do you understand?
- BELSKY You know you're way round a heavy machine gun. I take it all back.
- DURING THE END OF KRYMOV'S SPEECH THE FIREFIGHT HAS RECEDED AND THE MEN (AND WOMEN) ARE NOW SITTING AROUND IN THE CONDUIT, RESTING, RECOVERING.
SPORADICALLY, A SOLDIER 'BEGS TO REPORT' AND TELEPHONES RING AND MESSAGES ARE TAKEN AND DOCUMENTS TYPED
- KRYMOV Listen, listen, some men belong to their time, you see, they're made by it. And then their time flows away, and the man still breathes and cries and believes but the age that belonged to him, that's gone, it's disappeared.
- BELSKY Sorry, haven't the faintest idea what you're talking about.
- KRYMOV 1917, I was reborn, I was a child of those times – now, time's moved on and I'm the stepchild, unwanted. You know you don't belong. Yesterday, you were so sure of yourself. Now, another age has come.
- BELSKY You must have a woman tucked away somewhere.
- KRYMOV Did. With Zhenya I needed to exist. Now she's left me. I'm hollowed out. Finished.
- BELSKY Why don't we get some breakfast?
- VAVILOV (ENTERING, OVER THIS, BUOYED) The prisoner we got. His battalion only flew in yesterday.
- BELSKY And your point is?
- VAVILOV For God's sake, Belsky – their reserves, straight into battle. That's bloody good news.
- BELSKY (SARCASTIC) Especially with our divisional staff having to launch their own counter-attack.
- VAVILOV (OF KRYMOV) What's wrong with him?

BELSKY Apparently he's been hollowed out. By a woman.

VAVILOV (CHEER UP) Barber's outside, Comrade Lecturer. He's got powder, cologne. He can even play the violin. What do you say?

CUT TO:

SCENE 10. KUIBYSHEV: THE POLICE STATION.

GRISHIN Yes, how may I help you?

ZHENYA (SHE IS ALMOST IN TEARS AT THE RELIEF OF IT) My Director, after all, Lieutenant-Colonel Rizin, he has written the letter you asked for.

SHE PLACES IT ON THE DESK IN FRONT OF HIM

GRISHIN I made no request.

ZHENYA He was able to get it requested through the secret section. He brought it to me this afternoon.

GRISHIN Mmmmm.

ZHENYA (VERY ANXIOUS) Is it in order? Comrade District Inspector?

GRISHIN Absolutely.

ZHENYA Thank you. Thank you. Thank you so much for helping.

THEN:

GRISHIN Although, in this instance, unfortunately I am going to have to refuse the Residence Permit.

ZHENYA Why? I – I –

GRISHIN You appear to have no connection with the living space in question.

ZHENYA You've just been having fun with me, haven't you?

GRISHIN Mmmmm.

ZHENYA (VOLUME INCREASING) You said that's all I needed. You said – I really thought you wanted to help me, you finally were pleased that it was – no, you're just a turd.

GRISHIN Please, lower your voice.

ZHENYA You're an absolute turd. The worst of them. You're worse than the people in '37, sending everyone off to the camps.

GRISHIN (WHO HAS STOOD AND COME ROUND THE DESK) Time you were leaving. (OPENING THE DOOR AND CALLING OUT) Officer.

ZHENYA So happy with yourself, sitting there, enjoying our suffering.

THE POLICE OFFICER ENTERS THE ROOM.

OFFICER Comrade?

GRISHIN See this lady out.

ZHENYA (PUSHING HIM BACK) Get off me. Leave me alone.

OFFICER Come on then.

ZHENYA I have not finished with this turd.

OFFICER (WHISPERING) Ten years.

ZHENYA What?

OFFICER (IN KINDNESS) For that kind of talk. Shut it.

ZHENYA Do it, who cares? Send me off to the camps. Who bloody cares?

SHE SNATCHES HER PAPERS AND STORMS OUT THE DOOR.

SHE STORMS DOWN THE CORRIDOR, SAYING TO THOSE IN THE QUEUE

ZHENYA He's a turd. Face it. All of you. Give up now. No point in any of this. He's a turd and you're all turds if you believe in a turd like that.

THE DUST SETTLES

AND THEN, AT THE OTHER END OF THE CORRIDOR:

GRISHIN (UTTERLY UNRUFFLED) Next, please.

AND SMASH CUT TO THE DESIGN OFFICE:

RIZIN (DESPAIRING) What can I do?

ZHENYA You can get me a ticket for the steamer to Kazan.

RIZIN Honestly, Yevgenia Nikolaevna, the police are impossible. But Kuibyshev comes under special ordinances, they have their instructions.

ZHENYA Can you get me a ticket?

RIZIN That will be no problem.

ZHENYA Thank you.

SHE STARTS TO WALK AWAY

RIZIN Yevgenia?

ZHENYA Comrade?

RIZIN Are you – just on the chance – free for dinner this evening?

ZHENYA DOESN'T ANSWER HIM IN WORDS, SHE MERELY YOWLS HER EXASPERATION AND DESPAIR

CUT TO:

SCENE 11.STALINGRAD: INTERVIEW

My name is Grigori Bulatov. I was born in Sebastopol. I was conscripted to the 176th. They decided I was a sniper.

- We used to count. It was important, for the news-sheets.
- That time, I'd been waiting about two hours. Sun behind me so no-one was going to see the muzzle flash.
- Finally picked up this German walking down a path, between two old dormitory blocks, thought he was out of sight.
- Had his arm round a woman.
- I fired one wide to make them drop to the ground.
- Watch them thinking: stray shot? or what?
- I waited for them to get up.
- Fired another, on the other side, dust up by their feet. They go down again. Now they know I'm watching. I wait. They start to get up. What else are they going to do? Another. Bing.
- Did that three times.
- Then finished them off. Her first. He bends down to her. They were stretched across the path like a cross.
- A warning.
- Took my score to seventy-eight. The Commissar signed it off.

CUT TO:

SCENE 12. KUIBYSHEV: JENNI'S ROOM. EVENING.

LIMONOV IS JUST FINISHING RECITING HIS LATEST POEM

LIMONOV ...Obtuse indifference.
A unique eccentricity
A terrible difference.

HE STOPS.
ZHENYA WAITS, THEN:

ZHENYA That's....very nice. Good, I mean.

LIMONOV I had imagined a slightly more ecstatic response – especially
after I got you your residence permit.

ZHENYA (SORRY) I'm no critic.

LIMONOV You're more important than that. You're a lover, a lover of
poetry, a beating soul.

ZHENYA You know, my husband, he didn't care for poetry, I lost the
habit.

LIMONOV Who cares about him? That's over, isn't it?

ZHENYA Of course. We're divorced.

LIMONOV This woman you share this room with – she definitely won't
be back?

ZHENYA The old lady she looks after, she stays the night when the son
is away on rounds. He's a dentist.

LIMONOV I have no idea how you both fit in here.

ZHENYA We get by.

LIMONOV I suppose there's always room for your thoughts.

ZHENYA (WHERE THE HELL IS THIS GOING?) Yes.

LIMONOV And I've been thinking a lot about love lately.

ZHENYA (FLANKING MOVEMENT) How is your wife?

LIMONOV (UNSTOPPABLE) Do you know what love is, what sexual love is?

ZHENYA Umm....

LIMONOV It's a vitamin deficiency, it's a spiritual vitamin deficiency.

ZHENYA ...Yes.

LIMONOV You've seen cows and deer when they need salt, they'll do anything. Anything, to keep themselves healthy.

ZHENYA Not sure I have.

LIMONOV (CONTINUING) What I lack – what my wife lacks! – I search for in the object of my love. Do you understand?

ZHENYA Not yet...

LIMONOV A man craves in his lover what he has been starved of for years, of decades. A man's wife is the cause of his vitamin deficiency! Now do you understand?

ZHENYA (LAUGHING) It seems awfully complicated.

LIMONOV Just a spiritual deficiency. And you have the vitamins. (TOUCHING HER) Here, in your hair. On your shoulders. Held in your beautiful breasts.

ZHENYA NOW MOVES BACK

ZHENYA So the vitamin deficiency is physical as well as spiritual?

HE DROPS NOISILY TO HIS KNEES, GRABS HER ROUND THE WAIST.

LIMONOV Here, your body, your glorious body, it holds all the vitamins I need. Let me lose myself in here, in your sex, let me.

ZHENYA (SPEEDILY DISENGAGING HERSELF) I really don't think there's any need to paw at me like that. Do get up.

LIMONOV IS BREATHLESS.

ZHENYA Sorry, I sound like a kindergarten teacher.

LIMONOV LAUGHS AT THIS

LIMONOV You do. You certainly do.

THEY LAUGH TOGETHER.

LIMONOV (GETTING UP) Your poor husband.

ZHENYA Ex-husband.

LIMONOV You talk about him a great deal.

ZHENYA He's - for some reason - I'm missing someone else, and it makes me think about Krymov.

LIMONOV This someone else, you love them?

ZHENYA Obviously.

LIMONOV Oh well. Ho hum. Maybe that residence permit earns me a vodka then. Instead.

CUT TO:

SCENE 13. STALINGRAD: BYEROZKIN'S CONDUIT.

KRYMOV IS JUST STRIDING INTO THE COMMAND POST

KRYMOV (ENTERING) Seryozha? Is that you?

SERYOZHA (WAKING UP) What?

KRYMOV Seryozha, what – what on earth are you doing here?

SERYOZHA Uncle Nikolai?

KRYMOV Seryozha, here, come here.

THEY EMBRACE.

KRYMOV It's good to see you.

SERYOZHA (LESS ENTHUSIASTICALLY) And you. And you.

KRYMOV You're alive.

SERYOZHA (HIS ONE THOUGHT:) I have to get back. Can you help me?

KRYMOV I don't think I -

SERYOZHA I've been here days. I got chosen to get sent back to make a report or something. (EXPLAINING ALL THIS IN A RUSH) We can still get through this tunnel under the Tractor Factory. I mean, it was good to get some water – we've been drinking out of the radiators – soon as I saw the Volga , I just put my head in, like a dog, I was, my whole head.

KRYMOV Hang on, hang on - (TRYING TO KEEP UP) - where were you posted?

SERYOZHA Building 6/1. Past the Tractor Factory. Front line. Division want me to report on what's happening but it's all alright, the Manager's got it worked out.

KRYMOV 'Manager'? Who's this?

SERYOZHA Vanya - Captain Grekov, but he gets us to call him that. You know, like Building Manager, Caretaker.

KRYMOV Sounds – how does he keep discipline?

SERYOZHA He’s amazing. Except...

KRYMOV What?

SERYOZHA There’s this radio operator, they sent through to us last week.

KRYMOV I saw her – Uglanova – Vengrova.

SERYOZHA She’s so young. And those other men there, they’re, you know, experienced.

KRYMOV I’ll see what I can do.

SERYOZHA That’d be...thank you.

KRYMOV Have you heard from – have you heard anything from your family?

SERYOZHA We haven’t had letters, not since –

KRYMOV (HE CAN’T STOP HIMSELF) Nothing from your Auntie Zhenya?

SERYOZHA Nothing.

KRYMOV I thought maybe...?

SERYOZHA Can’t you get them to send me back?

KRYMOV I’ll talk to someone.

CUT TO:

SCENE 14. KUIBYSHEV: ZHENYA'S ROOM.

ZHENYA IS READING A LETTER. JENNI CAN'T WAIT:

JENNI Well?

ZHENYA It's from Novikov.

JENNI (EXCITED) I know!

ZHENYA He says he's going to visit me. If he can. Their train might make a halt here.

JENNI Is that not good?

ZHENYA Have you ever been in love, Jenni?

JENNI Why ask me?

ZHENYA Have you?

JENNI There – there was this boy with golden curls and light blue eyes.

ZHENYA And you loved him?

JENNI He had one white collar, over the velvet jacket.

ZHENYA When was this?

JENNI (SHE THINKS) I think eleven. Maybe I am twelve.

ZHENYA What happened to him?

JENNI Him I only know by sight.

ZHENYA People will talk about me, I can hear them now “So the lady wanted a man around again, doesn't want to waste her best years. She gets rid of the one who's in trouble with the Party, gets herself a tank commander.”

JENNI He loves you. That is the good thing.

ZHENYA He could get killed – worse, he could find some pretty little
nineteen year-old telephonist.

JENNI God will keep the bombs off of him.

ZHENYA He makes me so happy, but all the time I've got that bloody
Krymov (INTAKE OF BREATH FROM JENNI WHEN SHE
SWEARS) standing there, right there, between me and Piotr
Pavlovich. He's still ruining my life. I have every right to
love the man who loves me, don't I?

JENNI No-one can stop you.

ZHENYA Krymov, he always seems so weak and helpless. Like he's
lost and alone. And that's the last thing he is – “no pity for
kulaks, innocent people don't get arrested”. I can hear him
saying it. It's so cruel. It's why I had to leave him.

JENNI Whenever I find the person being unkind, I say What is
frightening this man, why does he to be unkind like that?

ZHENYA (LIMPLY) I had to leave him.

CUT TO:

SCENE 15. STALINGRAD: BYEROZKIN'S CONDUIT.

BYEROZKIN, RODIMTSEV AND KRYMOV IN CONFERENCE

BYEROZKIN As I said, I don't think we should withdraw.

RODIMTSEV Reasons?

BYEROZKIN The Observation Post at 6/1 is giving us daily sightings for our artillery on the east bank. Our Sappers can go forwards to harass enemy tanks.

RODIMTSEV And Fritz won't move forward until all resistance is extinguished?

BYEROZKIN They never do.

KRYMOV And the political situation? The partisan activity inside the building?

BYEROZKIN I don't take it as that, Comrade Lecturer.

KRYMOV (PAPERS) They write no official reports. Apparently, the commanding officer behaves like one of the lads – they call him 'Vanya'.

BYEROZKIN One report, does it matter?

KRYMOV Sounds more like the Paris Commune than a military unit.

BYEROZKIN Comrade General, this is initiative. I wouldn't mind being surrounded, if it meant I could forget all this paperwork.

RODIMTSEV Didn't I order one of the men to be sent back? Make a full report?

KRYMOV He's outside. He told me he's been waiting to report two days.

RODIMTSEV Get him in.

BYEROZKIN (CALLING OUT) Shaposhnikov. In here now.

SERYOZHA COMES INTO THE ROOM

- KRYMOV General wants to hear from you, Comrade.
- RODIMTSEV Tell us about this Building. 6/1.
- SERYOZHA Morale is high, Comrade General.
- RODIMTSEV We've heard about some irregular activity there?
- SERYOZHA Nothing to report.
- KRYMOV What you told me, about everyone calling Captain Grekov the Building Manager?
- SERYOZHA (TO KRYMOV, A RELATIVE) Am I supposed to?
- KRYMOV (FRIENDLY) Tell the General.
- SERYOZHA We all fight together, eat together, everything. Fritzie's sent up a white flag, said they'd let us have safe passage back to our lines. The Manager said 'Fire!' and we shot them all. You could see the blue sparks coming out of this tank - it was amazing.
- RODIMTSEV You address him as 'The Manager'?
- SERYOZHA (TO KRYMOV) Is that wrong?
- RODIMTSEV Think you can handle this, Krymov?
- KRYMOV I've been in the front line since the day the Germans invaded. I think I can handle a bit of partisan nonsense.
- SERYOZHA The Manager, he's in command, it's not like – no-one can change his mind or anything, not Buddha, not General Commanding.
- RODIMTSEV Sounds rather chaotic to me.
- SERYOZHA We're not partisans.

KRYMOV (GENTLY) Partisans never think they are.

RODIMTSEV Byerozkin, I want Krymov here to go forward to Building 6/1, as Battalion Commissar, establish Bolshevik order.

BYEROZKIN Comrade General.

RODIMTSEV If it gets sticky with Grekov, I want him to take over. You'll get him through to this building?

BYEROZKIN Certainly.

RODIMTSEV Krymov, daily reports. A state within a state is something I can do without.

KRYMOV Comrade General.

RODIMTSEV (TURNS AND GOES) I want everything in writing, I can do without Political giving me grief.

A MOMENT OF SILENCE THEN:

BYEROZKIN You'll see him safely through to 6/1, Shaposhnikov?

SERYOZHA Major.

BYEROZKIN It's surrounded.

KRYMOV I am aware.

BYEROZKIN And we have agreed not to withdraw from the position.

KRYMOV I understand.

BYEROZKIN Right then, took you a month but you're now at liberty to get yourself properly killed any time you want, Comrade Lecturer.

KRYMOV Commissar again now.

BYEROZKIN Get kitted up, we'll send you off as soon as it's dark.

CUT TO:

SCENE 16. KUIBYSHEV: OUTSIDE JENNI & ZHENYA'S ROOM.

ZHENYA IS WALKING UP THE STAIRS INTO THE LIVING SPACE.
AS SHE WALKS:

ZHENYA (HAPPY) Jenni, Jenni, I got some sliced sturgeon, it's amaz -

SHE HAS NOW PUSHED THROUGH THE CURTAIN INTO THE ROOM

ZHENYA Jenni? What's happened? Jenni, where are you?

SHE TURNS TO RUSH INTO THE KITCHEN
GLAFIRA IS STANDING RIGHT THERE IN HER WAY, ARMS FOLDED

GLAFIRA Your friend's gone.

ZHENYA Who's done that to our room? Why would she - ?

GLAFIRA People came. An Inspector. NKVD.

ZHENYA I've got my permit, it's all -

DRAGIN (APPROACHING) She's been arrested, comrade.

ZHENYA What for?

GLAFIRA She'll be on a transport by now, with all those other Fascists.

ZHENYA She's a good woman.

GLAFIRA There's good work to be done in those camps.

ZHENYA (LOOKING ROUND) She hasn't even got her coat. I'll have to take it to her.

DRAGIN Don't.

ZHENYA She'll need it.

DRAGIN Don't waste your time, Yevgenia Nikolaevna.

ZHENYA She needs winter clothes.

DRAGIN (HARD) You know what I'm talking about.

ZHENYA I have to do something. Look, she's got nothing. Schubert, come here.

GLAFIRA That cat has to go and all.

ZHENYA You can't. I'll feed it.

GLAFIRA (TO DRAGIN, AS SHE WALKS AWAY) See what I mean? First she gets her foot in the door, then she goes off and tells the appropriate authorities about her German friend, and six weeks later, she's got the whole space to herself.

ZHENYA How can you?

DRAGIN I'll help. With the cat, I mean, make a contribution.

ZHENYA Really?

DRAGIN (LOOKING OVER HER SHOULDER) Not a bad little room this....Nice.

ZHENYA Thanks. I need to just.... Thanks.

SHE SHUTS THE DOOR. AND SLUMPS ONTO THE BED

ZHENYA Jenni. Piotr. Jenni. Krymov.
Where are you, Krymov? I'm so sorry.

AND MIX INTO:

SCENE 17. STALINGRAD: THE FRONT LINES. NIGHT.

THE TUNNEL OPENING

SERYOZHA IS SOME WAY INTO CRAWLING DOWN THE TUNNEL
KRYMOV HAS LINGERED AT THE OPENING

SERYOZHA Come on, Uncle Nikolai.

KRYMOV Coming.

SERYOZHA What you doing?

KRYMOV Just saying goodbye.

SERYOZHA Who to?

KRYMOV No-one. Sorry.

SERYOZHA GOES A LITTLE FURTHER, THEN:

SERYOZHA (CALLING) Uncle.

KRYMOV (HALF-WHISPERED) Zhenya, think of me sometimes.

SERYOZHA Uncle!

KRYMOV No, don't. Forget me. Forget me right now. Zhenya.

END

“with you”

episode by jonathan myerson

cast

LENYA VIKTOROV, pilot

VERA SPIRIDONOVA

SKOTNOY, pilot

SOLMATIN, pilot

MUKHIN, pilot

ZAKABLUKA, squadron commander

PAVEL ANDREYEVICH ANDREYEV, power station worker

SPIRIDONOV, power station manager

**the action takes place in Stalingrad and on an airbase in northern
Russia, during September 1942**

SCENE 1.A FOREST IN THE NORTH OF RUSSIA. DAY.

VIKTOROV AND VERA ARE IN THE FOREST, WALKING OVER THE THICK CARPET OF LEAVES AND BRUSH. THEY ARE VERY MUCH IN LOVE. HE IS BUBBLING WITH ENTHUSIASM, SHOWING HER EVERYTHING HE HAS DISCOVERED. VERA CAN BARELY GET A WORD IN.

VIKTOROV Look, Vera, can you see it? Stop, stop, stop. Can you smell that? There.

VERA What?

VIKTOROV Here, here, the pine trees, it's tangier, like turps or something. Smell it? Sharper than the other trees.

VERA (SNIFFING) Mmmm.

VIKTOROV And that bitter breath - can you smell that? – that's elder.

VERA Yes.

VIKTOROV It's amazing being here with you –

VERA But Lenya, I'm –

VIKTOROV (CONTINUING) - I've never been this far before, but this is really Russia, this is old Russia - grey wolves ran through here – and yet - and yet - it all seems so much younger and fresher than us, with our planes and our diesel fumes and our cigarettes and hundred grams of vodka each day and -

HE STOPS

VIKTOROV It makes me feel old. Makes me feel ashamed. Why do I have to go and fight? (AND THEN REALISING HE HAS BROUGHT THE ATMOSPHERE DOWN) Come on, let's get out of here, let's get back into the light – pilots don't like all this darkness, we want the wind rushing through -

VERA (SLIGHTLY MORE DETERMINED) Lenya, I can't.

VIKTOROV (STOPPED) Vera?

VERA I'm not here.

VIKTOROV Don't say that.

VERA I'm in Stalingrad. You're here. I'm in the south.

VIKTOROV Out in the meadow, look, there's bluebells, like they're cast from pure steel.

VERA (GENTLY) Lenya.

VIKTOROV Wild carnations. Juniper.

VERA I know, but –

VIKTOROV No Heinkel's ever flown over here. We can forget fighters and bombers and tanks and mortars. This is our special place.

VERA I'm waiting for you.

VIKTOROV The butterflies, they're the colour of Yalta lemons.

VERA Come back to me soon.

VIKTOROV (PAINED) Of course.

VERA Don't....

VIKTOROV What?

SKOTNOY (CALLING OUT FROM A DISTANCE) Viktorov!

VERA Don't let them...

VIKTOROV What?

SKOTNOY Viktorov, where the bloody hell are you?

VERA (FINALLY SAYING IT) Don't get killed, Lenya. Please.

VIKTOROV I'm coming back to Stalingrad and we'll –

SKOTNOY (APPROACHING) Viktorov!

VIKTOROV (BACK TO REALITY, SHOUTING BACK) Here. Over here.

SKOTNOY Who were you talking to?

VIKTOROV (ALMOST BAFFLED) What?

SKOTNOY Your squeeze?

VIKTOROV We're engaged. She's having a baby.

SKOTNOY (GIVING UP ON GETTING HIM TO TALK SENSE) Orders are through. We're coming out of reserve.

VIKTOROV To the front?

SKOTNOY (SARCASTIC) No, Tashkent, a bit of sightseeing.

VIKTOROV North-West? Leningrad?

SKOTNOY Maybe back to your gaff, Stalingrad. You'd like that, wouldn't you?

VIKTOROV I'll go where I'm sent.

SKOTNOY (AS HE GOES) Briefing in twenty minutes, Blue Hangar. Full kit.

AS SKOTNOY TROMPS AWAY

VIKTOROV Did you hear that? Vera? I'll be with you soon. I will be.

CUT TO:

SCENE 2.STALINGRAD: THE POWER STATION YARD. DAY.

THE BATTLE IS POCK-POCKING ALL AROUND.
THEN A PLANE COMES IN LOW OVER THE YARD.
IT IS VIKTOROV'S ILYUSHIN.
SHE RUNS FURIOUSLY AFTER IT, SHOUTING:

VERA Lenya, here, I'm down here. Can you see me? Lenya!

AND TRIPS

VERA Leny - !

ANDREYEV, A DISTANCE AWAY, SEES HER AND NOW RUSHES OVER

ANDREYEV Comrade? Verochka, what are you doing? Here.

VERA (THROUGH THE PAIN, GETTING UP) The pilot, he dipped his wings, he saw me, it must have been him.

ANDREYEV Who?

VERA Lenya. My Lenya.

ANDREYEV (SURPRISED) He's not here, is he?

VERA He might be.

ANDREYEV Silly goat.

VERA I felt it. I was down in the bunker, with Papa, I said, "Just a second, I can hear something." He didn't say anything. I said, I know it's him. And I ran up.

ANDREYEV It's dangerous up here.

VERA One day he'll be here. I'm not lying. He'll walk through those gates, what's left of them, his map-case under his arm, his uniform, his leather boots, looking round, asking "Excuse me, comrades, does anyone know where the Spiridonovs are living?"

ANDREYEV I don't want you up here, it's too exposed. Snipers.

VERA I think about him every day, Pavel Andreyevich, every hour of every day.

ANDREYEV 'Nother raid, is it?

AND YES, THE UNMISTAKEABLE SOUND OF AN APPROACHING, LOW-FLYING FORMATION OF JUNKERS-78S.

VERA Where is he, Pavel Andreyevich?

ANDREYEV Yup, here they come, buggers, with their bugging bombs. Sorry, love.

VERA Do you think he thinks about me?

ANDREYEV Your Dad'd want me to get you in. (AS HE HUSTLES HER INSIDE) Come on, think of the baby.

VERA I was so certain this time.

ANDREYEV Next time, I'm dead sure of it. Next time it'll be him.

CUT TO:

SCENE 3. AIRFIELD: HANGAR. AFTERNOON.

THE PILOTS ARE GATHERED, SITTING ON CHAIRS IN THE HANGAR, FOR THE BRIEFING

ZAKABLUKA Comrades, this is the beginning of a new era for this fighter squadron. We must all step forwards and assume new responsibilities, take on new challenges. But we must also remember what we have learned. First, a fighter pilot must know his machine, must know it well enough to play with it, like a toy, know all its balances and ways. Second, he must love it, love it like it was his sister or his mother....

THIS SPEECH CONTINUES² AS THE PILOTS IN THE AUDIENCE START TO WHISPER AMONG THEMSELVES

SKOTNOY Heard about Mukhin?

SOLMATIN What?

SKOTNOY He's been arrested.

VIKTOROV What? What for?

SKOTNOY He, you know, 'forced' a girl.

SOLMATIN Who? What?

SKOTNOY His girl, Lida, she said he took her into the woods –

SOLMATIN They're always in the woods, those two. Canoodling.

VIKTOROV Don't.

SKOTNOY She said he threatened her with a gun and then did her. Took her.

VIKTOROV She said that?

² more background text to follow

SKOTNOY Her friend – Lida’s too scared - you know, Olga, that one she’s always hanging round with.

VIKTOROV It’s not true – it can’t be.

SOLMATIN We’re going to the front. Maybe he wanted – you know – just once, before we...

VIKTOROV I don’t believe it.

SKOTNOY Everything’s always love and romance with you, Alexei. Always gooey.

VIKTOROV It’s just – I’ve seen them together, what they’ve got, it’s special.

BUT THIS IS TOO LOUD

ZAKABLUKA Pilot Officer Viktorov, did you wish to address the meeting?

VIKTOROV STANDS.

VIKTOROV Everything correct, Comrade Colonel.

ZAKABLUKA To attention, Comrade. Won’t have slouches in this squadron. Look at you. I would like to know why -

SKOTNOY (STANDING) Beg to speak, Comrade Colonel.

ZAKABLUKA Comrade Lieutenant.

SKOTNOY We were wondering – we were all suggesting where we are to be posted?

ZAKABLUKA You will be informed before take-off.

SKOTNOY Thank you, Comrade Colonel.

ZAKABLUKA Alright, you two. (SKOTNOY AND VIKTOROV SIT) I want you all sleeping in your bunkers tonight. Anyone found off-limits, off the airfield tonight, will be subject to the most severe penalties. Is that understood?

ALL Understood, Comrade Colonel.

ZAKABLUKA Dismiss.

THE MEN STAND AND THE ROOM BURSTS INTO NOISE.

SKOTNOY Going into the village tonight?

SOLMATIN They'll never let us.

SKOTNOY They won't stop us. It's our last chance.

VIKTOROV We've got to find Mukhin, see what's happening.

SKOTNOY He's in the cooler.

VIKTOROV Already?

FADE OUT TO:

SCENE 4. STALINGRAD. THE SPIRIDONOV'S BUNKER.

THEY ARE DEEP BELOW GROUND, BUT THERE ARE STILL DISTANT,
MUFFLED EXPLOSIONS UP ABOVE

VERA I'm only staying here to stop you drinking.

SPIRIDONOV Thanks very much.

VERA Your 'anti-bomb medicine'. I've seen a thirsty fish drink less.

SPIRIDONOV Why did we decide to work in a power station, Pavel
Andreyevitch?

ANDREYEV I hate tractors.

SPIRIDONOV Tractor boys, Red October metalworkers, everyone else gets
evacuated over the river, but all our work, it's bloody screwed
down.

ANDREYEV They're good old beasts.

SPIRIDONOV Beasts we're chained to.

VERA And I'm chained to you, Papa.

ANDREYEV Verochka, the baby, how's he going to grow proper, hearing
nothing but bombs and guns all day?

SPIRIDONOV (CONTINUING) I put in for a transfer, turned me down flat.

VERA The soldiers, they go past, they always shout something nice
– he'll hear that, know there's goodness in the world.

ANDREYEV Good boys going off to die?

SPIRIDONOV I said to her, I had one of the Military Soviet in here
yesterday. He sees little Verinka, he says nothing. Afters, he
takes me outside he's all manner of curses, What Am I Doing
Keeping A Girl Like That On the West Bank?, offers her a
place on armoured launch. Back across the river.

VERA I'm not going.

ANDREYEV (EXASPERATED, EVEN WITH THIS MUCH PROTECTION) An armoured launch?

SPIRIDONOV You're never going to get a letter here. None of us is getting letters. God only knows what's happened to Zhenya and Lyudmila, your grandmother.

VERA Pavel Andreyevitch got a letter.

SPIRIDONOV Wasn't a letter, it was just a notification of -

HALF WAY THROUGH THIS WORD HE REALISES WHAT HE HAS SAID.
A SILENCE FOLLOWS.
THEN:

ANDREYEV No point in pretending like it didn't happen. She's gone now. Got to get used to it.

SPIRIDONOV (TO COVER HIMSELF) What if the Germans break through?

VERA Papa!

ANDREYEV He's right, little one.

VERA I have to stay here.

SPIRIDONOV What's the point?

VERA I can't tell you. The Fates. If I tell you.

SPIRIDONOV What?

ANDREYEV Leave her, boss.

SPIRIDONOV What's Fate got to do with anything? It's the German artillery's got everything to do with it.

VERA He knows we live here. This is where he'll come.

SPIRIDONOV Saints alive. You meet your first wounded pilot and you're an idiot for evermore.

VERA I'm having his baby.

ANDREYEV Exactly. The baby.

VERA Please, please, please.

SPIRIDONOV The baby.

VERA He's coming to get me.

SPIRIDONOV The baby.

VERA Please.

CUT TO:

SCENE 5. AIRFIELD: BILLET HUT.

SITTING QUIETLY IN A CORNER OF THE HUT.

MUKHIN IS HALF-WHISPERING.

IN THE BACKGROUND, THE OTHER PILOTS ARE CHATTING

MUKHIN It was that bloody friend of hers.

VIKTOROV Olga?

MUKHIN Don't tell the others, they wouldn't understand.

VIKTOROV Did you – did you try something?

MUKHIN It was just - Lida told Olga that we'd [*done it*]- and then Olga rushed off to the Commander saying she'd been forced and then Lida didn't dare deny it and –

VIKTOROV But she told them in the end?

MUKHIN They were about to shoot me.

VIKTOROV Bloody Olga, didn't she realise what she was doing?

MUKHIN You should have heard the guvnor, he hated it – his number three radio operator, down on her knees, begging him, telling him it was all a misunderstanding.

VIKTOROV I don't [*understand*] - what happened?

MUKHIN Right. We went out to the woods. We were, you know, she let me touch and all that, and then we dozed off. I woke up. And you know, sort of a joke, I slid my pistol out and fired it, into the ground –

VIKTOROV What?

MUKHIN Here. She was lying like this. Legs apart. Bang. Between her knees.

VIKTOROV (DRY) Very funny.

MUKHIN She woke up screaming. So I got down and comforted her.
And then we....she let me. You know. Do it.

VIKTOROV And then she rushes off and tells her friend?

MUKHIN Olga's a jealous bitch. She couldn't bear it that Lida and me,
we – you know – we managed it and she's still – you know.

MEANWHILE, SOLMATIN HAS BEEN SINGING IN THE BACKGROUND:

SOLMATIN *The plane's in a nose-dive
The earth's rushing to meet her.
Don't cry for me, love,
Forget me, my sweetest.ⁱ*

MUKHIN Look at him, wherever we land, Solmatin puts his peaked cap
on, walks down the street with his guitar and drives the next
girl out of her mind.

DURING MUKHIN'S SPEECH VIKTOROV STARTS TO JOIN IN WITH
SOLMATIN

SOLMATIN & VIKTOROV
*They'll drag out our bodies
From the twisted metal
The hawks will escort us
On our last flight of all.*

SKOTNOY Enough of that. Come on.

SOLMATIN Remember that fight up near Rzhev – the way Demidov,
eight Messers went for him, he fought them off for seventeen
minutes.

SKOTNOY He used to sing when we were up. Every bloody time.

MUKHIN A cultured man – a Muscovite.

SOLMATIN He'd go mad if he couldn't fly. He'd waste away.

SKOTNOY Remember that messer, the one that came at you, the raid over Rzhev – he shot through my oil-tank, feed-pipes, windshield. Everything was on fire.

SOLMATIN I covered you.

SKOTNOY Too right.

MUKHIN Scary.

SKOTNOY Didn't have time to feel frightened. Just had to land it. My boots were smoking.

VIKTOROV My bird was full of holes. Like an old grouse.

MUKHIN (TO SOLMATIN) No offence, but awarding medals for shooting down a Junkers.

SOLMATIN They can't take the medal back neither. Comrade Lieutenant.

VIKTOROV You know what I used to love? Really love? I used to fly kites. Used to walk seven k to the flying club, my dad used to thrash me for it.

MUKHIN I went for that Messer twelve times. Singed him in the end. Got him at twenty-five metres with my cannon.

VIKTOROV It was Demidov took it. He took that attack for us.

SKOTNOY A good man, a man to rely on.

VIKTOROV He saved us that day.

A MOMENT'S SILENCE

MUKHIN We'll be off at dawn and old Demidov'll be left here on his own.

SOLMATIN So let's go one last time.

SKOTNOY Lay a stone on his grave.

MUKHIN You heard the Colonel? Anyone found off -

SOLMATIN Do what you want, I've got ladies to see.

MUKHIN We can't.

SKOTNOY Come on, Mukhy, I won't tell Lida.

MUKHIN Drop it, Skotnoy.

SKOTNOY (THROWING AN ARM ROUND HIM) I mean it, I envy you.

SOLMATIN Come on, guys.

VIKTOROV I'm not sure.

MUKHIN Let's say good bye to the trees, alright?

VIKTOROV Maybe. OK.

AND BY NOW ALL THE PILOTS ARE POURING OUT OF THE BUNKER AND INTO THE NIGHT AIR.

AND MIX STRAIGHT INTO:

SCENE 6. AIRFIELD.

THE PLANES ARE WARMING UP ON THE AIRFIELD, PROPELLERS SPEEDING UP.

SKOTNOY (YELLING OVER THE NOISE) It's Stalingrad.

VIKTOROV What?

SKOTNOY Stalingrad, boss says we're going to Stalingrad.

VIKTOROV We are?

SKOTNOY He says he'll lead the wing, we just follow him.

VIKTOROV Will do.

SKOTNOY See you on the Volga.

AND THE PLANES TAXI FORWARDS AND BEGIN TO TAKE OFF.

VIKTOROV (INSIDE HIS COCKPIT) Vera, I'm coming. Vera. Can you hear us, Vera? I'm coming.

AND FADE

END

ⁱ Машина в штопоре кружится,
Ревет, летит земле на грудь,
Не плачь, родная, успокойся,
Меня навеки позабудь.

И вынут нас из-под машины,
Поднявши на руки каркас,
Взовьются в небо ястребочки,
В последний путь проводят нас.

“those who were alive were still alive”

episode by jonathan myerson

cast

radio operator

KATYA VENGROVA

infantry

ZUBAREV, 2nd Lieutenant

command

GREKOV, captain

scout

VASYA (KLIMOV)

the mortar team

SERYOZHA SHAPOSHNIKOV

POLYAKOV, lieutenant

sappers

LYAKHOV

artillery observers

BATRAKOV, Lieutenant

BUNCHUK, observer

from Army Political

NIKOLAI KRYMOV, Commissar

and an unnamed kitten

the entire play is set in (and around) Building 6/1 [pronounced ‘six-point-one’ – дом номер шесть дробь один] just north of the Tractor Factory, Stalingrad, during two weeks in October and November 1942

SCENE 1. GROUND FLOOR. NIGHT.

KATYA IS JUST STRUGGLING OUT OF THE TUNNEL OPENING, LED BY VASYA

GREKOV Who else you brought us then, old man?

VASYA Bit less of the old, if you don't mind. (TO KATYA, OF THE RADIO SET) Here, love, give me the thing. That's it. Up you get.

GREKOV (SEEING KATYA) Who's this?

VASYA (HOISTING UP THE RADIO) They sent us our very own fancy new radio operator. Say hello to Miss Katya.

GREKOV (DISAPPOINTMENT) Vasya – a radio?

LYAKHOV Hello, love, my name's -

VASYA (TO GREKOV) Battalion HQ said you been ought to.

KATYA I'm to – they want a daily report, Comrade Captain.

KATYA HAD A IMPOVERISHED UPBRINGING IN MOSCOW – BUT SHE'S SMART, SHE LISTENED AT SCHOOL. AND SHE'S TERRIFIED.

GREKOV I send my reports to the Fritzie's.

LYAKHOV They don't like much them neither.

KATYA Sorry?

GREKOV Do we look like we've got time to write essays each night?

VASYA Heard them talking, boss, back at HQ, something about Paris.

GREKOV (BAFFLED) What?

VASYA You're not many making friends back there.

LYAKHOV My name's –

GREKOV Are you sure they didn't say Partisan?

VASYA (DEFINITELY) Paris.

LYAKHOV They want us to go to Paris? I wouldn't mind.

KATYA (EXPLAINING) The 1871 Commune, Comrade Captain.

GREKOV Everyone else calls me The Manager.

KATYA Sorry?

GREKOV Welcome to Building 6/1. Four floors of fun and games. The neighbours are mostly German, on that side, that side and that side. And that side. That's all four sides. But it's home. Mortar crew across there, artillery observers up there, floor above. Yes, we decided it was much more convenient to blast a hole through the ceiling – you don't have to shout up the stairs this way. Well, actually, our neighbours blasted the hole for us, they're ever so obliging like that. They also did all the holes in the walls, the rockery over there but they have yet to touch the cellar.

KATYA (MORE CONFUSED THAN ANYTHING ELSE) Comrade Captain.

GREKOV Manager.

KATYA I...

GREKOV It's a building, isn't it? And I'm supposed to look after it, aren't I?

LYAKHOV That makes him the Building Manager. Name's Lyakhov, by the way. With the sappers. You can call me –

KATYA (TO GREKOV) Is that an order, Comrade?

GREKOV AND VASYA LAUGH.

GREKOV Do what you want. Come on, sit down here.

KATYA Where?

GREKOV Here.

KATYA Next to you, Comrade Cap – ?

GREKOV There you go again.

LYAKHOV (GETTING UP) I'll tell the new lads where to get settled.
Come on, Vasya.

VASYA AND LYAKHOV MOVE OFF.

GREKOV (CALLING AFTER THEM) We need a new gunner in the
double doors. And one up above, in the O.P. (TO KATYA)
Come on, sit down. How old are you?

KATYA Eighteen, Comrade Manager.

GREKOV 'Manager'll do.

KATYA I....

GREKOV Moscow?

KATYA Yes.

GREKOV Tell me what you know.

KATYA Sorry?

GREKOV (POINTING) Machine gun?

KATYA Degtyarev. Each pan magazine takes forty-seven rounds.
Range eight hundred metres.

GREKOV Calibre?

KATYA Fifty-four mill.

GREKOV (UNHOLSTERING HIS) This pistol.

KATYA (LOOKING AT IT, MILD SURPRISE) Walther. Eight rounds. Captured. Don't know the calibre. Hard to aim, someone told me.

GREKOV (OVER THIS, NEXT:) Those greatcoats.

KATYA What?

GREKOV Piled over there. Those coats.

THEY ARE DEAD MEN'S COATS.

KATYA (AS SHE WORKS IT OUT) Oh.

GREKOV Twenty-six empty coats. Sorry about the smell.

KATYA I hadn't....yes. (SCARED) Shall I go now?

GREKOV Nowhere to go, my little chaffinch.

KATYA Oh.

POLYAKOV (APPROACHING, OVER THIS) Comrade Manager, you telling me they brought bastard rations, they brought bastard bullets, but nothing for my mortars?

GREKOV Language, my good man, we have a young lady among us.

POLYAKOV Right. Yes. (THEN:) Mortar rounds?

GREKOV Speak to Vasya, he's our Marco Polo.

POLYAKOV (GOING) You know him, gets his extra soup, doesn't give a bumhole for us.

GREKOV I do apologise for that. Comrade Polyakov's often....

KATYA I have....I have served with –

GREKOV (STANDING) You get some rest then, we'll sort you out in the morning.

KATYA (STANDING) Thank you.

GREKOV Don't stand up. (GOING) It's all quite – none of your posh Moscow manners here. (AS HE CRUNCHES AWAY ACROSS THE RUBBLE, SHOUTING:) Right, who wants to go out there, bugger up the Fritzie's' dreams again? I'm looking for eager volunteers, Vasili Terentyevich, fancy taking young Seryozha for a stroll over the tennis courts?

CUT TO:

SCENE 2.INTERVIEW.

My name is Gennadi Bogdanovich Lyakhov. I was in the engineers, third company.

- we fought for each house, it didn't matter whether the house was cut off or not, you just fought for it
- you just fought
- the buildings – all sorts, and all smashed up, first by the air raids, then the artillery, the tanks, and then we fought over them – holes everywhere, in walls, in floors, in roofs, whatever was left standing, you hid behind that, slept in cellars
- some places we were less than a kilometre from the river, if the Germans got to the river, it was over, for all of us
- sometimes we were in, say, the basement, the Germans were in the floor above, more of us in the floor above that
- you'd break into a house, run up the stairs, if they were still there, into the next room, they'd be a meal, homework, there, still on the table, no wall on the side of the house, the rest of the room like the family had just popped out
- and there were the tunnels – some we dug, some were the sewers, there was lot of fighting in the sewers
- Germans, we heard later, they called it Rattenkrieg – rat war
- we were like rats, scurrying around, planting mines – that was our job, sneaking forward and blowing things up
- our artillery was on the other side of the river – whenever they tried to get their blokes ready for an attack, behind their lines, our guys would shell them
- we used to sneak out most nights, just chuck bricks or fire something off, keep the Germans on edge, make sure they didn't get any sleep, get them to waste some more ammunition, frazzle their nerves

SCENE 3. NO MAN'S LAND IN FRONT OF 6/1. NIGHT.

TWO MEN BREATHING HARD, CRAWLING, SLITHERING FORWARDS OVER RUBBLE, VERY SLOWLY, VERY CAREFULLY.

SERYOZHA AND VASYA ARE CROSSING NO MAN'S LAND, TOWARDS THE GERMAN LINES. THEIR BREATHING IS TIGHT, URGENT. EVERYTHING IS WHISPERED

SERYOZHA ACCIDENTALLY KICKS A BRICK WHICH RUNS DOWN THE RAILWAY EMBANKMENT:

VASYA Shtum.

SERYOZHA I know.

VASYA Other side of this embankment, they can see us. Low as a snake, my boy.

SERYOZHA I know.

VASYA Sausages?

SERYOZHA Got four.

VASYA Give me one. (HE SQUEEZES IT INTO HIS BELT) See there? (POINTING) My laundry lady lives along there.

SERYOZHA In that?

VASYA Nice little hole. (THEN:) Right. Over we go.

THEY CRAWL SOME MORE, TENSE, TIGHT BREATHING. UP THE EMBANKMENT, OVER THE RAIL TRACKS.

VASYA There.

THEY CRAWL SOME MORE AND APPROACH A GERMAN GUN EMPLACEMENT. ONE GERMAN IS EATING OUT OF A MESS TIN, SPOONING IT IN NOISILY, ENJOYING IT. ANOTHER IS SHAVING, THE

BLUNT RAZOR SCRAPING AGAINST HIS SKIN. THE THIRD IS GENTLY HUM-SINGING *THE SONG OF THE VOLGA*.

VASYA PULLS THE PIN OUT OF A GRENADE. THERE IS A CLICK, AN ALMOST NOISELESS COUNT OF

VASYA One, two, three.

AND THEN HE TOSSES THE GRENADE INTO THE SHELL-CRATER. IT EXPLODES. THERE IS ALMOST IMMEDIATELY ANOTHER EXPLOSION. VASYA AND SERYOZHA JUMP STRAIGHT INTO THE SMOKE, COUGHING, SNEEZING FROM THE DUST.

VASYA (URGENTLY, STILL HALF WHISPERING) Don't shoot. They're gone. Don't want no-one hearing us – let them think it was a mortar. Get the breech block. I'll do the papers.

VASYA EASES THE PAPERS OUT OF THE OFFICER'S TUNIC. AND THEN SLIDES THE WATCH DOWN HIS WRIST.

VASYA Binocs. Leitz. There. Alright?

SERYOZHA GETS THE BINOCULARS.
WHILE VASYA SNATCHES A PAIR OF SPECTACLES.

SERYOZHA Perfect.

VASYA Right. We're done. Get his tommy gun. (THEN:) Stomach or feet?

A MOMENT'S THOUGHT, THEN HE CHOOSES:

SERYOZHA Feet.

VASYA Right you are. (SERYOZHA PICKS IT UP) Ready? One, two, three.

THEY THEN CHARGE OUT OF THE CRATER, RUNNING AS FAST AS THEY CAN, OVER THE RUBBLE.
THERE IS ONE SHORT FUSILLADE OF GUNFIRE AND THEN THEY ARE UP AND OVER THE RAILWAY EMBANKMENT.
THEY DROP DOWN UNDER COVER.

- SERYOZHA (= *I'm alive*) Yes.
- VASYA You all there? All five limbs?
- SERYOZHA Yes.
- VASYA (UNTROUBLED) Let's see those binocs.
- SERYOZHA Shouldn't we keep going?
- VASYA That's what they'll think. Right now, they're waiting for us to start crawling across there. Give me that can.
- SERYOZHA PASSES HIM THE TIN CAN. WITH AN EFFORT, VASYA THROWS IT TEN METRES IN FRONT OF THEM. THERE IS A BURST OF MACHINE GUN FIRE.
- VASYA 'Sgive them ten. Let them get bored. Give me them binocs. (OF THE BINOCULARS, ADMIRING:;) Leitz Kriegsmarine seven fifties. Look, rangefinder, here, along the right lens. Workmanship.
- SERYOZHA Batrakov'll be pleased
- VASYA 'Snot bloody getting them.
- SERYOZHA But...
- VASYA Thought I might pop off see my laundry lady.
- SERYOZHA Now?
- VASYA She's got a boy. That's who this watch is for. (SHOWING IT TO HIM) What's that say, Professor?
- SERYOZHA (READING THE WATCH FACE) 'Phoenix'. And that, there, that's 'Luftwaffe'.
- VASYA Bloody German stole it off his own – what a scrote.
- SERYOZHA Shall we go?
- VASYA What's the rush?

SERYOZHA (COME ON) Count of three?

DURING THE FOLLOWING THEY GET TO THEIR FEET AND GET READY TO RUN.

VASYA One.

SERYOZHA Two.

VASYA & SERYOZHA Three

AND THEY START RUNNING.

CUT TO:

SCENE 4. CELLAR. DAY.

THE HOUSE IS UNDER HEAVY BOMBARDMENT

KATYA (QUIETLY CHANTING TO HERSELF, TO KEEP HER
NERVE) Tikhimirov, Flat 1 - one ring; Dzyga, Flat 2 – two
rings; Cheremushkin, Floor 2, Front Flat – three rings;
Feinberg, Floor 2, Rear Flat – four rings; Vengrova, Floor 3 –
Rear Flat - five rings; Andryushenko, Floor 3, Front Flat - six
rings; Pegov, Attic Flat – one long ring. One ring -
Tikhimirov, Flat 1; Two rings - Dzyga, Flat 2; Three rings...

AND FADE OUT TO:

SCENE 5. GROUND FLOOR. DAY.

A QUIET MOMENT. SERYOZHA IS READING TO THEM

SERYOZHA ...I stared at grey skies up high
 With no beliefs to inspire me,
 No one to weep for, live for, or die.

 Then came a moment of rebirth,
 I looked up - you are there again,
 An ephemeral mirage, the ideal
 Of all that's prized among men.³

BATRAKOV 'Snice. Very nice.

SERYOZHA Pushkin.

POLYAKOV 'Snot the real thing, though, is it?

ZUBAREV Unlike our new tootsie with the radio. Turning her knobs.

BATRAKOV Except her tits, Zubarev. Where's the tits?

POLYAKOV You tit men. I give up.

BATRAKOV It's about the whole package, dearest Comrade Polyakov, the
 whole experience. You need a good pair of tits to hang on to.

ZUBAREV 'Whole experience'!? You haven't even spoken to her.

BATRAKOV Everyone's been by for a little chat. Even old fartface here.

POLYAKOV Careful. (HE SPITS)

ZUBAREV Has she got what makes a woman a woman?
 Straightforward question.

POLYAKOV She's Grekov's anyway. Boss gets first dibs.

ZUBAREV Why's that mean she's got to fall in love with him?

³ from Pushkin's *A Magic Moment I Remember*. My translation.

- BATRAKOV (OF ALL THINGS) Love!?
- POLYAKOV That's not what it's called. Not when I do it.
- THE MEN LAUGH
- BATRAKOV In the kingdom of the blind, boys, that's all it is. We're that desperate even a Katya looks alright.
- SERYOZHA Anyone, anyone want – I could read the next few verses?
- BATRAKOV Legs like a stork, no arse I can see, eyes like a heifer. And don't get me started on the tits.
- POLYAKOV Big tits – an outmoded, pre-revolutionary point of view. I'm surprised at you, comrade.
- BATRAKOV Trouble is I'm picky. I really like them small. Armenians. Little Jewish girls. Short hair and those flitty wide eyes, like they're saying Don't Look At Me but really want you to get a good look at every bit of them. Right up there.
- ZUBAREV We'll see how it works out in the end.
- POLYAKOV (*You mean*) Who gets her knees open? (IT'S OBVIOUS:)
The Manager.
- ZUBAREV Not obvious. (HE HURLS A BIT OF BRICK AGAINST THE WALL AS HE SAYS, ANGRY) Not bloody obvious at all.
- THE OTHERS LAUGH
- POLYAKOV What about you, Professor?
- SERYOZHA I...um...I – she seems very...
- ZUBAREV You got to have an opinion.
- SERYOZHA Um...
- BATRAKOV Maybe if he doesn't say anything, it's because he doesn't want to.

ZUBAREV What about you up there? Oy, Bunchuk. Oy, down here, I'm talking to you, Bunchuk!

BUNCHUK IS ON THE FLOOR ABOVE.
THEY CALL THROUGH THE (SUBSTANTIAL) HOLE IN THE FLOOR

BUNCHUK As it happens, Comrade, I am trying to watch the enemy. You know, like I'm supposed to.

ZUBAREV What they up to?

BUNCHUK You want to see, Zubarev, climb up the bloody ladder, it's right there.

BATRAKOV Come on, tell us.

BUNCHUK Well...alright, funny you should ask because there's a German officer going for a walk with his dog.

POLYAKOV What breed?

BUNCHUK I can report that the fascist canine is sniffing a fine Soviet lamppost. It's a bitch, we have confirmation of the canine gender.

POLYAKOV What breed?

BUNCHUK The officer is now scratching himself. Right up his fascist anus. If that isn't a whatsit.

BATRAKOV Tautology.

POLYAKOV What rank?

BUNCHUK Oh, and there's two young females talking to a platoon of Fritzie's. The German individual is offering cigarettes to the young Soviet females.

POLYAKOV What brand?

BUNCHUK One female has lit up, the other is shaking her head.

POLYAKOV (NOT SERIOUS) 'Like that, no fraternisation.

BATRAKOV Might be saying she doesn't smoke.

ZUBAREV Might be saying she doesn't open up shop for two lousy cigarettes.

BUNCHUK There's a whole lot more soldiers filling the space, I think it's that square down from the tram station.

BATRAKOV By the State Bank?

BUNCHUK Didn't notice before, there's a sort of platform set up in the middle. No, it's a sort of pile of wood.

POLYAKOV Whole city's a pile of –

BUNCHUK No, they've stacked it up and –

HE STOPS DEAD.

ZUBAREV What's happened?

BUNCHUK Oh bloody bloody hell.

BATRAKOV What?

BUNCHUK There's a woman, they're dragging this woman in. In some sort of nightdress. They're marching her in and she's screaming and fighting.

POLYAKOV (CONFUSED) What?

BUNCHUK They've got her up against a post. By the pile. On the pile. They're tying her to this post. She's screaming. Her mouth, I can see her mouth opening.

SERYOZHA What's happening?

BUNCHUK Oh God, there's a little boy with her. They're tying him up and all. Shitting hell, Lieutenant, oh God, oh shit shit shit.

BATRAKOV (RUNNING UP THE LADDER TO THE O.P.) What is going on? Report.

WE GO WITH HIM, MOVING UP TO BE WITH THE O.P. (THE OTHER MEN NOW DOWN BELOW)

BUNCHUK There's two Fritzie's with cans. They've been shaking the liquid out all over the wood, the piled-up place.

BATRAKOV We have to – Polyakov, get your bloody map out, give me some co-ordinates.

BUNCHUK They've lit it.

BATRAKOV IS MEANWHILE FURIOUSLY WINDING THE TELEPHONE.

BATRAKOV Polyakov!

POLYAKOV I'm doing it.

ZUBAREV Come on, man.

BUNCHUK The place is full of smoke. The people are just standing round, watching, I can see them.

BATRAKOV (MEANWHILE INTO PHONE, MANICALLY TAPPING THE CONTACT POINTS TO GET THROUGH) Artillery HQ, this is Building 6/1. This is Building 6/1. (AND AD LIB)

SERYOZHA Do something. Captain!

IMPORTANT: DURING THE REST OF THE SCENE, ALL THE OTHER SOLDIERS (GREKOV, KATYA, VASYA AND LYAKHOV) JOIN THE GROUP, START LISTENING, WATCHING AND TELLING THEM TO HURRY UP

BATRAKOV (TO POLYAKOV) Co-ordinates, come on. (INTO PHONE) Come on, artillery, come on. (NOW HE GETS THROUGH:) I need immediate barrage. It's 6/1. Yes, immediate.

POLYAKOV Seventeen north, thirty-five eight east.

SERYOZHA What's happening?

BATRAKOV Seventeen minutes north.
No, seventeen.
No time to range it, just fire, fire at will.

BUNCHUK I can see her face. She's wriggling, she's trying to bend down to her boy. There's smoke, there's – the Germans, they're all standing round watching. They're just watching while she –

AND NOW THE ARTILLERY SHELLS LAND.
A LONG SALVO. AND THEN A SECOND.
THEN SILENCE.

POLYAKOV That's good.

SERYOZHA Is that the - ?

BATRAKOV Report.

BUNCHUK State Bank Square has been subjected to artillery bombardment.

BATRAKOV Report results.

A MOMENT, THEN:

BUNCHUK Significant damage. Casualties uncertain. Comrades.

THE MEN CLEAR THEIR THROATS, DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY.

BATRAKOV (CALMING DOWN, IT'S OVER) Alright. Alright.

ZUBAREV Alright.

POLYAKOV It's done.

SERYOZHA Oh God.

GREKOV (FINALLY) Everyone back to positions.

CUT TO:

SCENE 6. GROUND FLOOR. EARLY EVENING.

KATYA IS SITTING HUNCHED BY HER RADIO. SERYOZHA WANDERS OVER, TRIES TO MAKE CONVERSATION. HE IS NOT GOOD AT IT, SHE ISN'T MUCH BETTER.

SERYOZHA You – you – you do the radio, do you?

KATYA This is – (POINTING) – this is my radio.

SERYOZHA That?

KATYA Here. This.

SERYOZHA ‘Snice. New?

KATYA New ammeter was fitted. At Battalion HQ.

SERYOZHA They sent you up here?

KATYA That’s right. Sent me up.

SERYOZHA Don’t...you know...don’t....

KATYA What?

SERYOZHA (NEW SUBJECT) Vasya says the telephone cable is still live.

KATYA I know.

SERYOZHA So why did they...?

KATYA Don’t what?

SERYOZHA What?

KATYA You said ‘Don’t’ and then didn’t say what I shouldn’t...

SERYOZHA PLUCKS UP COURAGE. THEN:

SERYOZHA Don't listen to them too much.

KATYA The men?

SERYOZHA They're - they talk about you.

KATYA It's – I can get used to the Stukas and the shrapnel and the machine guns. I don't know if I can get used to the way they're looking at me. They're so...

SERYOZHA What?

KATYA Heavy. Man-like.

SERYOZHA Sorry.

KATYA I can – I'll do my radio, I'll keep – it'll be alright.

A MOMENT

SERYOZHA You saw the General?

KATYA He was very nice. Till he asked me if I wanted to dance.

SERYOZHA Dance?

KATYA He had a gramophone.

SERYOZHA I see.

A MOMENT

KATYA I didn't.

SERYOZHA What?

KATYA Dance with him. He was drunk. He was scared, I think.

SERYOZHA Aren't you?

KATYA I always, you know, when I was growing up, I always believed I was fated to be unhappy.

SERYOZHA Why would anyone think that?

KATYA I used to see people coming out of restaurants – just some cheap place – and they looked like fabulous beings, from somewhere else. What was it like to be them? I wanted to know. Sometimes I followed them.

SERYOZHA They're the same as anyone.

KATYA My Mum earns four hundred a month. You pay income tax, cultural tax and State loan, it doesn't leave much. You buy your milk at the state shop.

SERYOZHA You queued for – ?

KATYA Saved six roubles. Queues don't matter.

SERYOZHA (HE HAS NEVER HAD TO DO THIS) I see.

KATYA Once, apparently, I had three bowls of soup and I turned to my mother and said "Well, today we've had a three course meal."

SHE HAS GONE TOO FAR, EMBARRASSED HERSELF.

KATYA You know. When I was little or something.

SERYOZHA Did your father not...I mean, did he - ?

KATYA I was about ten, eleven and I was searching in a cupboard and I found a photograph of him. Didn't tell my mother, I just left it there and I used to go and look at it after I got back from school.

SERYOZHA What was he like?

KATYA He had these eyes. Really sad. Really dark.

- SERYOZHA Where was he? I mean, what - ?
- KATYA (CONTINUING) And on the back, there was this thing written: "I am of the tribe of Asra. When we love, we die in silence."
- SERYOZHA That's –
- KATYA Someone told me. It's from a poem.
- SERYOZHA (QUIET) By Heine.
- KATYA I don't mind it's German. It's a lovely poem.
- SERYOZHA Where is he, your dad?
- KATYA It wasn't till I joined up, came home in my uniform, Mum told me – he was arrested in '37.
- SERYOZHA My father too.
- KATYA He had left my mother before then, a long time before. She was very upset.
- SERYOZHA (BUT) If they'd been together in '37.
- A MOMENT. THEN:
- KATYA You really like poetry?
- SERYOZHA The others, they told me to read it to them. They call me Professor.
- KATYA Is it yours? The book.
- SERYOZHA My mother's. She wanted me to – it's the one we studied at school and she said –
- KATYA We did Nekrasov.
- SERYOZHA He's great.

- KATYA (SURPRISE) D'you think?
- SERYOZHA Amazing.
- KATYA You're having me on.
- SERYOZHA (PULLING BACK, 'WANTING TO AGREE WITH' HER) No, no, I know, I was just – he's not very good, is he?
- KATYA Terrible.
- SERYOZHA Yes.
- KATYA I really miss....
- SERYOZHA What?
- KATYA It was never easy, for my Mum and me. But I loved it you know. I really – and I can never go back now.
- SERYOZHA We'll be alright. We'll get through this.
- KATYA I meant – it won't be the same. I want to be ten again, I want to be curled up there, staring at that photo of my father, not knowing who he was, not wanting to know really, just happy that I could look at him. I don't want to get older and find out he humiliated my mother, I don't want to think about him being questioned and tortured by the you-know, and I don't want to – all this. I want it to be like it was.
- SERYOZHA Queuing for an hour for a bottle of milk?
- KATYA That's right. That's exactly what I want. Is that – why shouldn't I?
- VASYA (APPROACHING, HAVING CLIMBED THROUGH A WINDOW) Bloody buggering hell.
- SERYOZHA Ladies present, Vasili Terentyevich.

VASYA Don't bloody bugging care.

SERYOZHA What's got your goat?

VASYA (SURPRISE) You knew about it?

SERYOZHA What?

VASYA My laundry lady. Her goat.

KATYA She's got a goat?

VASYA Not any bloody more she hasn't. Bloody great hole in the ground now.

SERYOZHA Her little boy?

VASYA Goat, boy, woman – looks like a one-tonner. Bang on top.

KATYA That's....

VASYA (WHAT REALLY PISSES HIM OFF:) My trousers.

SERYOZHA What?

VASYA She had my spare trousers and a shirt. Blown to smithereens. What did I do?

SERYOZHA Vasya.

VASYA My trousers!

SERYOZHA And that watch you gave him.

VASYA Kept that in the end. Luckily. (SHOWING HIS WRIST)
Nice, isn't it?

KATYA What about....?

VASYA What, love?

KATYA Did you find out about the woman? In the square? The fire and everything.

VASYA Gyppos, apparently. Germans reckoned she and her boy was spying.

KATYA But did they....?

VASYA (IMPATIENT) What, love?

KATYA Did they – did the artillery manage to...before the fire...?

VASYA Don't know. (WALKING AWAY) Doesn't make much difference in the end, does it?

SERYOZHA I think it does.

VASYA (TURNING BACK) Here, forgot, got you this – it was crawling round where my trousers should've been.

HE GETS A KITTEN OUT OF HIS POCKET AND DROPS IT INTO KATYA'S HANDS. IT MEWS PATHETICALLY.

VASYA Don't know why I picked up the little bugger.

KATYA He's so....

SERYOZHA Careful. He's scared.

KATYA All he's known is noise and fire.

SERYOZHA And hunger.

KATYA Here, lick my finger. That's it. That's it. Kitty-cat, that's it.

CUT TO:

SCENE 7. GROUND FLOOR. EVENING.

GREKOV AND KATYA ARE NEXT TO THE RADIO TRANSMITTER.

GREKOV German attack repelled at noon today.

HE STOPS BRIEFLY AT EACH FULL STOP AND ALLOWS KATYA TO REPEAT WHAT HE HAS SAID INTO THE RADIO. LIKE AN INTERPRETER, HE DOESN'T WAIT FOR HER TO FINISH EACH TIME.

GREKOV One casualty. Not serious. German infantry has successfully dug in a short distance along building's west flank. Everything indicates a major offensive against Tractor Factory. Telephone link severed and not possible to send a lineman. Have instructed Sergeant Major to blast new communication tunnel. Have released three sticks of dynamite for the purpose. Have farted several times today, but no satisfactory motion since Wednesday.

KATYA (STOPPING HERSELF AS SHE REPEATS:) Have far – Comrade?

GREKOV Honestly, do they really need to know everything we're doing?

KATYA (INTO RADIO) Sorry, Battalion. Transmission complete. Awaiting reply.

SHE CLICKS IT TO RECEIVE.

GREKOV STRETCHES.

GREKOV How's that kitten getting on? Getting his strength up?

KATYA Don't think so. (SHE PICKS HIM UP) Look.

GREKOV Miserable beast.

KATYA That's not fair. He's been scared.

GREKOV When we were on the steppe, months back, there I was, something suddenly hit me, middle of my back. Know what it was? A rabbit. Stayed with me all evening. Then hopped

off. Doesn't know the difference between a mortar and a 108 and a recon plane. Even you can do that. Waste of life.

KATYA This village, where we were stationed, there was this mongrel. Our planes flew over – Ilyushins, he just lay there, all calm, head on his paws. Soon as it was a Junkers, he could hear, he went straight to hide – he had a place under a truck. Never got it wrong.

IMPORTANT: IN THE MIDDLE OF THESE TWO SPEECHES, A GERMAN ROCKET LANDS NEARBY. EXPLODES. THERE IS A SHOWER OF EARTH AND MASONRY DUST. THEY CONTINUE TALKING AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE THROUGHOUT, MAYBE EVEN REPEATING WORDS IF UNHEARD, UTTERLY UNSHAKEN, DUST THEMSELVES OFF, KEEP TALKING. KATYA HAS BECOME BATTLE-HARDENED.

GREKOV You've changed.

KATYA Have I?

GREKOV I remember timid little Katya arriving here, a week ago.

KATYA You want to take the credit?

GREKOV How could I?

KATYA And it's nine days.

AND THE RADIO IS SUDDENLY SPEAKING INTO HER HEADSET. SHE RECITES IT TO GREKOV.

KATYA Yes, receiving.
Go ahead, comrade.
Battalion will send ammunition tomorrow.

GREKOV Always tomorrow.

KATYA Building to be held. Reinforcements as soon as possible.

GREKOV Meaning never.

KATYA HQ requires a detailed report to be made each day, twelve noon precisely, without –

GREKOV SMASHES HER HAND OFF THE SWITCH.

KATYA YELPS

GREKOV GETS OUT HIS REVOLVER AND SMASHES THE SWITCH OFF

GREKOV Looks like a mortar fragment just put the wireless-set out of action.

KATYA (SHOCKED) Comrade.

GREKOV ‘Sabugger when that happens.

KATYA (SHOCK) Battalion HQ. Daily report.

GREKOV (TAKING HER HAND) Sorry, Katya, didn’t mean to hurt you.

KATYA My wireless set.

GREKOV Contact will be re-established when the Building Manager has the time to be told things he already knows.

KATYA What am I going to do? I’m only here to –

SHE GETS NO FURTHER.

SUDDENLY THERE IS A GRENADE EXPLOSION, FOLLOWED BY MACHINE GUN FIRE FROM SEVERAL POSITIONS

GREKOV Now what are they doing?

THE MEN ARE NOW COMING ALIVE AND GRABBING WEAPONS AND ALL SHOUTING AT ONCE

POLYAKOV Shaposhnikov, get them shells up here.

LYAKHOV Where’s that charge?

SERYOZHA Where’s that tarpaulin, need that tarpaulin.

ZUBAREV For God’s sake, Polyakov you’ve missed another chance to take them.

GREKOV Get the other Degtyarev up here. I want covering fire.

BATRAKOV Grenades, get me some grenades here.

GREKOV Polyakov, for God’s sake, sitting duck, right there and you’re asleep. Do you want Germans living in our house? You going to rent them rooms?

ZUBAREV You two, behind there. Hold the position. Use spades if you have to.

GREKOV No, you don't. Get back, you bastards.

AND THE SHOUTING AND GUNFIRE BUILDS UP TO A FULL FIREFIGHT. UNDER WHICH:

KATYA (ONLY TO HERSELF) Seryozha. Be careful. Seryozha. Please.

CUT TO:

SCENE 8. MONTAGE: AGAINST A CONSTANT BACKGROUND OF
ARTILLERY BOMBARDMENT OR MACHINEGUNFIRE.

THE NOISE CRESTS AND THEN DROPS AWAY ONLY JUST ENOUGH TO
ALLOW THESE EXCHANGES:

ARGUING EARNESTLY, IN SPITE OF SURROUNDING BARRAGE:

BATRAKOV I'm just talking the odds of it. Somewhere, in some galaxy,
there's got to be another Soviet state.

LYAKHOV But that implies that there are also capitalist states?
Bourgeois dictatorships? On other planets?

BATRAKOV All in decline, obviously.

LYAKHOV All my reading, tells me that this is the first, a genuine
discovery here on earth.

BATRAKOV There is Soviet Power in other galaxies, it's inevitable.

MORE BOMBARDMENT/GUNFIRE. THEN:

GREKOV (LOOKING ROUND) Not a bad spot for you up here. You
and your kitten.

KATYA Maybe I should check the radio.

GREKOV If I'd met you before the war, I'd've made you my wife.

KATYA I'll just go down, check for –

GREKOV HQ sent a message, General wanted us to send someone
back, make a full report to Division. I chose your new friend
Seryozha. He's off for two days of hot kasha, beetroot,
maybe even a bit of calf's foot jelly.

KATYA I see.

GREKOV So I could pop up and see you up here.

MORE BOMBARDMENT/GUNFIRE.

ZUBAREV Oy Vasya, don't get too comfortable, Building Manager's looking for you.

VASYA I just bloody got back.

ZUBAREV He wants you behind German lines again.

VASYA I'm coming.

ZUBAREV GOES OFF SINGING (A LENSKY ARIA FROM *EUGENE ONEGIN*)
IN FULL OPERATIC BEL CANTO

VASYA Do you have to sing?

ZUBAREV Got to show them – life's still got grace and charm – don't care about how many bombs they drop on us.

VASYA You're crazy.

ZUBAREV All opera's crazy.

MORE BOMBARDMENT/GUNFIRE

POLYAKOV What's that mean?

BATRAKOV (TRANSLATING A BOTTLE LABEL) Helps with –

POLYAKOV Cures.

BATRAKOV Maybe - cures ailments – illnesses – ausschlag - of the foot.

POLYAKOV Look at my corns, hasn't done a thing.

BATRAKOV That's nasty.

POLYAKOV German medicine. Bloody useless.

BATRAKOV Apply twice a day to all infected areas.

POLYAKOV 'Sright, took a slug twice a day.

BATRAKOV Apply. Paint. Rub it on. The outside.

POLYAKOV Drinking it does the same, though, right?

BATRAKOV Hasn't, has it?

POLYAKOV (FLINGING THE BOTTLE AGAINST THE WALL) Because it's bloody German, that's why. I'm going to bloody kill them next time they come over that wall. Bloody kill them.

MORE BOMBARDMENT/GUNFIRE

GREKOV That's right – you wanted a flat, nothing fancy, just enough for you and the wife, you had to bribe the quartermaster, two captains and a major.

LYAKHOV That's terrible.

GREKOV General in our regiment, he started as a first lieutenant. Wrote a letter denouncing the Captain. He gets promoted. Writes another letter, that gets rid of the major. Three years, four more letters later, he's a general. Because he can write letters.

KATYA You're married?

GREKOV Let's not talk about that.

KATYA You said a flat for you and 'my wife'.

AND THE BARRAGE BUILDS AGAIN

AND THEN MIXES OUT TO:

SCENE 9. CELLAR: TUNNEL ENTRANCE. DAY.

KRYMOV AND SERYOZHA EMERGE THROUGH THE TUNNEL. KRYMOV COUGHING.

POLYAKOV IS FRYING POTATO CAKES ON A TIN-PLATE GRIDDLE.

SPORADIC GUNFIRE AND MORTAR SHELLING (WHICH WILL GRADUALLY DIE OUT DURING THE SCENE)

POLYAKOV (WELCOMING HIM) Seryozha! The young professor returns.

SERYOZHA (DELIGHTED TO BE BACK) There's an officer present.

POLYAKOV Never thought I'd see you again in this world.

SERYOZHA This is Battalion Commissar Krymov.

POLYAKOV 'Syou I've been waiting for.

SERYOZHA 'Sonly been four days.

KRYMOV (ARRIVING) How old are you, soldier?

POLYAKOV Sixty-one – want a potato cake?

KRYMOV Regular army?

POLYAKOV Workers' militia. That factory you just came through - that was my gaff.

KRYMOV Where's your commander?

SERYOZHA He'll be upstairs.

POLYAKOV (OFFERING) They're good. The potato cakes.

KRYMOV (TO SERYOZHA) I'll find him. You....do whatever you should be doing.

SERYOZHA (SALUTE AND GO) Comrade Commissar.

POLYAKOV Ladder's over there.

KRYMOV Thank you.

KRYMOV MOVES ACROSS, THEN:

KRYMOV (TO ALL, STOPPING AS HE CLIMBS THE STAIRS) So Building 6/1 is holding out. 6/1 has not yielded to the Fascists. All over the world, millions of people are reading about you and rejoicing.

BUNCHUK (EATING ONE) Anyone written about Polyakov's potato cakes yet?

KRYMOV I don't think so.

ZUBAREV Have they opened a second front yet?

KRYMOV Not yet.

LYAKHOV Three days ago, our own heavy artillery, east bank buggers, opened up on us. Captain was knocked off his feet. He gets up, and he says "There it is, boys, there's the second front for you."

LYAKHOV BECOMES MORE DISTANT AS KRYMOV CONTINUES UP THE STAIRS, WHERE HE ASKS ANOTHER SOLDIER:

KRYMOV Where's your commander?

LYAKHOV (LOOKING ROUND) There. By the shutters. With the binoculars.

KRYMOV WALKS OVER

KRYMOV Comrade Captain?

GREKOV Shhh.

KRYMOV (STERNER) Comrade?

GREKOV (LOUDER) Shhhh.

KRYMOV Battalion Commissar Krymov reporting.

GREKOV (TURNING) Ah.

HE STANDS AND COMES DOWN THE PILE OF BRICKS.

GREKOV Welcome to our hut, Comrade Commissar. I'm Ivan Ivanovich Grekov, currently employed here as Building Manager.

KRYMOV IS MOMENTARILY WRONG-FOOTED BY THIS 'INSOLENT'

GREKOV How was your trip? Like our new tunnel? Antsiferov gets down there with his dynamite, he can get a bit carried away. (CALLING OUT TO LYAKHOV) Lieutenant, this is our new commissar

ZUBAREV Comrade.

GREKOV Used to be a builder, now he just loves blowing them up. Explains a lot.

KRYMOV Would you like to be relieved, Comrade?

GREKOV We would like some cigarettes. And of course, mortar shells, grenades, and, only if you can spare it, some vodka. I know, we'd like something to eat. We're a bit sick of rotten potatoes, foul water.

KRYMOV The General genuinely admires what you're doing here. It's remarkable how you've held this position.

GREKOV Just doesn't like how we're doing it.

KRYMOV You need to log your operations.

GREKOV No point in writing it all down, even if I had any paper.

KRYMOV You currently fall under the command of the 176th.

GREKOV Very probably, Comrade Battalion Commissar. Except when the Germans cut off this entire street, I gathered these men together, I assembled these weapons, some of ours, some of

theirs. I repelled enemy attacks twice daily, I destroyed eight German tanks, and, you know, during all that time, I wasn't under any command at all.

KRYMOV Where's that radio operator we sent you?

GREKOV Ah...turned out to be a German spy – tried to recruit me to the Thousand-Year Reich. Saw right through her. Raped her first, then had her shot. With a rusty bullet.

KRYMOV (WHAT?) Comrade Captain?

GREKOV Isn't that the sort of answer you want? Surely I'm heading for a penal battalion anyway, isn't that your plan?

KRYMOV I'm not here to – I have been in command of a surrounded unit myself.

GREKOV Shhh.

KRYMOV My orders were that if necessary I was to demote you and take command myself. Please don't make that a necessity.

GREKOV Shhh, shhh. It's gone quiet. Fritzie's finally calming down.

CUT TO:

SCENE 10. TOP FLOOR: ARTILLERY OBSERVATION POINT.
AFTERNOON.

THE BUILDING IS UNDER SPORADIC ARTILLERY BOMBARDMENT.
SERYOZHA APPROACHES KATYA.

SERYOZHA You read that?

KATYA Trying – not as good as Dickens.

SERYOZHA (DESPISING) Dickens.

KATYA What about Zola, do you like him? Germinal.

SERYOZHA (AFTER A BEAT) Not much.

A MOMENT. THEY'VE RUN OUT OF THINGS TO TALK ABOUT.
AND THEN THEY EACH START TALKING SIMULTANEOUSLY:

SERYOZHA I'm going with the infantry –

KATYA I think they're tunnelling right underneath us.

SERYOZHA (LETTING HER CONTINUE) Can you hear them?

KATYA It feels like it. I mean, they're so close. It feels like they must
be right here.

SERYOZHA (SUDDENLY ITCHING) These sodding lice. (REALISING
HE HAS SWORN) Sorry.

KATYA (ITCHING) Stop, you're making me.

SERYOZHA You can do things, bury your clothes overnight, leave a bit
sticking out, they all climb onto it.

KATYA How am I going to do that?

SERYOZHA Is he after you?

KATYA Mmmm.

SERYOZHA How do you – I mean, what's that like?

KATYA You know perfectly well.

SERYOZHA I think he's an amazing man.

KATYA I've never heard anyone talk about – you know – what happened, the arrests, the camps.

SERYOZHA I'm going with the infantry –

KATYA (AGAIN COMING IN OVER HIM) He must know they'll arrest him if anyone –

SERYOZHA (DETERMINED TO TELL HER) I'm going with the infantry tonight, we've got to clear the Germans out of that shack next door.

KATYA (*But*) You're mortar crew.

SERYOZHA Grekov's ordered me.

KATYA That's not – [*fair*]. It's like the tribe of Asra.

SERYOZHA Why are you still here anyway? Your radio's smashed. He should have sent you back to the East Bank.

KATYA At least we get to talk. Most days.

SERYOZHA (AVOIDANCE) Where's the kitten?

KATYA Over there.

SERYOZHA Where?

KATYA When the wall came down. Crushed his back legs. He was crawling over here. He died in silence.

SERYOZHA The others, they look at us and laugh.

KATYA So?

SERYOZHA (TRYING TO BE MANLY) I'm a soldier.

KATYA First time I saw you, you were reading poetry. I thought 'What a twit.'

SERYOZHA Thanks.

KATYA Then you went off to Division for almost a week and I didn't know if you were...

SERYOZHA It was so boring. I didn't know what – I thought if any of the men tries to get you to –

KATYA And then when you got back you walked straight past me, didn't even say Hello.

SERYOZHA Batrakov was watching.

KATYA Definitely a twit, I thought.

SERYOZHA (SUDDENLY ITCHING) Bloody lice.

KATYA You'll be careful. Won't you?

CUT TO:

SCENE 11. GROUND FLOOR: EVENING.

FOOD IS BEING COOKED

GREKOV Don't sit over there, Comrade Commissar. Come, join us, eat.

KRYMOV STANDS, AND CROSSES TO THEM, OVER PILES OF BRICK.

KRYMOV Comrades, let me ask you. You don't need anyone to teach you about fighting. The spirit of the revolution is alive here – you know what you're fighting for and I envy you. It's what we felt when we fought for the Revolution. We were making this country – and so are you. Right here. You are. So why do you think my superiors decided to send me to you? What have I come here for?

BATRAKOV (*For*) A bowl of soup?

SOME LAUGHTER (INCLUDING GREKOV)

KRYMOV Comrades, please, can we be serious?

LYAKHOV Go on.

KRYMOV The Party. The Party sent me to you.

LYAKHOV Why's that?

KRYMOV There's – everyone, we all, everyone, applauds what you're doing here. And then when I arrived – there's such dignity here, you're all together – equal, that's good.

GREKOV I decided there really wasn't the room for an officers' mess.

KRYMOV I don't mean that – I mean you're all working men here. Whether you're shooting the enemy or digging or peeling potatoes. You're working together to make a new world.

BATRAKOV Be lucky to see it.

- KRYMOV That's probably true – and that makes it all the more miraculous. It's like it was in Lenin's day.
- LYAKHOV Ah, Lenin, knew he'd be back.
- KRYMOV (RIDING OVER THIS) You all believe good will triumph, that's all I mean. Regardless of the cost. The personal cost. That's what the Party is for, to carry on your work. Bring it value. That's what it means – what it's always meant for me.
- POLYAKOV You know, there's something I've been wanting to ask the Party for years now.
- KRYMOV (GO AHEAD) Please, Comrade.
- POLYAKOV I've heard – everyone – you know – under Communism – everyone gets according to his needs.
- KRYMOV That's right.
- POLYAKOV Won't everyone just end up getting pissed all day?
- KRYMOV That's not –
- POLYAKOV If they receive according to their needs right from breakfast onwards?
- DURING THIS GREKOV HAS STARTED TO LAUGH MORE AND MORE
- KRYMOV You're misunderstanding how –
- POLYAKOV Right through to supper time? I don't get it.
- KRYMOV Under Communism, man will aspire to higher –
- LYAKHOV What about the collective farms – couldn't we get rid of them after the war?
- KRYMOV I can explain that.
- GREKOV Excellent, we can have a lecture about the famines in –
- KRYMOV I have not come here to give lectures.

GREKOV (MOCK DISAPPOINTMENT) Ohh.

KRYMOV You really shouldn't be – certain unacceptable partisan attitudes – they seem to have taken root in this building.

BATRAKOV So a lecture about partisan –

KRYMOV Not lectures, not soup, I am here to give you a taste of real Bolshevism.

GREKOV Yum, yum, let's tuck in.

KRYMOV (SHARP: DON'T PUSH ME TOO FAR) What do you want, Comrade?

GREKOV (LETTING IT DROP) We need to eat. Some of these men are going on a raid soon. (TO THE MEN) Come on, we'll be sharing this soup with Fritz if he gets any closer – I want them scared off tonight.

CUT TO:

SCENE 12. CELLAR: NIGHT.

VERY OCCASIONAL SHELLS AND FLARES, OTHERWISE SILENCE.
KATYA IS TRYING TO SLEEP.
SHE HEARS TENTATIVE FOOTSTEPS APPROACHING UP THE LADDER.

KATYA (URGENT) Who's that?

SERYOZHA 'Sme.

KATYA You scared me.

SERYOZHA I've got to tell you something.

KATYA What?

SERYOZHA I'm sorry. It's important - I've never read Germinal.

KATYA I know.

SERYOZHA Oh.

THEN:

SERYOZHA I can't see you.

KATYA I'm here.

SERYOZHA Where?

THEN A SHELL BURSTS NEARBY

SERYOZHA Got you. I thought you were –

KATYA Here.

AND SITS ALONGSIDE HER.

KATYA Here. Have a bit of coat.

SERYOZHA Thanks.

SERYOZHA TAKES HER HAND.

SERYOZHA Is that alright?

KATYA What?

SERYOZHA Your hand. Not squeezing too hard?

KATYA No.

SERYOZHA Not sure how...I haven't – before.

THE BREATHING IS TIGHT, CLOSE.

A FLARE BURSTS OVERHEAD. A RUSH OF BURNING PHOSPHOROUS.

SERYOZHA Your eyes are closed.

KATYA Of course.

SERYOZHA Can I...?

KATYA What?

HE KISSES HER.
ONCE.
TWICE.
THEN STOPS.

SERYOZHA This – this is the real thing, isn't it?

KATYA My eyes were closed.

SHE KISSES HIM.
THEN:

SERYOZHA This is for all our lives.

KATYA I'm worried someone might come over.

SERYOZHA They won't.

KATYA Until now, I was so pleased when anyone – Polyakov, Zubarev, Lyakhov – any of them came up to talk.

SERYOZHA Grekov?

KATYA No.

SERYOZHA KISSES HER NECK. UNDOES SOME TUNIC BUTTONS. SHE RESPONDS.
THEN:

SERYOZHA Katya?

KATYA What?

SERYOZHA Nothing. I mean, I just needed to hear your voice.

ANOTHER FLARE EXPLODES ABOVE.

SERYOZHA Suddenly you look different.

KATYA The flare, it is green, you know.

SERYOZHA I don't mean that. It's like this sudden moment, I get to see you for half a second. It's so different.

KATYA Your hair, it's like a boy's.

SERYOZHA It's alright. We don't need to be afraid. You and me. This is for life. If.

KATYA It's not - I was just thinking about my mother.

SERYOZHA Do you miss her?

KATYA Until you came.

SERYOZHA Really?

KATYA Hold me. Hold me until we fall asleep.

SERYOZHA (HE HOLDS HER TIGHTER) How's that?

KATYA Yes.

SERYOZHA Alright now?

KATYA You?

SERYOZHA Yes. You?

KATYA Yes. Yes.

FADE OUT AND MIX ACROSS TO:

SCENE 13. CELLAR. NIGHT.

KRYMOV IS APPROACHING
GREKOV IS TRYING TO SLEEP

GREKOV Who's that?

KRYMOV Commissar Krymov.

GREKOV Pull up a brick, we're very informal here.

KRYMOV Can we talk seriously. (KRYMOV SITS) What do you want?

GREKOV Freedom. Got any of that in your rucksack?

KRYMOV Seriously.

GREKOV (SIMPLY AND SERIOUSLY) Freedom is all I'm fighting for.

KRYMOV We all want freedom.

GREKOV You really think that? Your people really want me, Vasya, Polyakov to have real freedom?

KRYMOV You must not allow your men to make false political statements.

GREKOV They're entitled to their opinions.

KRYMOV For God's sake, that crack about collective farms – you supported it, why?

GREKOV Any question deserves an answer – a lecture if needs be.

KRYMOV We can sort this out, between us. If you're willing.

GREKOV The people hate the farms – you know that – why make such a fuss?

KRYMOV Please, if you push this too far, I will have to write a report. You know how that ends.

- GREKOV (MOCKING) The Compassionate Commissar.
- KRYMOV (DETERMINED NOT TO BE KNOCKED OFF COURSE)
Ukraine, last summer, my battalion was surrounded. I lead the men out, one casualty, and as soon as I got back, I was interrogated. I understand what you're angry about.
- GREKOV You know, I'm not scared of flamethrowers, shrapnel, slow death. There's only one thing I'm scared of.
- KRYMOV Tell me.
- GREKOV It's written in crimson letters over the Moscow sky – this terrible, terrifying state of ours.
- KRYMOV But the spirit of Lenin is alive in this building. You, your men, you give me such hope.
- GREKOV We're just soldiers. We do a job best we can. That's all I've ever wanted to do.
- KRYMOV You're the wonder of Stalingrad.
- GREKOV So leave us alone to get on with it and go back to HQ with your kitbag of Bolshevik discipline.
- KRYMOV (ALMOST SIGHING) I have orders to remove you from your command if I deem it necessary.
- GREKOV But you won't – because you're suffering, I can see it.
- KRYMOV What are you talking about?
- GREKOV It's always the old Bolsheviks who have it worst.
- KRYMOV You're right, Comrade, I've done things – I've never had any scruples about the enemies of the state – White Guards, kulaks, conspirators – they had to go. But sometimes, just sometimes, I wonder about all these Germans we're told to kill, now we're the army of vengeance – some of them, many of them, they must be working men. What happened to class consciousness?

GREKOV (STANDING UP, ALMOST GROANING) See? You're a good man – but like I said, Comrade, you're in pain.

KRYMOV Don't force me to take action.

GREKOV How about we get some sleep instead? Things are going to be different in the morning. The Germans are less than fifty metres away.

KRYMOV Can we talk again?

GREKOV Look, over there.

KRYMOV What?

GREKOV LEADS HIM OVER.
SEMI-WHISPERING:

GREKOV Those two – look, there - asleep in each other's arms.

KRYMOV Where?

GREKOV Comrade Radio Operator and her boy.

KRYMOV (TRYING TO MAKE THEM OUT) In the corner?

GREKOV Daphnis and Chloe. Romeo and Juliet. Right here. Now.

KRYMOV Shhh.

GREKOV The way he's got his arm round her. Like he's afraid of losing her.

KRYMOV To sleep like that.

GREKOV Should have told me you were related to this boy.

KRYMOV It's not relevant.

GREKOV Sure?

KRYMOV (IT HURTS) He's my ex-wife's family, her nephew. We are no longer related. Really.

GREKOV You care about this boy, his family, his aunt, don't you?

KRYMOV I sometimes feel....I think she's why I'm here.

GREKOV See? It's not all Spirit of Lenin, is it? You're a human, you feel things, like the rest of us. I want to help you. Let me.

CUT TO:

SCENE 14. GROUND FLOOR. MORNING.

COLD MORNING.
SOME PORRIDGE BEING COOKED.
SPORADIC GUNFIRE

BATRAKOV Who's got my cap? Who's bloody taken my cap?

POLYAKOV Lice'll have eaten it – nice woollen breakfast.

GREKOV Shaposhnikov, here! Now! Vengrova, you too.

THE TWO SCRAMBLE ACROSS AND PRESENT THEMSELVES TO GREKOV.

SERYOZHA Building Manager.
KATYA Comrade Captain.

GREKOV No need for all that. At ease.

SERYOZHA Comrade Captain.

GREKOV Alright, Shaposhnikov, I'm sending you back to Regimental HQ.

SERYOZHA I've already been once, why not Lyakhov or - ?

GREKOV This is an order.

SERYOZHA I want to fight. I want to kill -

GREKOV There'll be plenty of chances for that.

SERYOZHA I want to stay here.

KATYA Let him, Comrade Manager. Please.

GREKOV That's all. Return to post.

SERYOZHA (DESPAIR) Comrade.

GREKOV And....the radio operator can go with you. No point in her pissing around here with nothing to do.

KATYA (HARDLY ABLE TO BELIEVE IT) Captain?

GREKOV You can show her the way back through the tunnels.

SERYOZHA Captain.

GREKOV After that...

THEY WAIT FOR HIM TO FINISH.

SERYOZHA Comrade?

GREKOV You'll have to - you'll have to sort it out for yourselves.

KATYA Thank you, Comrade Captain.

GREKOV I did you this. (SCRAP OF PAPER) You know I hate paperwork, I've done one order, you'll have to say it's for the both of you.

THEY SAY NOTHING

GREKOV Is that alright?

SERYOZHA Yes. Yes, it is.

GREKOV LAUGHS.

GREKOV Go, go, quick. Just go.

THEY RUSH FROM HIS PRESENCE, ALMOST GIGGLING.

GREKOV (NEXT) Right, where is he? Commissar Krymov, where are you?

HE STRIDES ACROSS THE RUBBLE

LYAKHOV He's over here.

GREKOV What do you mean?

LYAKHOV He's been hit.

KRYMOV (COMING ROUND, GROGGY) I'm alright.

LYAKHOV You got a nasty one, Comrade.

KRYMOV (DAZED) Where?

GREKOV They've grazed you, Battalion Commissar. Right down to the skull. (URGENT) Don't touch it, you'll start it bleeding again.

KRYMOV (DETERMINED, TRYING TO STAND) I'm alright.

LYAKHOV Steady now.

GREKOV Head wound, it's going to need stitches.

KRYMOV Get me a bandage, there's no reason I can't –

BUT HE IS INTERRUPTED BY HIS OWN VOMITING.
GREKOV AND LYAKHOV JUMP BACK

GREKOV Let's get a medic over here. Get this bandaged.

KRYMOV (THROUGH THE HAZE) Thank. You.

GREKOV Might have to evacuate you.

KRYMOV I Um Stah Ing Eh.

GREKOV Get you bandaged. Take a decision.

KRYMOV (WHAT HE WAS TRYING TO SAY BEFORE. NOW REALLY TRYING:.) I am staying here.

GREKOV One thing at time, Comrade Commissar.

KRYMOV Dig U Oooh Hiss?

GREKOV Sit down, come on, let them bandage you up.

KRYMOV (AGAIN, EFFORT, ENUNCIATION) Did you do this?

GREKOV That's right, I'm a German agent, fighting from within.

LYAKHOV (ARRIVING) Bandages, Comrade Manager.

GREKOV Our Commissar got a nasty head graze. A centimetre to the left and he'd have three eyes.

KRYMOV Dig You Do Hiss To Me?

GREKOV Bandage his head, stop the bleeding. (AS HE WALKS AWAY) Then maybe bandage his mouth, stop the talking. (CALLING OUT:) Vasili Terentyevich, where the hell are you?

VASYA (IN A FAR CORNER) Over here, trying to get some sleep.

GREKOV Think we're going to need you to take someone back to HQ.

VASYA In and out like a fiddler's elbow, you people.

KRYMOV (REALLY TRYING NOW, SLURRING) I was sent to restore discipline in this building.

BUNCHUK All respect, comrade, you couldn't discipline a kitten.

GREKOV The Germans are coming in tonight, it's obvious. I need you out the way.

VASYA Me and Polyakov done it before, we can carry him on our shoulders, made this sling.

BUNCHUK Through the tunnel?

POLYAKOV He's alright crawling.

KRYMOV (ACROSS THIS) Will make full report.

GREKOV You do that. You write it all down.

POLYAKOV (CONTINUING) Then we'll be in open country – we can hoist him up and run for it.

GREKOV You're going back to HQ, Comrade Commissar.

KRYMOV I have to –

HE VOMITS AGAIN, EXCEPT IT'S MORE DRY-RETCH.

GREKOV Get him in that tunnel, off you go.

VASYA Watch your head, Comrade.

GREKOV See you in Moscow. Comrade.

AD LIB, POLYAKOV AND VASYA HOISTING HIM UP

BUNCHUK If you see Seryozha, forgot to tell him....

POLYAKOV (MID-HOISTING) What?

BATRAKOV (FROM ABOVE) Tell him to get a move on and get her to the registry office.

GREKOV Katya's not that stupid.

BATRAKOV Still think she's waiting for you, Comrade Manager?

GREKOV One day, Comrade. One day.

MEANWHILE, VASYA AND POLYAKOV HAVE GOT HIM TO TUNNEL OPENING

GREKOV Good luck, Comrade Commissar.

KRYMOV GROANS.

VASYA There you go, Comrade, on your hands and knees. That's it. Forward, that's it.

THE MEN START THEIR CLIMB THROUGH THE TUNNEL. THROUGHOUT, KRYMOV AD LIBS – CONFUSION AND SICKNESS

POLYAKOV Stinks down here.

VASYA What did you want, the Moscow Metro? Chandeliers?

KRYMOV Here?

VASYA That's right, Comrade, that's it, keep going. That's it.

MEANWHILE, UP ABOVE, A BOMBARDMENT STARTS.

POLYAKOV What's going on up there?

KRYMOV German attack.

VASYA Sounds like they're launching a big one.

POLYAKOV What's new? (AS HE HITS HIS HEAD) Yow.

VASYA You want to watch those cross-beams.

POLYAKOV Very funny.

BUT THE BOMBARDMENT ABOVE HAS BEEN IS GROWING, IT IS NOW ENORMOUS, TOTAL, DEVASTATING. IT CONTINUES THROUGHOUT THE FOLLOWING.

VASYA It's not stopping, is it?

POLYAKOV If they're starting in the morning, that's not a quick raid.

VASYA What's going on up there?

KRYMOV Can't see.

POLYAKOV They're throwing everything at us.

VASYA You can feel it. Coming down through the timbers.

POLYAKOV 6/1's really getting it. This is the big one.

VASYA Bastards.

KRYMOV Got to sit down.

VASYA We should be back there. We should be giving it to them.

POLYAKOV Fritzy's going to flatten it. Bastard Germans.

VASYA He bloody sent us back, sent us away, just when....

POLYAKOV They need us.

KRYMOV Should be fight. Help me.

VASYA You want to go back and all?

KRYMOV (DELRIOUS) Should fight.

POLYAKOV Not bloody being done for disobeying orders. (AS THEY
GET HIM ON THEIR HOIST) Come on, Comrade Battalion
Commissar Senior Staff Lecturer and Best-Ever Bolshevik,
up you get. Ready, Vasya? One, two, three, and up and off
we go.

AND THEY MOVE OFF DOWN THE TUNNEL

END

“peter bach”

episode by jonathan myerson

cast

LIEUTENANT PETER BACH

HOSPITAL SISTER

GERNE, officer

ZINA, Russian civilian, aged 17

FRESSER, officer

THE GOALKEEPER, civil servant

HOSPITAL ORDERLY

SCENE 1. GERMAN MILITARY HOSPITAL JUST BEHIND THE
LINES: BATHROOM. OCTOBER 1942.

A LARGE TILED BATHROOM.
 PETER IS IN THE BATH, HIS BACK BEING SCRUBBED BY A NURSE.
 IN THE BACKGROUND, THE ARTILLERY BOMBARDMENT IS SPORADIC
 BUT INSISTENT.

SISTER Arm.

PETER (EMBARRASSED) Ummm, I...

SISTER Seen it all before, Lieutenant. Every bit of every man. Hands
 on head.

PETER RAISES HIS ARMS AND SHE SCRUBS.

SISTER Can't have you in front of the doctor looking like you've just
 crawled out of a dug-out.

PETER I've been here - (*for almost a week*)

SISTER Hands on head, please.

SHE IS NOW SCRUBBING UNDER HIS ARMS. HE WINCES.

SISTER Not too hot, is it?

PETER It's...(A PLEASURE BEYOND BELIEF)...it's extraordinary.

MEANWHILE THE BACKGROUND BOMBARDMENT HAS INTENSIFIED,
 SUDDENLY A SHADE MORE NOTICEABLE

SISTER By the time you're out of here, all that'll be sorted out, sorry -
 Russkies will be grovelling for peace.

PETER That's not what they're - [STOPPING HIMSELF SAYING:
saying on the front line]

AN UNCOMFORTABLE SILENCE.

SISTER Sorry, Lieutenant?

PETER (HE DECIDES TO GO FOR IT) No-one, down there, the fighting in Stalingrad city, no-one thinks it's going to be over any time soon.

A POINTED SILENCE FROM THE SISTER, THEN:

SISTER (STERN) Foot.

AS PETER LIFTS HIS FOOT

PETER (ALMOST SELF-DESTRUCTIVELY) Nobody knows how this is going to end up.

SISTER Other foot.

MORE SILENT SCRUBBING

SISTER You're lucky the bullet passed straight through here.

PETER (CONTINUING) I mean....it's what the men are saying.

SISTER (CONTINUING ABOUT THE WOUND) Think we need to get this splinter looked at.

PETER It's not really hurting.

SISTER (BRISK) I'll give you two more minutes in there while I tell the doctor. Towel's there.

THE SISTER WALKS ACROSS THE TILED FLOOR.
BEFORE SHE REACHES THE DOOR

PETER Sister?

SISTER Lieutenant?

PETER (BACKTRACKING, ANXIOUS) What I said - morale - if

anyone asks - on the front line – it's solid.

SISTER (FIRM) Two minutes.

SHE GOES OUT AND SHUTS THE DOOR BEHIND HER.

PETER (SLAPPING THE WATER, WHY DID I SAY THAT?) Bloody bloody hell.

AND CUT TO:

SCENE 2. MILITARY HOSPITAL: SIDE WARD.

THE FOUR MEN ARE LYING IN BED
FRESSER AND GERNE ARE ALSO OFFICERS, 'THE GOALKEEPER' IS A CIVIL
SERVANT FROM BERLIN

FRESSER It's just this trapdoor, flat in the ground, middle of all these bricks and steel and -

GERNE So how do you find it?

FRESSER Listen, will you?, you lift this trap door and this cellar, it's only about three metres square – but it's like you've gone straight into the mysteries of the Orient. They've got cushions and these mattresses and there's this oil lamp with a red shade –

PETER Why's it always red?

FRESSER Like I said, it's the full works. One of them's got lipstick.

PETER I mean, who decided red? Why not, I don't know, yellow?

THE GOALKEEPER (WELL OUT OF HIS DEPTH BUT WANTING TO KNOW FROM FRESSER) These women, I mean, for example, how long do you get?

FRESSER Get what you pay for. You can pay to have both of them at the same time, if you want. If there isn't too much of a

queue.

THE GOALKEEPER (SHOCK BUILDING AS HE WORKS IT OUT) You mean, usually, two men normally go in there at once?

FRESSER They got this camouflage netting across the middle of the room.

THE GOALKEEPER Where is this?

FRESSER You going to get your driver to stop off, twiddle his thumbs while you get a quick taste of Russian?

GERNE You want to hope they don't charge by the kilo.

FRESSER Here, fatso, pass us the ball, go on, we can have a kick around.

THE GOALKEEPER (HURT) Very funny.

GERNE Go on, goalie, stop hugging it, let everyone have a go. (PRETENDING TO REALISE:) Oh, it's not a ball.

PETER Leave it out, Gerne.

THE GOALKEEPER (EMBARRASSED) I try to exercise. It just all goes to my waist. If they didn't put me in an office all day –

FRESSER You want to be out here, lying in a shell-hole, Ivan sniping every time you breathe out, grenade up your jacksy if you take a crap?

THE GOALKEEPER You think it's easy in the Reichs-ministry, the sort of pressure we're under? (BUILDING STEAM) The biggest concentration of forces in the history of human warfare and we're supposed to itemise it all. Everything! You've never seen so many GK73 requisitions in your life.

FRESSER Bloody desk-jockeys. Back in Berlin, banging all the best women while we -

- GERNE (DISTRACTING HIM) Fress, Fress, let's hear more about your two Orientals. Come on.
- FRESSER One of them's blondish, the other's half redhead, half I-don't-know-what – you don't look at the mantelpiece anyway, do you?
- PETER 'God's sake.
- FRESSER What are you, Bach, some holy celibate monk?
- THE GOALKEEPER (TRYING TO GET BACK IN WITH THEM) I think we got one here. (MEANING GAY, DOING THE VOICE) A you-know.
- PETER I've had Russian women. My share.
- FRESSER Tell us about some of them then.
- GERNE Tell us, (IMAGINING) tell us about one on her back, she's in the corn field, no, no, no, no, she's up against one of them grain silo things, come on.
- PETER I've got myself a local at the moment. (THE BOASTING THEY WANT TO HEAR) Every time I fancy it, I send my orderly. She runs over, runs, even if the bombs are falling. I tell her how I want it. I do her. She crawls back to her hole. She knows who the master race is.
- FRESSER It's when they want to hang about and talk to you. I can't take it.
- PETER Never talk to them. Rule One. Gives them the wrong idea.
- DURING THIS MIX TO DUG-OUT. NIGHT.*
PETER AND ZINA ARE IN BED TOGETHER, CLOSE, INTIMATE:
- ZINA [ACCENTED, SPEAKING GERMAN BADLY] *Again tell first when you see I.*
- PETER *There were these fires burning, the day after we took the*

house - it was the only light to see your face by.

PETER *You were standing there, trembling, shivering. I went over to you.*

ZINA *You falling.*

PETER *I tripped, on a brick.*

ZINA *You give chocolate me.*

PETER *If I'm killed, you must find someone else, an officer, you promise me.*

ZINA *No-one kill you, not now. Not with me.*

PETER *I didn't mean, not here, not now.*

ZINA *I understand, now you me together, we not never killed.*

PETER *You a Russian witch then?*

ZINA *(MISHEARING THE WORD) 'Which'? What?*

PETER *You casting a spell over us?*

ZINA *What?*

PETER *Nothing.*

ZINA *Say what you say, say him.*

PETER *I was joking.*

GERNE *Had this one, just a one-night billet, when we were coming through Kalach, we drive on, she turns up the next night, she's following me.*

PETER *Didn't she realise?*

GERNE *Walked all the way, expecting – expecting the works,*

wedding bells, I don't know.

THE GOALKEEPER Did you do her?

GERNE Gave her to the platoon.

PETER She wasn't walking too far after that, I bet.

ZINA *You protect me, yes?*

PETER *The bombs are falling on both of us. They don't make a distinction.*

ZINA *I go and you to Germany?*

PETER *You're quite an optimist.*

ZINA *I what?*

PETER *The sort of person who...Let's not talk about after this.*

ZINA *I go Germany?*

PETER *If I live that long, if any of us live.*

A MOMENT'S SILENCE. A VERY DISTANT BOMBARDMENT.

ZINA *Every time you stop, I know you go.*

PETER *I'm just looking at you.*

ZINA *I wait you come back.*

PETER *Kiss me.*

ZINA *(TEARS COMING) Always you say Kiss Me and you go.*

PETER *I'm staying, Zina, I'm staying. Please. I'm staying the whole night. I'm staying the whole night here with you. I promise.*

PETER Just use them and leave them for the next battalion coming through.

GERNE Officers first, enlisted men second, conscripts third.

FRESSER Civil servants last.

THE GOALKEEPER I know, very funny.

GERNE Go back to Berlin and requisition yourself some women.

THE GOALKEEPER Maybe I will. Soon as they've got this shrapnel out.

GERNE (CONTINUING) Bet you've even got a form for it.

THE GOALKEEPER There's a form for everything, my friend.

FRESSER Send me a couple of freshly-requisitioned Bavarian girls.

GERNE Nice wide mouths.

FRESSER Nice wide open legs.

A MOMENT

GERNE Your turn, Bach, nice wide what do you want?

PETER Sorry?

GERNE The Bavarians. (PROMPTING) Nice...wide....?

PETER Sorry, I was thinking.

GERNE Deep, isn't he?

FRESSER No point in thinking, mate, just use them and lose them. Think about it and you're kyboshed.

AND CUT TO:

SCENE 3. MILITARY HOSPITAL: SIDE WARD.

THE THREE MEN ARE LYING IN BED.

FRESSER IS ALMOST WHISPERING, WHAT HE IS SAYING IS SO
TREASONOUS

FRESSER That's what I'm telling you, this major I was in the dressing
station with.

PETER (WANTING TO KNOW) What did he say?

FRESSER Ivan, he launched a counter-attack, up North West of the
city, retook a train station.

PETER That's mostly our brave Rumanian allies, isn't it? Or Itis⁴?

FRESSER Brave? Said they've sent our HQ officers, put some guts up
their spines.

GERNE How many gears on a Rumanian tank?

FRESSER (SIGH) Not now.

GERNE Four reverse gears and one forward gear in case the enemy
attack from behind.

HE ENJOYS HIS JOKE, THE OTHERS IGNORE HIM AND CONTINUE

FRESSER We're overstretched and Ivan knows it.

PETER Ivan's hasn't got new tanks, new planes.

FRESSER So why've HQ sent our radio operators up there, all along the
front, sending out messages all day, all night?

PETER Good communications are –

FRESSER Speaking German, so Ivan'll think the line's held by proper

⁴ 'Iti' pronounced 'eye-t-eye'

German soldiers,

GERNE How do you sink an Iti battleship?

PETER (TO FRESSER) There's no need. There's nothing to worry about.

GERNE (CONTINUING) Put it in the water.

AGAIN, HE ENJOYS HIS OWN JOKE IMMENSELY.
BUT PETER HAS HAD ENOUGH:

PETER What were you before the war, Captain?

GERNE Here we go.

PETER I wondered, what university?

GERNE You know full well – my father was a farm worker, and his father before him and I'll be proud to go back to –

PETER But here you are, an adjutant at Regimental HQ.

GERNE You was born into it, I had to work.

FRESSER (TO CALM THINGS) People have been shooting at me since 1939. I get food, drink, clothes. Don't need to start philosophising about it.

PETER We've all gained something from National Socialism.

GERNE (TO FRESSER) I told you, didn't I?

FRESSER What?

GERNE Toffee-nose here would turn out to be a party man.

PETER I'm not a member.

GERNE I saw – it was an SS Officer brought you in.

PETER He's...we share a dug-out. Share a drink when we get it.

GERNE Get together, sing a few party songs, quote your favourite Nuremburg rally, do you?

PETER I am...as it happens, I am thinking of, feeling I want to join the Party.

GERNE You posh lot have had it all for centuries – bit of a shock when it changes, isn't it?

PETER My father will be – (*disappointed*) – I'm going to have to write and explain.

GERNE People like you, you always float to the top, don't sweat it.

PETER There's room for everyone.

FRESSER I go where I'm wanted, I take what I'm given.

PETER All of us, if we join the party, we can change it. Look (SEARCHING FOR THE RIGHT ARGUMENT:) Think about it - great artists and composers and writers are part of Germany - you can't just let these thugs in the police get rid of everything that's - you can force Einstein out but who's going to take his place?

FRESSER (BAFFLED) Einstein?

PETER The man's a genius.

GERNE (CAREFUL) Albert Einstein?

FRESSER But.....isn't Einstein...(UNSAID: *Jewish*)? Isn't he?

PETER We should be able to handle that.

FRESSER I've seen how the Special Action Groups handle it.

GERNE (TO FRESSER) I went through this ghetto village where they'd - took some snaps. (REACHING FOR THEM) D'you

want to see - ?

PETER That's wrong. (DISTASTE) The shootings, those vans they gas them in, it's -

SISTER (STRIDING IN) Everything alright in here?

PETER (TOO QUICK) Yes. Good. Thank you.

A MOMENT OF SILENCE

THE SISTER IS MEANWHILE STRIPPING THE GOALKEEPER'S EMPTY BED

GERNE So old fatso was faking it after all, was he?

THE SISTER DOES NOT REPLY

FRESSER Our hero Civil Servant malingering, was he, Sister?

STILL SHE DOES NOT REPLY

GERNE Come on, Nurse, what's going on?

SISTER Cardiac arrest. During the operation.

FRESSER What's that?

PETER Heart attack.

GERNE (AMAZED) He's dead?

SISTER He died nobly for his Fatherland.

SHE BUNDLES UP THE SHEETS AND WALKS OUT

GERNE Probably choked on a requisition form.

PETER It wasn't some act he was putting on. He was a genuine patriot. Sincere.

GERNE Looks like there's a sudden vacancy in the party and you're just the man.

PETER (INTENSE) The state isn't an effect, it's a cause, can't you see that?

GERNE Jesus.

PETER We can change things if we -

VERY TENSE.

FRESSER IS DETERMINED TO LIGHTEN THE ATMOSPHERE:

FRESSER Look at this, my hearties! (AND HE PRODUCES A BOTTLE, WRAPPED IN NEWSPAPER) Monsieur Hennessy's best.

GERNE (EAGER, SALIVATING) Is that French?

FRESSER Swapped it for a pair of fur boots. Those Itis, they can't take a bit of cold.

GERNE (GETTING OUT OF BED) I love this man.

PETER Didn't the nurses say we - ?

AS GERNE HOPS ROUND THE ROOM, COLLECTING GLASSES

FRESSER That doctor, the Westphalian, with the stammer, he saw this, he says "W-w-w-w-w-w-what's that, in that n-n-n-n-n-n-n-n-newspaper?" (ANGELIC VOICE:) "Letters from my sainted mother, doc. I'm never parted from them." He waved me on. Tosser.

DURING THIS, FRESSER POURS AND GERNE DISTRIBUTES:

PETER You were waiting for the Goalkeeper to go, weren't you?

FRESSER (RAISING HIS GLASS) Gents, from your very own Captain Fresser, with greetings from the Barrikady Front.

GERNE & PETER (RETURNING THE TOAST) Captain. Barrikady.

THEY ALL DRINK. IT IS GOOD.

TOO SOON:

GERNE Any more?

FRESSER I can feel it in my goolies already.

GERNE I'll pour another round, shall I?

HE DOES SO AND THEY DRINK DURING:

PETER It's bloody good we ended up in the same ward.

GERNE Knew that the moment I came in, I said these are real, hard frontliners.

PETER When this is over, we must set up an association, for Stalingrad Veterans.

GERNE Remember the vodka we drank in the summer, marching through the steppes.

FRESSER Once winter's in, the front's not shifting, neither way.

PETER There's more tanks and guns out there than you've ever seen. They're about to punch right through to the Volga.

GERNE We'll be having Vladivostok girls by Christmas.

FRESSER (A TOAST) To Vladivostok girls with nice wide open –

BUT THIS IS CUT OFF BY A STRING OF BOMBS FALLING NEARBY AND THEN THE WHINE OF THE RUSSIAN BOMBERS' ENGINES. DURING WHICH:

FRESSER (SHAKEN) Same time every day. Is it religious or something?

GERNE (TRYING TO KEEP THE ATMOSPHERE UP) Come on, another toast. Drink up.

AND MIX OUT TO:

SCENE 4. MILITARY HOSPITAL: CORRIDOR.

PETER IS HOBBLING ALONG WITH THE SISTER

SISTER You're almost walking on your own. Look.

PETER Hardly.

SISTER All the way to the ward, come on.

PETER I don't think I can....

SISTER Need to keep those muscles working. Step, straighten, step, straighten.

AND FROM INSIDE THE WARD, CHEERING HIM IN:

GERNE Come on, Hopalong, you can do it.

FRESSER Quick march there. Step to it, Bach. Hup, hup.

SISTER Your friends are waiting for you. Nearly there.

PETER They just like to see me suffer.

CUTTING ACROSS THIS, OVER PETER'S SHOULDER:

ORDERLY Lieutenant Bach?

PETER Yes?

ORDERLY Visitor for you.

PETER What?

ORDERLY Asked to see you. Specially.

PETER Officer?

ORDERLY (MILD EMBARRASSMENT) Woman. Sir. Young woman.

PETER Russian?

SISTER (DISTASTE, ALMOST APPALLED) Native population?

ORDERLY (LIKE DUHH) Well, yes. Russian.

SISTER (TO ORDERLY) This is not correct.

ORDERLY Sorry, Sir, I said she should come along and.... (TURNING AND INDICATING) She's here, sir.

SISTER Good God.

PETER SEES ZINA ALONG THE CORRIDOR, STANDING MEEKLY

PETER Zina?

ZINA (ACCENTED) Lieutenant.

BUT GERNE AND FRESSER HAVE NOW COME TO THE DOORWAY

GERNE Now that's what I call successful work on the occupied peoples.

FRESSER Get her in here. The Lieutenant's got a good wide bed. We can marry them up right now.

SISTER (SHOCK, TO FRESSER) Captain.

GERNE Women, see?, like dogs. They always follow their men.

PETER (MEANWHILE HOBBLING TOWARDS HER) You can't come here. This is strictly -

FRESSER Walking alright now, isn't he?

GERNE Man's got an incentive.

ZINA (TO PETER) I walk. I walk many time.

PETER This is wrong.

ZINA Good man in car, stop, say he drive. And I walk more.

PETER (KEEPING HIS VOICE DOWN, HOPING NOT TO BE OVERHEARD) How did you know where I was?

ZINA I ask...you go, I ask....

PETER The field ambulance?

ZINA I ask.

PETER So everyone knows now?

ZINA What bad?

GERNE (CALLING OUT) We're gents, Bachy, we'll give you the room, how long do you need?

SISTER You most certainly will not. (AS SHE GOES OFF DOWN THE CORRIDOR) I'm getting the doctor.

PETER What if I had family working here or something?

ZINA What?

PETER A week, ten days? Is that how long? You can't go chasing men after just a week.

ZINA I want see, you good?

PETER How does it look? Alright, I'm alive, you've seen me now. Off you go.

ZINA You live⁵.

PETER For God's sake, get out of here.

⁵ pronounced as in 'live concert'

ZINA I walk. All night.

PETER This is wrong.

ZINA (DESPERATE BUT QUIET) I want see you.

PETER We are engaged in something important here. I am giving myself up to it. Willing to die for the fulfilment of our destiny.

ZINA I no understand.

PETER I want you out of here at once.

GERNE That's it, Bachy, send her off.

PETER Go! Go! Get out of here! (TO ORDERLY) You, soldier, see this woman off the premises.

ORDERLY Sir. (IN RUSSIAN:) You, this way, move it.

AS PETER HOBBLER BACK

FRESSER You put her in her place.

GERNE Bit of a waste, we could have got her in and taken turns.

FRESSER (LAUGHING) You disgusting bastard.

GERNE Hope so.

PETER Just another bitch on heat.

THEY ARE ALL LAUGHING NOW

PULL BACK TO PETER'S LAUGH, A SUPPRESSED LAUGH, WHICH MAY IN FACT BE SOBBING.

END

“a hero of the soviet union”

episode by jonathan myerson

cast

NIKOLAI GRIGOREVICH KRYMOV

TOSHCHEYEV, general in Army Political
OGIBALOV, instructor in Army Political

PRYAKHIN, first secretary of the local party committee

STEPAN FYODOROVICH SPIRIDONOV, power station manager

power station workers:

PAVEL ANDREYEVICH ANDREYEV

MAKULADZE

NIKOLAYEV

and others

**the action takes place in Stalingrad and at the Soviet Army HQ in
Akhtuba during October 1942**

SCENE 1. AKHTUBA: ARMY HQ: POLITICAL SECTION. DAY.

KRYMOV IS PRESENTING HIMSELF TO THE GENERAL.

KRYMOV I was wounded, and therefore found myself unable to complete my mission to Building 6/1. I am now willing to return.

TOSHCHEYEV Do you know you absolutely stink?

KRYMOV I have come straight from the hospital, Comrade Brigade Commissar.

TOSHCHEYEV Carbolic, isn't it?

KRYMOV Presumably.

TOSHCHEYEV (CORRECTING HIM) Comrade General. (HIS BRAID) See? This stuff here?

KRYMOV Sorry, Comrade General.

TOSHCHEYEV (DISMISSIVE) Write me a full report.

KRYMOV Is that all?

TOSHCHEYEV You tell me.

A MOMENT WHILE KRYMOV WORKS IS OUT. THEN:

KRYMOV Congratulations on your promotion, Comrade General.

TOSHCHEYEV A full report then.

TOSHCHEYEV CLEARS HIS THROAT.

KRYMOV LEAVES THE ROOM.
SHUTS THE DOOR BEHIND HIM.

NOW IN THE OUTER OFFICE:

OGIBALOV Nikolai! You're back.

KRYMOV As you see.

A MOMENT

KRYMOV I've been over the river. In Stalingrad.

A MOMENT, WHILE KRYMOV WAITS FOR OGIBALOV TO ASK HIM ABOUT IT.

HE DOESN'T.

OGIBALOV IS A POLITICAL INSTRUCTOR, SMUGLY CONTENT TO HAVE AN OFFICE JOB A LONG WAY BEHIND THE FRONT LINE.

KRYMOV On the front line. Just beyond the Tractor Factory.

THEN:

KRYMOV One night the Germans broke through right to Divisional HQ, we all had to fight them off – grenades, bayonets, spades.

OGIBALOV Old man give you a hard time in there?

KRYMOV Why's he so – when did he become a general?

OGIBALOV Everything's new over here at Army HQ. (ACTUALLY, IT'S FUNNY:) Except Moscow kept delaying the announcement. He was going up the wall. Had the sawbones in twice a day, fainting fits, neuralgia. There was a rumour some regimental commissars would be given the rank of captain, major if they were lucky.

KRYMOV He wants me to write a report. I was happy to go back.

OGIBALOV As it is the Military Soviet are saying Senior Political Instructors now have to eat in the general canteen.

KRYMOV This frontline building I was sent to – there was this man in

charge there.

KRYMOV IS SUBDUED, QUIET, WHICH ENABLES OGIBALOV TO IGNORE HIM, TO CARRY ON WITH HIS ANECDOTAGE

OGIBALOV And any instructors sent on a mission now have meal-tickets withdrawn – but no compensatory issue of field rations.

KRYMOV (FIRST TIME HE HAS DARED SAY IT OUT LOUD) I think this man, the officer in charge, I think he shot me.

OGIBALOV Not surprised. Everyone's shooting everything out there, aren't they? Madhouse!

KRYMOV I don't think it was a mistake.

OGIBALOV (WANTING TO TELL HIS STORY) And then they put forward a couple of poets – Kats, Talalayevsky, you know them?

KRYMOV Don't think I –

OGIBALOV (DRIVING ON) Put them up for a Red Star, with oak leaves. Except now, another new rule, all awards to members of the press have to be approved by Central Political. So everyone's celebrating their new medals, including the poets.

KRYMOV You go along these tunnels, a tiny point of daylight up ahead, you feel such strength, faith.

OGIBALOV Of course, it's mug-face here who has to go and deliver the good news. 'Blamed me, said Id stopped their bloody medals. Poets.

KRYMOV I made a fool of myself too. Started lecturing the men.

OGIBALOV I don't think anyone's going to be writing a Homeric epic about me any time soon either.

KRYMOV I'd do anything to be there again.

OGIBALOV (IMAGINING IT) The Lay of Sergei Ivanovich, Senior Political Instructor Second Class. The world will have to wait a bit longer for that great opus.

KRYMOV And that man, that bloody man, gave me a flesh wound, sent me back to this.

OGIBALOV Talking of epic lays, there's a rather sweet little waitress in the new canteen – every cloud, eh? – shall we go and get her to stir our goulash?

KRYMOV I need to....

OGIBALOV You could tell me all about your time over the river, fighting off the fascist invaders.

KRYMOV He said this really strange thing.

OGIBALOV Who?

KRYMOV This man, in the building, the commanding officer, he said “You've suffered, you've suffered a lot.”

OGIBALOV (AGREEING) That looks like a nasty wound there.

KRYMOV (DISMISSIVE) He didn't mean that.

OGIBALOV Come on, goulash, rice, a special smile, and a bum pinch if we're quick.

KRYMOV I'd better...I need to write my report.

OGIBALOV (JOKEY) Denunciation, you mean.

KRYMOV (URGENT) No. Not at all. (THEN:) I don't know, maybe. Really?

OGIBALOV (NOW DISTANT) See you at the anniversary thing. It's over the river.

CUT TO:

SCENE 2. KRYMOV'S ROOMS.

HE IS TYPING

KRYMOV (WHAT HE IS TYPING:) Following his thorough subversion and demoralisation of the military sub-unit under his command, Citizen Grekov then proceeded to commit an act of terrorism. He fired –

HE STOPS TYPING, BACKSPACES

He deliberately fired at a representative of the party. I believe this man to be an enemy of the state.

BUT HE SUDDENLY STOPS HIMSELF
HE TEARS THE PIECE OF PAPER OUT OF THE TYPEWRITER AND
SCRUMPLES IT AND FLINGS IT INTO A CORNER
AS HE DOES SO

KRYMOV No, no, no, no, no.

THEN HE CONTROLS HIMSELF, HIS BREATHING.
HE CROSSES THE ROOM, PICKS UP THE PIECE OF PAPER, SMOOTHES IT
OUT ON THE DESK AND RELOADS IT INTO THE TYPEWRITER.
AND STARTS TYPING AGAIN:

KRYMOV While the military sub-unit was sleeping, Citizen Grekov discharged his pistol so that I, Battalion Commissar Krymov, was wounded in the...

DURING THIS, MIX INTO:

SCENE 3.BEKETOVKA: SUDOVERF FACTORY.

A HALL PACKED WITH RESPECTFUL PARTY MEMBERS LISTENING TO A DREARY SPEECH FROM PRYAKHIN ON THE PODIUM, CRACKLY, WHISTLING PA SYSTEM

PRYAKHIN And even so, comrades, even so, even in the face of all these difficulties, I am proud to announce today, on the very day, twenty-five years to the day that the Winter Palace was stormed, that the Revolution began, on this very day I can announce that the agricultural districts on the east bank have nevertheless satisfactorily provided their grain quotas towards the great Soviet plan.

APPLAUSE

PRYAKHIN (SPEEDILY) There have been some slight delays. Those will be dealt with and not repeated. I can also announce that the factories on the east bank have also fulfilled their part in the state plan.

APPLAUSE

PRYAKHIN The factories on the west bank, in the city and to the north, are situated within the zone of military operations and I believe it will be understood why their failure to carry out their obligations is understandable.

NO APPLAUSE

PRYAKHIN There have been unfortunate reductions in grain supplied by the Zimovnichesky and Kotelnichesky districts. But their workers have provided more than three thousand two hundred enrolled in the militia, of whom over three hundred have been decorated for exemplary courage and valour.

APPLAUSE

PRYAKHIN And so, comrades, on this special day, on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the revolution, on this very day I can report to

the great Stalin that workers of this oblast have carried out every single one of their obligations to the Soviet State.

HUGE APPLAUSE
THE CROWD STANDS.
OGIBALOV IS NEXT TO KRYMOV

OGIBALOV (WILDLY ENTHUSIASTIC) Wonderful, fulfilled all our obligations – wheat, factory production, grain. Did you hear that?

KRYMOV (NOT SO ENTHUSED) What about – yes, wonderful.

OGIBALOV That’s true Soviet power, that’s why we will never be defeated. Here he comes.

PRYAKHIN IS NOW COMING THROUGH THE CROWD: ‘THANK YOU, COMRADE, THANK YOU’
OGIBALOV RUSHES TO SHAKE HIS HAND.

OGIBALOV Comrade Secretary Pryakhin, marvellous speech, marvellous. The achievement. The quotas.

PRYAKHIN Thank you, comrade, thank you. We’ve all worked hard for the Great Stalin.

OGIBALOV Every sacrifice is worth it.

PRYAKHIN Sacrifice to the Soviet State is the only thing that gives meaning to my life.

KRYMOV Remember twenty-five years ago, Yuri? Out at the front, the two of us, getting the troops to rise up – “to hell with the Tsar!”.

PRYAKHIN (COOL) Krymov. You’re here.

KRYMOV (BAFFLED BY THIS COOLNESS) Yuri?

PRYAKHIN Actually. Did you ever know anyone by the name of ‘Getmanov’?

KRYMOV Sorry?

PRYAKHIN I need to ask.

KRYMOV In the Ukraine? Member of the Bureau of the Central Committee?

PRYAKHIN That's right.

KRYMOV Why are you...? [*asking me this, now?*]

OGIBALOV Will you join us, Comrade Secretary, there's an empty seat right here. I'll move my briefcase.

PRYAKHIN I really need to – I – General Shumilov needs me to –

HE MOVES OFF

OGIBALOV What did you do, screw his wife or something?

KRYMOV I need to get back into the line. I can't stay here.

OGIBALOV Don't go. (STOPPING HIM) Look, I have to – they asked me to speak to you.

KRYMOV What?

OGIBALOV (PULLING HIM TO ONE SIDE) Over here. (THROAT CLEARING AND THEN, QUIETER:) Boss asked me to handle your report, about this Building 6/1.

KRYMOV (MILD SURPRISE) Oh.

OGIBALOV This Captain Grekov, quite a piece of work.

KRYMOV Did the General say why he didn't want to talk to me himself?

OGIBALOV Turns out your brave Spartan's been lucky. (PAPERS FROM HIS CASE) Got this through yesterday. (HANDING IT TO KRYMOV) From Political at the 62nd. Grekov and all his men were killed during the assault on the Tractor Factory.

KRYMOV (SHOCK) All of them?

OGIBALOV Division nominated him for a posthumous Hero of the Soviet Union.

KRYMOV That's terrible.

OGIBALOV (CALMING WHAT HE PRESUMES KRYMOV IS WORRIED ABOUT) Don't worry, we can squash that.

KRYMOV Lucky, you said?

OGIBALOV (SEMI-WHISPERED) Actually, Special Section reckons he might still be alive.

KRYMOV Really?

OGIBALOV We think he may have gone over to the enemy.

KRYMOV The Manager? – that's ludicrous.

OGIBALOV Who?

KRYMOV Nothing.

OGIBALOV Anyway, (ANOTHER PAPER) here, Special Section want to have a word.

KRYMOV With me?

OGIBALOV They've got to nail down 'the facts'.

KRYMOV Grekov's dead - what else is there to say?

OGIBALOV It's Special Section – how are we mere mortals to ever know? Pop in as soon as we get back.

KRYMOV Now we're on this side of the river, there's someone I want to see over, up in the city.

OGIBALOV You're right, why do today what you can do tomorrow?

CUT TO:

SCENE 4. STALINGRAD: POWER STATION YARD. NIGHT.

SPIRIDONOV IS EMERGING, SUMMONED, FROM HIS CELLAR.

SPIRIDONOV Who bloody wants me now? It's gone – [*eight o'clock*]

KRYMOV Stepan Fyodorovich. It's me.

SPIRIDONOV (VERY TENTATIVE) Nikolai?

KRYMOV You don't even recognise me?

SPIRIDONOV (THROWING HIS ARMS ROUND HIM) Nikolai
Grigorevich! (GETTING WEEPIER) Nikolai. My dearest
dear Nikolai.

KRYMOV (NOT WANTING TO CRY) Stop it. I'm here. I'm here.

SPIRIDONOV What are you doing here?

KRYMOV Twenty-fifth celebrations – they brought us all over the river,
just south of here.

SPIRIDONOV (MEANWHILE OVER THIS) Nikolai. Kolya. Kolya.

KRYMOV (FRIENDLY) Have you been drinking?

SPIRIDONOV This war. You know what this war's done? What this bloody
war's done?

KRYMOV Stepan.

SPIRIDONOV Taken my Marusya. And now Vera.

KRYMOV (SHOCK) Vera's - ?

SPIRIDONOV Over the river there, somewhere, the girl's a fool and she's
over there, on her own, a stupid fool for love.

KRYMOV What about her husband, when did you last - ? [*hear from
him?*]

SPIRIDONOV He's probably dead as well. (IT'S INEVITABLE:) He's a fighter pilot.

KRYMOV What about....?

SPIRIDONOV You think we get letters here? Lyudmila, Alexandra, don't know the first thing about any of them.

KRYMOV (HE CAN'T STOP HIMSELF) Not even – have you heard from Yevgenia Nikolaevna? Is she – ?

SPIRIDONOV She's in Kuibyshev or Kazan. I don't know. You know her.

KRYMOV Yes.

SPIRIDONOV I'm sure she's alive, that's what matters, eh, Kolya?

KRYMOV SAYS NOTHING

SPIRIDONOV You two, you've got to make up some day.

KRYMOV It's not that, Stepan. It's – everything about her hurts.

SPIRIDONOV You think there's life without pain? Who told you that? Was that your chum Lenin again?

KRYMOV (DANGEROUS TALK) Stepan.

SPIRIDONOV Come on, come and visit my home. There's a few of us down there. Come on.

SAYING THIS, HE IS LEADING KRYMOV INTO THE CELLAR

AND CONTINUE STRAIGHT INTO:

SCENE 5. STALINGRAD: POWER STATION: CELLAR. NIGHT.

SPIRIDONOV Few of the lads came over from the works. Said we'd have a drink or two.

THE CELLAR IS FULL OF THE BUZZ OF CONVERSATION.
 MEN ARE SITTING ON PALLETS, SACKS, BOXES.
 CLOSE, HOT.
 BOTTLES, MUGS.

KRYMOV A 'few' of the lads?

SPIRIDONOV What else are we going to do?

KRYMOV I met a man who'd really appreciate a drink down here.

SPIRIDONOV Get him round.

KRYMOV Captain Grekov's drunk all he's ever going to drink.

SPIRIDONOV (MISUNDERSTANDING, AS HE POURS KRYMOV A
 DRINK) Teetotallers, give me the willies. (THEN, TO ALL)
 Quiet, quiet, quiet. Quiet! All of you. I must say something.

KRYMOV (REMEMBERING PRYAKHIN) No more speeches, please.

SPIRIDONOV GATHERS HIS WORDS, AND THEN:

SPIRIDONOV Lads, fill them up. Come on. Fill your glasses.

EVERYONE DOES SO. CLINKING GLASSES AND TIN MUGS.

SPIRIDONOV A song, someone, a song.

NIKOLAYEV STARTS SINGING (OLD RUSSIAN, NOT SOVIET)

MAKULADZE (TOPPING UP KRYMOV'S MUG) Welcome, brother.

KRYMOV Thank you.

MAKULADZE Look at this – seen this? – look at my hands. Skin's right off.
 Both sides.

KRYMOV Incendiary?

MAKULADZE Digging out my friend, Anton. Anton Vorobyov - did you
 know him?

KRYMOV I didn't. I don't.

MAKULADZE (TEARING UP) I loved that man more than my own brother. Buried by a landmine. I dug him out with these hands. Look.

ANDREYEV (JOINING IN) You loved him?

MAKULADZE More than my own brother.

ANDREYEV Maybe you did. Except I once worked in an anthracite mine. The boss there. He loved me, I loved him. We drank together, he said to me "You're like a brother to me, even if you are only a miner."

KRYMOV We got rid of all that – twenty-five years ago.

ANDREYEV No, no, he was the boss. Mister Voskresensky, he respected me and he had capital of millions.

SPIRIDONOV (NOT HOW YOU TALK NOWADAYS) Is that so, Pavel?

ANDREYEV You're making fun of me now.

SPIRIDONOV Another song. (NIKOLAEV'S HAS NOW BROKEN DOWN) Pavel, sing us that factory song, from the old days.

ANDREYEV The Frenchie chan-son-song?⁶

SPIRIDONOV That's the one.

ANDREYEV The Commissar, won't he - ? [*mind?*]

KRYMOV Go ahead.

ANDREYEV They used to sing it at the French Factory, see?, back when - this place used to be called Tsaritsyn.

SPIRIDONOV We all know that.

ANDREYEV STARTS SINGING.

⁶ to be researched

GRADUALLY EVERYONE IS CHORUSING THE LAST WORD OF EACH LINE
AND

CROSS-FADE TO:

THE LAST FEW MEN ARE SAYING GOODBYE

MAKULADZE Here's to the morning light, comrade.

SPIRIDONOV We'll see it in together.

MAKULADZE GOES

KRYMOV I must find my way back to –

SPIRIDONOV Don't even look for your coat, you're staying right here.

KRYMOV But –

SPIRIDONOV I'll make you up a bed here. Pack it around with these crates.
Snug as a bug in a fug that he's dug with a mug.

HE IS STACKING SOME CRATES AND LAYING DOWN A QUILT, DURING:

KRYMOV Those fires up there, Stepan. Burning everywhere. They remind me – I know this is stupid – they make me think of that night. The night we put Vladimir Ilyich to rest. Fires, braziers, candles burning along the road. There was a really harsh frost, dark winter sky over the Strastny monastery. Hundreds of men in leather jackets, caps with ear-flaps, pointed helmets. Lenin's body was taken to the station on a peasant sledge. The runners squeaked, the horses, Krupskaya following – her grey headscarf. All along the road out of Gorki, the memorial fires, by the side of the road – (EXPLAINING) – like all the fires up there.

SPIRIDONOV There you are. You lie down there. I'm right here.

SPIRIDONOV NOW SETTLES DOWN IN HIS BED, WHILE KRYMOV SETTLES ON TO HIS. WHILE SAYING:

KRYMOV The workers from the Dynamo Factory, they'd come out to Gorki. Volodya, he'd insisted on greeting them, got up out of

his bed. He wanted to say something, all that came out was this thin moan. They knew he was dying. And he knew he was too.

SPIRIDONOV Need another pillow?

KRYMOV We followed the coffin. All of us. Mostovskoy was there with me. He was in tears. We both were. Everyone, we followed the coffin – Bukharin, Kamenev, Zinoviev, Yevdokimov. Lenin's true heirs. They wouldn't have made speeches about grain quotas.

A MOMENT

KRYMOV Except now it turns out they were all spies and provocateurs. (MUST HAVE BEEN:) They all confessed. Stood up in that court and confessed.

ANOTHER MOMENT

KRYMOV (*No*) Zinoviev. He wasn't a spy. Bukharin, he wasn't a rightist, wasn't an assassin Grekov was right, none of these people. None of them.

THEN:

KRYMOV I let them take Mostovskoy. Let them take Abarchuk. All my friends arrested, I got called into the Lubyanka, I wrote denunciations, I voted with the others. I believed it. I did. I wasn't lying. Why didn't I doubt, even once? My God, I saw their wives, I crossed the road. Their children – some people took them in – how did they? – they didn't feel the fear and the rest of us – party members – we just did nothing, took the pain inside. Everyone goes along with it – until they get arrested. That's what he meant, isn't it? Grekov, when he said I was suffering? He knew the pain I was in. Stepan?

AND SPIRIDONOV IS GENTLY SNORING

KRYMOV (SUDDEN FEAR) Stepan, what I just said – you mustn't ever tell –

SNORING AND SNUFFLING

KRYMOV (TRUE RELIEF) Sleep well, Stepan.

CUT TO:

SCENE 6. STALINGRAD: POWER STATION: CELLAR. EARLY MORNING.

SPIRIDONOV IS ENTERING, DOWN THE STEPS

SPIRIDONOV Up you get, slugabed.

KRYMOV IS JUST WAKING, GROANING

SPIRIDONOV Thought a man like you could hold his drink.

KRYMOV What time is it?

SPIRIDONOV Gone six. And your escort's just arrived outside.

KRYMOV Escort?

SPIRIDONOV They sent some chaps to see you back safely.

KRYMOV (SURPRISED) Really?

THEN, FROM THE TOP OF THE CELLAR STEPS:

OGIBALOV (NOW THE IMPLACABLE VOICE OF OFFICIALDOM)
Citizen Krymov?

KRYMOV What are you doing?

OGIBALOV (AS HE COMES DOWN THE STEPS) Please hand over your
weapon and your personal documents.

KRYMOV What is this?

OGIBALOV (PICKING UP HIS BELT) I take it this is your revolver?

SPIRIDONOV (TERRIFIED) What's going on?

KRYMOV Show me your documents. There's some misunderstanding.
This is ridiculous.

OGIBALOV

Papers, please, Citizen Krymov. You are under arrest.⁷

END

“a parcel”

episode by jonathan myerson

cast

in Stalingrad/Lubyanka:

NIKOLAI KRYMOV
NKVD SENTRY
NKVD CORPORAL
NKVD COMMANDANT
NKVD QUARTERMASTER
CONDEMNED MAN
KATSENELENOGEN, prisoner
BOGOLEEV, prisoner
DRELING, prisoner
LUBYANKA INTERROGATOR
LUBYANKA DOCTOR
LUBYANKA WARDER
LUBYANKA SOLDIER

in Moscow:

ZHENYA SHAPOSHNIKOVA
LYUDA (née SHAPOSHNIKOVA) SHTRUMA
VIKTOR SHTRUM
NADYA SHTRUMA
MASHA SOKOLOVA
PRISONERS' RELATIVES
CHEKISTS

all the action takes place in November 1942
in Stalingrad and Moscow

SCENE 1. FRONT HQ: NKVD COMPOUND.

ON THE LEFT BANK OF THE VOLGA.
DISTANT ARTILLERY.
KRYMOV IS BEING MARCHED TOWARDS THE HUTS.
IT'S FREEZING COLD.

SENTRY Move it, come on, move it up, move it up.

COMMANDANT (WALKING PAST) Who's this?

SENTRY (PAPERS) Citizen Krymov, arrested, last night.

KRYMOV There's been some sort of misund –

SENTRY He's a Commissar.

COMMANDANT Was. Now he's a disgrace to the Soviet nation. (TURNING
ROUND, FROM A DISTANCE) Put him in the Solitary Cell.

SENTRY But there's a man –

COMMANDANT (STRIDING AWAY) Did you hear me?

AS THEY NOW WALK INTO THE BUILDING AND DOWN THE CORRIDOR:

SENTRY (JOB SWORTH) Always the sodding same, isn't it? "Put him
in Solitary", except Solitary's full. Solitary's only for
Sentenced to Death. There's always someone sentenced to
death. What am I supposed to do with the tosser who's
already in there?

KRYMOV You could –

SENTRY (BUTTING HIM FORWARD WITH HIS MACHINE GUN)
Wipe that blood off your face, you're a total disgrace.

HE IS MEANWHILE UNLOCKING THE DOOR TO SOLITARY AND:

SENTRY (CALLING ALONG THE CORRIDOR) Corp, can you do my
Solitary now?

CORPORAL Now? My lunch.

SENTRY Colonel said this new tosser's got to go into Solitary instead.

CORPORAL (GRUDGINGLY GETTING UP) Alright.

SENTRY (TO MAN INSIDE SOLITARY CELL) You, sunshine, out.

CONDEMNED MAN Me?

SENTRY Yes, you, who else? You people.

THE CONDEMNED MAN SHAMBLES OUT THE CELL.

SENTRY (TO KRYMOV) You, yes you, Citizen Former Commissar, in.

KRYMOV Comrade.

THE CELL DOOR SHUTS BEHIND KRYMOV
FROM BEYOND IT:

SENTRY Down there, that's right, move it, move it, into the yard,
come on. Haven't got all day.

THE DOOR INTO THE YARD IS OPENED

SENTRY Up against the wall, come on.

CORPORAL (NO CEREMONY:) Right. Fire.

A MOMENT THEN THREE RIFLES FIRE.
THE MAN FALLS.

CORPORAL You deal with him.

SENTRY I got my soup in there, going cold.

CORPORAL We're not burying him.

SENTRY You're the squad, he's your business now, not mine.

CORPORAL The ground out there's frozen solid.

SENTRY He's yours.

CORPORAL 'cksake.

CUT TO:

SCENE 2.INTERVIEW.

I was a party member, I got called up. They put me into this NKVD regiment.

- Some of what we were asked to do, it wasn't [pretty]- you got used to it.
- Some things, I didn't like - it was our boys, if they were caught, and then we got them back. They told us to pop them. Didn't like doing that.
- Wasn't right.
- I was in combat, it was the NKVD regiments held them back, first days round the city, it was us, NKVD slowed them down, coming into the city proper.
- Then I was posted to a blocking detachment. If you didn't shoot the deserters, they was going to shoot you. What do you do?
- Some men, they lifted their hands up above the trenches, hoping to get a German bullet in them. What are you going to do? - tell them that's fine, you carry right on. You had to make examples. Maybe there were too many, I don't know. How many's too many?

CUT TO:

SCENE 3. STALINGRAD: FRONT HQ: SOLITARY CELL. NIGHT.

THE CORRIDOR OUTSIDE KRYMOV'S CELL:

SENTRY It's not my bloody fault.

QUARTERMASTER I'm not signing out a chit for a man who's dead.

SENTRY He bloody isn't dead, is he? He's standing right next to you.

CONDEMNED MAN (CONTINUES MUMBLING AND MOANING
THROUGHOUT) Sorry. Sorry.

Q/MASTER (IGNORING HIM) On my roster, he's been shot. Three
o'clock this afternoon.

SENTRY Commandant says he's still got be fed. Look at the state of
him.

Q/MASTER I'd rather not.

SENTRY Got to warm him up somehow.

COMMANDANT (APPROACHING, OVER THIS) What the hell are you two
standing there for?

THEY COME TO ATTENTION
THROUGHOUT ALL THIS, THE CONDEMNED MAN IS STANDING NEXT TO
THE, SHIVERING AND WHIMPERING

COMMANDANT Get that man in the Solitary Cell.

SENTRY Beg to – Comrade, that Commissar's in there.

COMMANDANT Get him - put him in the guard room.

SENTRY I'm in there.

COMMANDANT Do you want to join a penal battalion?

SENTRY Comrade.

COMMANDANT (GOING) You, Quartermaster, sort him something to eat.

Q/MASTER (GOING, IN OPPOSITE DIRECTION) Comrade.

DURING THIS, THE SENTRY HAS BEEN UNLOCKING KRYMOV'S CELL DOOR.

AS HE SWINGS IT OPEN:

SENTRY Out. Move it.

KRYMOV STANDS AND STEPS INTO THE CORRIDOR.

SENTRY Don't look at him, he's a bleeding disgrace.

KRYMOV Comrade.

CONDEMNED MAN Uhhh. Sorry.

SENTRY You. In. And stay there.

THE SENTRY SLAMS THE CELL DOOR SHUT ONCE THE CONDEMNED MAN IS IN.

KRYMOV Was that....the man who was in here?

SENTRY Come on, down the hall, that's it.

THEY ARE MOVING DOWN THE HALL.

AND INTO THE GUARD ROOM.

WHILE:

SENTRY He can bloody send me to a penal battalion. Anything's better than this place. My nerves, they're shredded, shredded.

KRYMOV Wasn't that man....?

SENTRY Sentenced for self-mutilation. Shot himself in the hand, you know, how obvious is that? So they take him out, pop him, lazy tossing firing squad bury him. Tell em about it. Find a shell-hole, sprinkle over a bit of earth, sod off back to billets.

KRYMOV He was – his eyes – I wish I hadn't seen.

SENTRY You and me both, mate. They didn't bloody shoot him right, and they certainly didn't bleeding bury him, so he wakes up, comes to life, and what does he do?, he decides to make my life a total misery and walk back in here again.

KRYMOV My God.

SENTRY My nerves – look at my hands, look at that. They bog up every single thing they do, and I get the blame.

KRYMOV Why did he come back?

SENTRY (LAUGHING) To ruin my day. That's why.

KRYMOV Here?

SENTRY And now the Commandant says we've got to give him bread and tea and I've got the Quartermaster saying he won't give him any because he's off list. The Commandant, yes, it's never his fault – 'salways mine, always.

A MOMENT

KRYMOV What did you do before the war?

SENTRY Bee Keeper. (HE GENUINELY LOVES THIS MEMORY) On a state farm. We made lime blossom honey. Bleeding lovely.

THEY BOTH BREATHE

SENTRY (VOICE BREAKING WITH EMOTION) I just love those bees.

THEN, ENTERING:

Q/MASTER Right, we got him a truck.

SENTRY (CONFUSED) We've got to shoot him, haven't we?

Q/MASTER Not him. This one here. Commandant's signed off a truck. We send this one off, we can give the dead man his tea, his bread.

SENTRY I like it. (TO KRYMOV) Up you get, sunshine.

KRYMOV Back to my billet?

SENTRY Lubyanka, more like.

Q/MASTER We're not supposed to tell them.

SENTRY (REALISING HE'S PUT HIS FOOT IN IT) Sods.

KRYMOV (CONFUSED) My kit, from my bunk. I should have my kit, my suitcase.

Q/MASTER He's funny, this one.

SENTRY They're all funny.

Q/MASTER Get on the truck, we've got a dead man needs your rations.

MIX INTO THE TRUCK DEPARTING AND THEN

MIX THE TRUCK INTO:

SCENE 4.INTERVIEW.

My name is Alexei Abramovitch Bogoleev. I was arrested in the summer of 1942.

- My first day at the Lubyanka, not the worst. The courtyard, knowing you won't see daylight again, that was bad, but it got worse.
- The processing, that wasn't – that was humiliating, but at least you were busy.
- The first few days in a cell. You can get used to that.
- Feeling guilty, even though you know you aren't, you feel totally guilty.
- The first interrogation. That's not so bad. Very shocking.
- And all the time you think about who's denounced you – everyone does that.
- I knew two men, in a cell together, the second one had denounced the first, just to get his job. They didn't mind. Didn't mind at all.
- It's after that, it's after, when you've got to know your interrogator.
- And you realise something, you realise you're the same as your interrogator – the man shouting at you, hitting you, whipping you, watching you freeze – he's the same as you. Like you, he wept as he first read the word of the Communist Manifesto.
- You recognise him – and it's you.
- That's terrible.
- That's really appalling.
- You see the first man, in the cell, he'd denounced someone else before him to get the job.

CUT TO:

SCENE 5. MOSCOW: THE LUBYANKA: INNER PRISON.

THE CELL DOOR IS UNLOCKED AND THEN THROWN OPEN

WARDER In.

KRYMOV I need to telephone – there are people who would insist on knowing that I’m -

WARDER In.

HE PUSHES HIM IN AND SHUTS THE DOOR, LOCKS IT
KRYMOV STANDS, NOT KNOWING WHAT TO DO NEXT
KATSENELENOGEN AND DRELING STAND BY THE BUNKS

KRYMOV (BAFFLED) They took my belt, my laces.

KATS’BOGEN ‘Sright.

KRYMOV Cut the buttons off my trousers.

KATS’BOGEN Yup.

KRYMOV How am I supposed to...? [*walk around*]

KATS’BOGEN What?

KRYMOV I don’t know.

KATS’BOGEN They look up your arse too?

KRYMOV (SHAMED) Yes.

KATS’BOGEN Never know quite what they’re hoping to find.

KRYMOV How can I even....there are people, people who would be shocked to hear that I’m –

DRELING Shhh. Whisper.

KRYMOV They should be informed.

DRELING Your big friends wouldn't do anything. Even if you could tell them.

KRYMOV SAYS NOTHING.

KATS'BOGEN I'm Katsenelenbogen. By the way. Welcome to Chateau Lubyanka. He's Dreling. And Citizen Bogoleev – bottom bunk - is currently having a tête-à-tête with our friends.

KRYMOV I...?

KATS'BOGEN Interrogation. Probably not about his poems. Though frankly, some of his rhymes constitute a crime against civil society.

KRYMOV (SUDDENLY NOTICING) The floor.

KATS'BOGEN Sorry?

KRYMOV There's parquet on the floor.

KATS'BOGEN Nothing's too good for a Communist.

KRYMOV (STILL FLAILING) I joined before the Revolution.

KATS'BOGEN When this place was still insurance offices.

KRYMOV Insurance?

KATS'BOGEN The parquet.

KRYMOV I see.

KATS'BOGEN Now it's more of a Radiological Institute for the Diagnosis of Society.

KRYMOV Cancer ward.

KATS'BOGEN If you like. Though don't ask me who's the tumour.

KRYMOV SITS ON THE BUNK. IMMEDIATELY:

KATS'BOGEN Get up!

KRYMOV (STANDING) What?

KATS'BOGEN Not on the bunks, not lying down, not during the day.

KRYMOV I can't - ? [*lie down*]

KATS'BOGEN They check. (POINTING) The hole.

DRELING Where have you come from?

KRYMOV Stalingrad.

KATS'BOGEN How goes the heroic resistance?

DRELING Do you smoke?

KRYMOV Um. Yes.

DRELING (MATTER OF FACT) Oh.

KATS'BOGEN I let the whole show down, Comrade Commissar. Told our friends I don't smoke. They could have had my ration. In the dog house again.

KRYMOV (REALISING) You used to – I saw you, with my wife, we saw your cabaret. The Hall of Columns.

KATS'BOGEN My little moment in the sun.

KRYMOV You were good.

KATS'BOGEN (MODEST) Really.

KRYMOV Why did you stop?

KATS'BOGEN I was working – I worked here, I worked in a camp, I was with these people.

KRYMOV (SURPRISE) You were with the Cheka?

HE GETS NO REPLY BECAUSE THE DOOR IS BEING UNLOCKED AND BOGOLEEV IS THROWN IN.

KATS'BOGEN (JUMPING STRAIGHT TO HELP HIM IN) Here you are. That's it. One step, that's it.

KATS'BOGEN LEADS HIM TO HIS BUNK

DRELING Let him have a smoke. He needs a smoke.

KATS'BOGEN He needs to eat.

BOGOLEEV Let me...

KRYMOV Get him some water.

BOGOLEEV (VERY WEAK) Please. Please, have a look at my back.

KATS'BOGEN MOVES FORWARD AND PULLS HIS SHIRT DOWN THE THREE OF THEM RECOIL. THEN:

KATS'BOGEN (GENTLY, TO BOGOLEEV) The lash?

BOGOLEEV Don't touch me.

KATS'BOGEN Let's get some water on this.

KRYMOV Need to wash it.

KATS'BOGEN (RINSING OUT A CLOTH IN THE BUCKET) Get some of the blood off.

BOGOLEEV Oh God. Hear me, my God.

KATS'BOGEN That's it, gently. Gently.

AND AS BOGOLEEV CONTINUES MOANING:

KRYMOV (HALF-DESPERATE, HALF-FEARFUL) My wife, you see, she left me. We separated. She left me. There's no-one out there to even send me a parcel.

CUT TO:

SCENE 6. MOSCOW: THE SHTRUMS' FLAT: FRONT DOOR.

WITH ZHENYA, OUTSIDE THE FRONT DOOR.
INSIDE THE FLAT, THE DOORBELL IS RINGING AND LYUDA
APPROACHING.

LYUDA Coming, coming.

LYUDA OPENS THE DOOR AND SEES ZHENYA.

LYAKHOV Zhenya! What are you - ?

ZHENYA (MORE CAUTIOUS) Hello.

LYUDA THROWS HER ARMS ROUND ZHENYA. SAYING:

LYUDA He's dead. My Tolya's dead.

ZHENYA (COMFORTING) I know, my darling. I know. I know.

AND MIX INTO:

SCENE 7. MOSCOW: THE SHTRUMS' FLAT: OUTSIDE THE BATHROOM.

LYUDA IS KNOCKING ON THE DOOR.
INSIDE (BEYOND THE DOOR), WATER NOISILY DRAINING OUT OF THE BATH

ZHENYA Alright, alright, I'm coming out.

LYUDA Don't rush, not on my account.

ZHENYA I'm not. (*I am*)

LYUDA There's a dressing gown on the –

DURING WHICH ZHENYA OPENS THE DOOR AND EMERGES IN A DRESSING GOWN.

LYUDA You look like a witch.

ZHENYA Thanks.

LYUDA I mean, in a good sense.

ZHENYA Sofya Osipovna called me that.

LYUDA (= *not just me*) See?

ZHENYA It was the night Piotr Pavlovich proposed.

LYUDA Where is he? When did you last hear from him?

ZHENYA (IGNORING THIS) I haven't heard from Sofya since....'Slike she's vanished into thin air.

LYUDA I never liked her much.

ZHENYA I hope she's alright. Even if you don't.

LYUDA I don't wish her ill.

ZHENYA DECIDES TO SAY IT:

ZHENYA Look, Lyuda, the reason I've come back to Moscow.

LYUDA What?

ZHENYA Krymov has been arrested. That's why I'm here. They told me he's in the Lubyanka.

LYUDA Nikolai Krymov? - he's a one hundred percent Communist.

ZHENYA And our brother wasn't? And your first husband? Abarchuk, he was a thousand percent Marxist.

LYUDA Krymov, he was an absolutist – “The kulaks can go to hell for all I care.” I remember him saying it.

ZHENYA Nice time to bring that up. Thanks.

LYUDA You want me to lie?

ZHENYA (INTO IMMEDIATE WHISPER:) – they summoned me for interrogation.

LYUDA Oh my God. Oh my God.

LYUDA RUSHES ACROSS THE ROOM

ZHENYA What are you doing?

LYUDA [*Shhh*] They can bug the mouthpieces.

SHE IS LAYING A SCARF OVER THE PHONE

ZHENYA A scarf isn't going stop it.

LYUDA It muffles it. Someone told me.

ZHENYA Day I got the notice – they don't tell you why, who it's about, just Be There. This building in the middle of Kuibyshev – I'd

never realised what it was - bring your passport. Just a plain room, and an ordinary young man but he looked like he already knew everything.

MIXING IN HERE, THIS INTERVIEW, CO-EXISTING WITH THE SCENE WITH LYUDA (IN ITALICS):

- CHEKIST* *Are you aware of the counter-revolutionary activities of Nikolai Grigorevich Krymov?*
- ZHENYA* *Of course not.*
- CHEKIST* *You were married for eight years?*
- ZHENYA* *We were never officially married.*
- CHEKIST* *You took his name?*
- ZHENYA* *For that period.*
- CHEKIST* *This presumably gave him the respectability he needed?*
- ZHENYA* *We were in love.*
- LYUDA Why did you say that?
- ZHENYA* *Because we were.*
- LYUDA You fall in love far too easily.
- CHEKIST* *You found it possible to 'love' an enemy of the revolution?*
- ZHENYA* *Krymov volunteered for the Front. He was almost captured in the Ukraine, led his company to safety.*
- CHEKIST* *That's right, his battalion was encircled, yes?*
- ZHENYA* *That's what he told me.*
- CHEKIST* *Interesting.*

ZHENYA *What do you mean?*

CHEKIST *That is when he was recruited by the Gestapo.*

ZHENYA *You – that’s ridiculous.*

LYUDA *What if Tolya had been surrounded? Would they have said the same about him?*

ZHENYA *Of course. They’re all – how did we let this happen, Lyuda?*

CHEKIST *And when did N.G.Krymov first instruct you to become involved with Colonel Novikov?*

ZHENYA *What?*

CHEKIST *To form a relationship with him so as to elicit intelligence which you would pass back to N.G.Krymov?*

ZHENYA *I thought “I’m never going to get out of here.” This Is It.*

CHEKIST *How would N.G.Krymov communicate with his Fascist paymasters?*

ZHENYA *Nikolai is the most loyal citizen I have ever known.*

CHEKIST *I see, you’re implying that Colonel Novikov is not a true Soviet citizen?*

ZHENYA *(FINALLY HITTING BACK) Men are at the front, fighting the Fascists, and you, young, fit, you sit here in Moscow, flinging accusations at them.*

LYUDA *Zhenya!*

ZHENYA *I was ready for him to punch me.*

LYUDA *What did he do?*

ZHENYA *He didn’t....he almost blushed.*

CHEKIST *Unfortunately, none of that gets us round the problem of the Trotskyism.*

ZHENYA *Sorry?*

CHEKIST *Trotskyism. Worship of the disgraced former citizen, L.D.Trotsky.*

ZHENYA *I am aware of what 'Trotskyism' means.*

CHEKIST *And yet you claim ignorance. In spite of the fact that your husband once boasted to you – (PAPERS) – boasted that Trotsky had once told him what he thought of one of his articles?*

LYUDA *What's he talking about?*

ZHENYA *(UNCONVINCING) I don't know what you mean.*

CHEKIST *"Marble. That's pure marble." Trotsky said to him. Yes?*

ZHENYA *How could you know he - ?*

CHEKIST *What?*

ZHENYA *Nothing.*

LYUDA *What?*

ZHENYA *Krymov told me, I remember him saying "You're the only person who know these words."*

LYUDA *So how did this Chekist know that – ?*

ZHENYA *I told – I told Piotr Pavlovich, when he came up to Kuibyshev last month.*

LYUDA *(SIGHS. THEN:) Poor you.*

CHEKIST *You said earlier "you were in love".*

LYUDA But then of course it's exactly the sort of thing that would happen to you.

CHEKIST *You found it quite possible to love a man loved by Trotsky?*

LYUDA You left one man for the other and then told the second about the first.

ZHENYA You left Tolya's father - I bet you've told Viktor all about –

LYUDA That's different.

CHEKIST *And yet you still dispute this is the sort of man who might start working for the Gestapo?*

ZHENYA Now I understand why Mama prefers to live like a gypsy in Kazan rather than coming here.

LYUDA We keep inviting her.

ZHENYA (CHANGE OF HEART) I'm sorry. I'm sorry, Lyuda, that's not fair.

LYUDA Maybe your Piotr told someone else and they denounced him. Have you thought of that?

ZHENYA You're right. Why didn't I think of that?

LYUDA Quite.

ZHENYA (SHIVERING) That must be it.

LYUDA You've got cold.

ZHENYA I'll go and....I'm sorry about what I said.

LYUDA (AS SHE WALKS ACROSS THE ROOM) I've made up the divan. What time do you go back to the Lubyanka?

ZHENYA Visitors Office is on Kuznetsky Most. I'll start again tomorrow.

LYUDA I'll get you something to eat. Madame General must keep her strength up.

ZHENYA I'm so tired, Lyuda. So bloody tired.

CUT TO:

SCENE 8. MOSCOW: LUBYANKA: WAITING ROOM. DAY.

A SHABBY OLD ROOM: BANK CASHIER WINDOWS AT ONE END, LINES OF PEOPLE QUEUING ON FRONT OF THEM, QUIETLY, RESPECTFULLY, FEARFULLY.

ZHENYA IS JUST ENTERING:

ZHENYA Where should I...?

MAN First time?

ZHENYA Yes.

MAN Start queuing. Any window.

ZHENYA Right.

SHE STEPS OVER AND JOINS A QUEUE.

MAN IN FRONT Got your passport?

ZHENYA Yes, I put it in my handbag this morning. (AS SHE SEARCHES) It's definitely here.

MAN IN FRONT You don't need to show me.

ZHENYA Yes, it's here. Sorry.

WOMAN IN FRONT You don't have to apologise.

ZHENYA Sorry.

WOMAN IN FRONT (WHISPERING) If they're not here. The Inner Prison, I mean, next you go to Matrosskaya Tishina, then, if no good, you go to Butyrka, but they only see people in alphabetical order. If he's not there, you go to Lefortovo Military. Then, if you don't - you come back here.

ZHENYA How long does that take?

WOMAN IN FRONT Six weeks I still haven't found my son.

ZHENYA You don't even know where he - ?

MAN IN FRONT You've been to the Military Prosecutor?

ZHENYA (BAFFLED) No.

MAN IN FRONT Oh.

THEY ALL SHUFFLE FORWARD, SOME SLIDING BAGS AND PACKAGES.

ZHENYA Queue's moving quite fast.

WOMAN BEHIND Bad sign, means everyone's getting vague answers.

MAN IN FRONT (OF CHEKIST BEHIND WINDOW) Where's he going?

WOMAN BEHIND He'll be gone to phone someone.

ZHENYA That means they're giving proper answers.

MAN IN FRONT Everyone's getting the same today, Parcel Not Accepted.

WOMAN BEHIND That means Investigation Not Yet Completed.

ZHENYA Why can't they have parcels during - ?

MAN IN FRONT He's coming back, watch her shoulders, you can tell what he'll have said.

THEY WAIT AND WATCH A MOMENT. THEN:

WOMAN IN FRONT Bad news.

WOMAN BEHIND Could be no news.

ZHENYA Poor woman.

THE QUEUE SHUFFLES FORWARD AGAIN, SLIDING PARCELS.

WOMAN BEHIND Father, husband or son?

ZHENYA Former hus – Husband.

WOMAN IN FRONT See that bloke over there? Posh like you. He's come for his wife, he's an interpreter in the All Union Society for Cultural Relations.

WOMAN BEHIND He's not stuck up.

ZHENYA Sorry, I didn't mean to seem –

WOMAN IN FRONT 'Salright, love, we all have – first time.

WOMAN BEHIND That woman over there, she married a French, a Communist, settled here years ago. 'Course he got arrested.

WOMAN IN FRONT I spoke to him yesterday, with the glasses, he's a lecturer, at the Timiryazev.

MAN BEHIND Our bloke, Window Three, he's a good one. Today could be my day.

ZHENYA For what?

MAN IN FRONT Take my parcel. Here. (HE SHOWS IT) Last time, they said, wrap it in paper, tie with tape. Took me forever to find that tape.

WOMAN BEHIND You got tinned food there. They'll never take that.

OTHER MAN That's the Butyrka, they never take tinned there.

WOMAN IN FRONT What use is tinned?, they need onions, garlic, for the scurvy.

WOMAN BEHIND You can't give them anything too good, the criminals take it.

OTHER MAN How do you know all this?

WOMAN BEHIND Did any of you talk to that woman in here last week? Husband, an engineer, designer –

MAN IN FRONT The woman with the silver fox?

WOMAN BEHIND Don't think so. Her husband, he'd had this fling, when he was a lad, and he went on sending money for the kid that was born. Never seen the boy. Never once. Just did the decent thing.

MAN IN FRONT I know who you mean now.

WOMAN BEHIND Son goes to the front, deserts to the Germans.

MAN BEHIND (VERY QUIETLY) Gets captured, you mean.

WOMAN BEHIND This bloke – he designs important things! – he gets ten years for fathering a traitor to the motherland.

MORE SILENCE.

ZHENYA To have a parcel accepted.

WOMAN IN FRONT What, love?

ZHENYA To have a parcel accepted, that would be.... [*wonderful*]

WOMAN BEHIND That's right.

MAN BEHIND That's the thing.

WOMAN IN FRONT It's going to happen today. It's going to be me.

WOMAN BEHIND I think you're right. Today. You. Maybe me.

AND MIX THIS INTO:

ZHENYA IS NEXT IN LINE.

CHEKIST Next!

ZHENYA MOVES FORWARD AND:

ZHENYA Hello. Sorry.

CHEKIST (NICE) What for?

ZHENYA Sorry, I don't know.

CHEKIST Yes?

ZHENYA (HER VOICE IS STRAINED) I want to ask about, I want to enquire about a person who has been arrested.

CHEKIST Name?

ZHENYA Yes, sorry, Nikol – Krymov, Nikolai Grigorevich.

CHEKIST When was he arrested?

ZHENYA November.

CHEKIST This year?

ZHENYA Yes.

CHEKIST I'll put in a request.

ZHENYA Thank you.

CHEKIST Your name?

ZHENYA Yevgenia Nikolaevna.

CHEKIST Surname?

ZHENYA Shap – (SHE STOPS HERSELF)

CHEKIST What was that?

A MOMENT, THEN, SHE DECIDES:

ZHENYA Krymova.

CHEKIST Wife, yes?

ZHENYA (ABOUT TO EXPLAIN) Well...Yes, wife. I am his wife. Wife.

CHEKIST Come back tomorrow.

ZHENYA Alright.

CHEKIST Answers tomorrow from eleven to three.

ZHENYA I understand.

CHEKIST That's all.

ZHENYA Yes.

CHEKIST You may go now.

ZHENYA Yes, I'm going.

ZHENYA, RELUCTANTLY MOVES OFF, BUT STOPS ALONG THE QUEUE.

MAN BEHIND What did he say?

ZHENYA Said he'd put in a request.

MAN BEHIND Take your passport number?

ZHENYA Should I go back and tell him it? (SEARCHING) I haven't got my passport.

WOMAN BEHIND Check.

ZHENYA (RUMMAGING IN HER HANDBAG) It's in here somewhere. I'm sure I put it – here it is.

ZHENYA If I join the queue again....I could get to the front and tell him.

WOMAN BEHIND Come back tomorrow.

ZHENYA Yes, I'll tell him then.

NOTHING.
THEN:

ZHENYA Better get going then. (URGENT:) Where's my passport? I thought I put it in –

WOMAN BEHIND Is it in that side pocket?

ZHENYA That's where I thought I put it.

MAN You put it in your coat pocket.

ZHENYA Did I? Yes. Here it is.

WOMAN BEHIND Good. Got it.

ZHENYA Yes.

NOTHING.
THEN:

ZHENYA Maybe I'll just sit on the bench for a while. Seems a shame to go. He might be just through there.

A MOMENT
SHE SITS

ZHENYA Sit here. Just a bit longer.

AND SLOWLY MIX OUT TO:

SCENE 9. MOSCOW: THE LUBYANKA: INTERROGATION ROOM.

KRYMOV SITS ON A STOOL IN FRONT OF THE INTERROGATOR.
MID-WAY THROUGH THE SESSION.
IT IS FREEZING, KRYMOV IS SHIVERING.

KRYMOV I was with the Comintern for fifteen years.

NKVD INT’GATOR You knew the traitor Zinoviev, the subversives Kamenev,
Bukharin?

KRYMOV As much as any –

NKVD INT’GATOR All of whom confessed to Right Trotskyist conspiracy against
the Soviet State?

KRYMOV I was as shocked as anyone.

NKVD INT’GATOR Disappointed? That they were caught?

KRYMOV They were enemies of the State. They needed to be purged.

NKVD INT’GATOR We can move on. (PAPERS) On the phone, in August 1937,
it’s seems you were of the opinion that Josef Vissarionovich
has an inferiority complex about philosophy.

KRYMOV I think maybe that remark is capable of being
misunderstood.

NKVD INT’GATOR Back in 1932, you told a visitor from Germany that the Soviet
Trade Union Movement “represented the State more than
the Proletariat.”

KRYMOV I incited soldiers to mutiny against the Tsar. I fought in the
Civil War. I have volunteered for the front line throughout
this conflict.

NKVD INT’GATOR You think you’re here to receive a testimonial?

KRYMOV Of course, I don’t –

NKVD INT’GATOR This is all – none of this matters, just tell me about Muska Grinberg.

KRYMOV REACTS.

THE INTERROGATOR KNEW THIS WOULD WRONG-FOOT HIM.

KRYMOV (BLUSTERING) That’s nothing to do with – that’s not your business.

NKVD INT’GATOR When did she recruit you into her counter-revolutionary Zionist espionage ring?

KRYMOV You don’t mean that seriously, do you?

NKVD INT’GATOR You’ve heard, we know about everything you have said and done.

KRYMOV I would never spy.

NKVD INT’GATOR (PAPERS) Muska Grinberg. You came in here – four years ago, yes? - you made your statement about her husband. Here it is. “I am not able to totally exclude the possibility that the suspect is a double agent.” And then you went straight to visit his wife, Muska.

KRYMOV I meant to make things better. For her.

NKVD INT’GATOR But in fact you had carnal relations with her.

KRYMOV No, I don’t believe I –

NKVD INT’GATOR You’re right, not on that particular occasion. It was two days later, in the Hotel Caucasia.

KRYMOV I....

NKVD INT’GATOR We have Grinberg’s own confession. Here.

KRYMOV Then why do you need me?

A MOMENT’S SILENCE.

NKVD INT’GATOR That time you were surrounded. In Byelorussia.

KRYMOV I led two hundred men out of encirclement.

NKVD INT’GATOR You were flown to German Army HQ and given your new instructions. Was it SS or Gestapo?

KRYMOV That’s ridiculous.

NKVD INT’GATOR Really? Weren’t you friends with many who have now been unmasked as enemy agents?

KRYMOV That’s – it’s not what -

NKVD INT’GATOR Did you in fact fornicate with one?

KRYMOV I did.

NKVD INT’GATOR So she was your handler. In every sense.

KRYMOV Muska was – she was, you know, good looking.

NKVD INT’GATOR You wouldn’t be the first.

KRYMOV But we only –

NKVD INT’GATOR (SHARP) Yes?

KRYMOV (SMALL) I am not as dishonest as you make out.

THEN:

KRYMOV Please, believe me, comrade.

NKVD INT’GATOR ‘Citizen’. You are no longer my comrade.

KRYMOV Citizen.

NKVD INT’GATOR If you genuinely want to repent, if you still feel any love for the Party, then you must help the Party by confessing.

KRYMOV I won’t make things up.

NKVD INT’GATOR Take your time.

A MOMENT OF SILENCE.
IN THE DISTANCE A MAN IS BEING BEATEN.
HE IS HOWLING IN PAIN.

THEN THE PHONE RINGS:

NKVD INT’GATOR (FORMAL:) Hello.
> (THEN SOFT) Mmmm. Can’t wait.
> You went to the special store, didn’t you?
> Sergei’s wife got a leg of lamb with her coupon.
> I sometimes dream about you as well.
? No, tell me yours.
> In my undies again?
> I’m going to have to teach you a lesson when I get home.
> I will. Only one kiss in each room to begin with.
> Alright, run along.

HE HANGS UP.

NKVD INT’GATOR Any nearer a decision?

KRYMOV SAYS NOTHING

NKVD INT’GATOR I do wish you’d stop tapping your feet.

KRYMOV They’re going numb.

NKVD INT’GATOR (ROLLING A PIECE OF PAPER INTO HIS TYPEWRITER)
Plenty of time. Plenty of time. (STARTING TO TYPE
SLOWLY) Remembered anything yet?

MIX OUT INTO:

SCENE 10. MOSCOW: THE SHTRUMS' FLAT. AFTERNOON.

VIKTOR IS JUST COMING IN THE DOOR

LYUDA Viktor?

VIKTOR Here I am.

LYUDA You're not going to the –

VIKTOR (DELIBERATELY CUTTING THIS OFF) Where's Yevgenia?
Has she done to Kuznetsky Most today?

LYUDA What does that matter?

ZHENYA (ENTERING THE ROOM) I'm still here.

VIKTOR You're looking pale.

ZHENYA The food in Kuibyshev.

VIKTOR (CORRECTING HER) Actually, that's a Jewish compliment.

ZHENYA Sorry.

VIKTOR (EAGER TO TELL HER A JOKE) Here, here. Two men
from the shtetl, they've both done well, moved to Petersburg.
They meet in the street. One says to the other How have you
been? So ill, he says, I've been so ill for a month - I had to
spend two thousand roubles on a doctor. Still, I'm cured
now. Two thousand? the other one says. Back in the shtetl I
could have been ill for a year on that much.

ZHENYA LAUGHS, LYUDA DOESN'T

LYUDA This is no time for jokes.

VIKTOR How about a game of chess then?

ZHENYA Last time I checkmated you twice in a row.

VIKTOR (EAGER) Come on, here it is. I've been looking forward to this.

THEY ARE GETTING THE PIECES OUT, SETTING UP THE BOARD

LYUDA You can't just sit there. Look, the clock, remember?, it's always ten minutes slow at least.

VIKTOR Left or right?

ZHENYA That one.

VIKTOR Black.

LYUDA What are you doing?

VIKTOR I used to think about all our friends, relatives who've been arrested and then I'd think at least I can tell them not all my fiends are like that. Krymov's a dyed-in-the-wool – he worked in the underground.

LYUDA And if they interrogate him?

ZHENYA Lyuda, please.

LYUDA We all know they do. (TO VIKTOR) What if he tells them all about everything you used to say?

VIKTOR My skull is unstitching. Please.

ZHENYA (PROMPTING) White moves first, Vitka.

VIKTOR Sorry, yes, right. No-one's called me that for years.

HE SHIFTS INTO A REVERIE

ZHENYA Your move?

VIKTOR Yes. (LOOKING AT THE BOARD) Right.

HE MOVES A PAWN.

ZHENYA Nikolai always opened with King's Pawn. [*too*]

LYUDA See? [= *You'll get arrested like him*]

VIKTOR For God's sake, Lyuda.

LYUDA Just saying.

VIKTOR Have you seen my slippers?

LYUDA By your feet?

VIKTOR Mmmmm.

ZHENYA (MOVING A PIECE) Your move.

VIKTOR Alright. (HE MOVES) Try that, Capablanca. (WHO IS NOW TRYING TO WORK HIS SLIPPERS ON WITHOUT BENDING DOWN AND USING HIS HANDS) Don't tell me, Trotsky always used to do that move.

LYUDA You think it's funny?

VIKTOR (STILL SLIPPER STRUGGLING) There you go. My knight enters the fray.

LYUDA For God's sake, let me.

LYUDA DROPS TO HER KNEES AND PUTS HIS SLIPPERS ON HIS FEET.

LYUDA Feet up.

VIKTOR Thank you, my love.

ZHENYA (JOKEY) What a good wife.

LYUDA The revolution was supposed to change things like this.

ZHENYA (MOVING) Your move.

VIKTOR Will you please stop fiddling?

LYUDA (STRAIGHTENING THE PAWNS) They're all out of line.

VIKTOR They don't have be exactly in place.

LYUDA It's nicer if –

VIKTOR (MOVING) There. That opens it up.

LYUDA Nothing frightens me. We can sell our possessions, move to the dacha, live off cabbage, you can teach chemistry in the local school.

ZHENYA (SHE'S SAID THIS BEFORE) You're never going to keep your dacha.

VIKTOR Zhenya, you've obeyed your conscience. The greatest thing a man can do. Woman.

LYUDA Here he goes again.

ZHENYA I know this a trap but. (SHE MOVES)

LYUDA What good will it do? Krymov won't be happy even if he does get released.

ZHENYA Lyuda!

LYUDA He was doing fine when you separated. You've got nothing to feel guilty about, Zhenya.

A MOMENT
THEN:

ZHENYA I wish you understood.

VIKTOR Come on, Zhenya, your bishop's in mortal danger.

LYUDA (GOING) I'll leave you two alone.

SHE GOES

VIKTOR Maybe I should do some work.

ZHENYA Today? Why not bang your head against the wall instead?

VIKTOR Let me do some work.

ZHENYA I'll go and help Lyuda. (GETTING UP) Don't think I haven't
 memorised the board.

CUT TO:

SCENE 11. MOSCOW: THE LUBYANKA: INTERROGATION ROOM.

KRYMOV HAS BEEN STANDING MOTIONLESS IN THE ROOM FOR EIGHTEEN HOURS.

THE INTERROGATOR SITS BEHIND HIS DESK.

NKVD INT’GATOR Legs apart, spine straight.

KRYMOV Citizen, I have been standing here since –

NKVD INT’GATOR And you’ll stay there another twelve hours if you don’t start writing.

SILENCE

NKVD INT’GATOR I asked you about your Trotskyite Sex Conspiracies. What have you got to say?

SILENCE

NKVD INT’GATOR Stand up. You think you’re in here for a sleep?

KRYMOV STRAIGHTENS
AGONISED SILENCE

NKVD INT’GATOR Didn’t you hear what I said? Have you gone completely deaf?

KRYMOV My boots. My feet.

NKVD INT’GATOR Don’t talk to me.

KRYMOV STRAIGHTENS AGAIN
IT IS AGONY

THE NKVD INT’GATOR STANDS AND MOVES TO THE WINDOW
HE OPENS THE ROLLER BLIND
A BURST OF LIGHT. KRYMOV GROANS.

NKVD INT’GATOR Time for breakfast.

THE INTERROGATOR PULLS OPEN A DRAWER, TAKES OUT A ROLL,
STARTS EATING IT OSTENTATIOUSLY
KRYMOV QUIETLY MOANS

NKVD INT’GATOR Want to do some writing?

KRYMOV I have. No. Intention. Of confessing to something I haven’t
- I am not a spy.

NKVD INT’GATOR CONTINUES EATING, FLIPPING THROUGH THE PAGES
OF A FILE

NKVD INT’GATOR Been reading here. You’ve never been promoted. Still a
Battalion Commissar. Ever wonder why?

KRYMOV SAYS NOTHING

NKVD INT’GATOR Trotsky himself said “That’s marble, pure marble!” about one
of your speeches.

NKVD INT’GATOR WAITS, TAKES A BITE AND CONTINUES

NKVD INT’GATOR (MOUTH FULL) I’m right, aren’t I?

KRYMOV WHIMPERS

NKVD INT’GATOR If that worm had seized power, wouldn’t you be doing well,
eh? Pure marble – pure shit.

KRYMOV I have never had any connection with Trotskyism. I have
always voted against Trotskyite resolutions.

NKVD INT’GATOR It’s what we always find. How else are you going to preserve
your cover?

KRYMOV SAYS NOTHING

NKVD INT’GATOR Tired?

KRYMOV Mmmm.

NKVD INT’GATOR Want to lie down, take your boots off, ease those swollen
feet?

KRYMOV Uhhh.

NKVD INT’GATOR Why won’t you help us? Do you really think it matters whether you were recruited before the war or during it? It’s much more deep-rooted. You must help the Party in this new stage of the struggle. You must renounce your old opinions. Only a true Bolshevik is capable of a task like that.

KRYMOV (TALKING CAREFULLY:) I may have expressed some views hostile to the Sovereign Socialist State. But espionage, sabot –

NKVD INT’GATOR Why the ‘but’? You’re already halfway to understanding your own hostility. That’s almost sabotage in itself. So no ‘buts’.

KRYMOV I am not a spy.

NKVD INT’GATOR You won’t help the Party? We get to the nub of it and still you hide. You stand there, smelling like shit and tell me you’re –

KRYMOV JUMPS FORWARD AND GRABS THE INTERROGATOR. HE TRIES TO WRESTLE BACK, SHOUTING ‘GET OFF ME’ AND AD LIB, DURING:

KRYMOV Where you when I was leading men into battle? Where were you in the winter fighting? Have you fought in Stalingrad? You Tsarist –

HE GETS NO FURTHER BECAUSE MEANWHILE, THE INTERROGATOR HAS SHOUTED ‘SOLDIERS’ AND ‘GET IN HERE’ THE TWO SOLDIERS HAVE RUN IN AND START LAYING INTO KRYMOV. UNTIL:

NKVD INT’GATOR Enough. Get the doctor. I want to keep going.

CUT TO:

SCENE 12. MOSCOW: SHTRUMS' FLAT: MAIN ROOM. LUNCHTIME.

LYUDA AND NADYA AND ZHENYA ARE COMING OUT OF THE KITCHEN
WITH PLATES OF FOOD

ZHENYA Tell me all about your young lieutenant.

NADYA He writes poetry.

THE DOORBELL RINGS AND VIKTOR GETS UP

VIKTOR (GOING) I'll get it.

ZHENYA Who does he like?

NADYA He can't stand Ostrovsky and Sholokhov and all those
people.

ZHENYA He's a modernist, is he?

NADYA Actually, he doesn't believe in anything.

VIKTOR COMES IN WITH MASHA

VIKTOR (BUOYED UP) Look who's here!

MASHA Hello, everyone.

LYUDA Masha, you'll eat with us, yes? I've made borsht. This is my
sister, Yevgenia, she's staying with us. Masha Ivanovna is
married to one of Viktor's colleagues.

ZHENYA Masha.

LYUDA Sit, sit. Everyone. Nadya, will you get the pie?

VIKTOR I'll get you cutlery.

AS THEY DO SO:

MASHA Yevgenia Nikolaevna, forgive me, I have never seen – you’re so beautiful.

LYUDA (NONSENSE) Mashenka, look at her hands.

VIKTOR And her neck.

NADYA (GOING) And her nostrils.

ZHENYA Hang on, I’m not a horse, you know.

VIKTOR I’ll get you a nosebag.

LYUDA Borsht? Mashenka?

MASHA A little.

ZHENYA Remember when there were eggs for the borsht?

VIKTOR Don’t.

ZHENYA A man I know in Kuibyshev. He managed to get eggs. Made me an omelette.

VIKTOR Stop.

ZHENYA There was a price, of course.

THEN:

ZHENYA No, Lyuda, I didn’t pay it.

A TENSE SILENCE

MASHA This is delicious.

LYUDA Thank you.

NADYA (COMING THROUGH) Mama, the oven’s gone out.

LYUDA I’m coming.

MASHA (GETTING UP) Let me help you.

THE TWO WOMEN GO OUT.

ZHENYA Do you like MASHA Ivanovna?

NADYA I think she's the best person in the whole world. I'd marry her if I could.

ZHENYA Not too angelic?

NADYA You don't like her?

ZHENYA You know, saints, there's nearly always a bit of hysteria going on underneath. I'd rather have an out and out bitch.

VIKTOR Hysteria?

ZHENYA Just in general, I mean, not her, not actually her.

OVER THIS:

LYUDA (FROM KITCHEN) Nadya, come in here, come and learn how to light this oven once and for all.

NADYA Sorry.

NADYA GOES

VIKTOR Zhenechka, do you really not like our little Masha?

ZHENYA I don't know. Some women. They're so accommodating, so ready to throw themselves on the fire. It's never, I mean with them, it's never "I'm going to sleep with this man because I actually want to." It's always got to be "I pity him, it's my sacrifice." 'God's sake. A woman sleeps with or marries or leaves a man because of her own choice. It's not a sacrifice, she wanted to! But she believes she's the great martyr to men's love. Women like that, can't stand it.

VIKTOR I see.

ZHENYA And you know why they get up my nose? Because I sometimes think I'm one of them.

VIKTOR I'm not sure I –

ZHENYA (*But*) That's not why you want to know, is it, Vitka?

VIKTOR Stop calling me that.

ZHENYA The young lady's head over heels in love with you.

VIKTOR Don't be stupid. She's Lyuda's closest friend.

ZHENYA Tell me about you and Masha.

VIKTOR I'm being serious.

ZHENYA LAUGHS

VIKTOR Go to hell, Zhenya, got that? Go to hell.

BUT HE IS INTERRUPTED BY MASHA RE-ENTERING

MASHA They're trying their best.

VIKTOR Come and finish your soup, Masha.

MASHA I was thinking, Yevgenia Nikolaevna, sadly, I have some experience. Would you like me to come with you to the Lubyanka?

ZHENYA [NONCOMMITTAL, MEANING NO] There are things you have to do on your own. You know.

LYUDA (ENTERING) Mashenka's got it into her head you don't like her.

MASHA No, I mean, well, I did wonder. Oh dear, now it looks like I'm forcing myself on you.

ZHENYA My fault. I'm just upset. Sorry.

AND OVER THIS

NADYA

(ENTERING, TRIUMPHANT) It's cold pie tonight, my people. Well, lukewarm, get your plates ready.

CUT TO:

SCENE 13. MOSCOW: THE LUBYANKA: INTERROGATION ROOM.

KRYMOV IS EXHAUSTED INTO SILENCE

EACH OF THE NKVD INTERROGATOR'S LINES IS PUNCTUATED BY A SHORT SILENCE IN THE HOPE THAT KRYMOV WILL SAY SOMETHING

NKVD INT'GATOR I can sit here all year.
 I'm good - everyone signs.
 And then no more beatings. No more camphor injections.
 You'll be sentenced, and then you can sleep.
 Stand up now, no slouching.

KRYMOV STRAIGHTENS.

NKVD INT'GATOR Remembered anything yet?
 You really want me to call them in?
 Alright.

THE INTERROGATOR SIGHS, WALKS OVER TO THE DOOR, OPENS IT

NKVD INT'GATOR He's yours.

THE TWO SOLDIERS COME AND START LAYING INTO KRYMOV AGAIN.
 HE BARELY HAS THE STRENGTH TO GROAN.

AND MIX TO:

NKVD INT'GATOR Now the witnesses all say the same thing. In Building 6/1,
 you worked to betray the Motherland, to weaken political
 consciousness, to incite Grekov, the commander, inciting to
 go over to the enemy.

KRYMOV I....

NKVD INT'GATOR Yes?

KRYMOV I was instructed to take command of the – to end partisan
 activity.

NKVD INT'GATOR (STANDING AND APPROACHING KRYMOV) Captain
 Grekov has been posthumously awarded Hero of

Motherland, the highest award for bravery and you thought to relieve him of his command?

KRYMOV My orders –

THE INTERROGATOR SMACKS KRYMOV ACROSS THE FACE.
HE CONTINUES TO KICK ON THE GROUND.

NKVD INT’GATOR You’re an asshole. A Trotskyite prostitute asshole. (AND NOW A WORD WITH EACH KICK:) A Trotskyite Rightist Prostitute Arsehole With No Bollocks and No Kidneys.

AND MIX FROM THIS INTO:

NKVD INT’GATOR Thank you, doctor.

NKVD DOCTOR Too many injections, in a short space of time.

NKVD INT’GATOR I don’t want to wait any longer. (TO KRYMOV, FACE SLAPPING) Come on, we’ve got medical science, don’t need any more rest.

KRYMOV GROANS

NKVD INT’GATOR Sit up, that’s it.

THEN:

NKVD INT’GATOR Alright?

KRYMOV Unghh.

NKVD INT’GATOR Do you know the difference between Bourgeois Jurisprudence and Soviet Jurisprudence?

KRYMOV (MISSING A FEW TEETH) I don’t.

NKVD INT’GATOR In the Bourgeois system, you’re innocent until proven guilty. Here in the Soviet Union, the accused is required to prove that he is innocent. You have clearly failed to do so.

KRYMOV I am not a –

NKVD INT’GATOR That doesn’t matter. Just sign this.

KRYMOV If you know I am a spy, why do you need me to sign it?

THE INTERROGATOR STANDS UP, UNHOLSTERS HIS REVOLVER.
HE CHECKS IT’S LOADED

NKVD INT’GATOR Sign it or I will shoot you.

KRYMOV I know.

NKVD INT’GATOR Sign.

KRYMOV I cannot.

NKVD INT’GATOR There’s a crematorium downstairs. Thousands have been
shot and disposed of.

KRYMOV I know. We knew.

NKVD INT’GATOR Sign.

KRYMOV I cannot.

HE COCKS IT AND THEN FIRES
IT CLICKS, IT IS NOT LOADED

KRYMOV COLLAPSES TO THE GROUND, WEEPING

KRYMOV Zhenya. Zhenya.

THE INVESTIGATOR CONTINUES, RELENTLESSLY, OVER THIS:

NKVD INT’GATOR Paragraph 58, Section 4, Support of a Foreign State against
the Soviet Union, 6, Espionage, Section 8 Terrorism, Section
14 Sabotage – that’s the only thing that’s going to save you.
You confess to one of them, we stop.

KRYMOV (THROUGH TERRIFIED TEARS) Zhenya. Zhenya.

THE INTERROGATOR SIGHS

NKVD INT'GATOR You'll be so happy when we finally shoot you. But you DO have to sign first.

CUT TO:

SCENE 14. MOSCOW: SHTRUMS' FLAT. MAIN ROOM. DAY.

VIKTOR IS TURNING THE PAGES OF THE NEWSPAPER, SCANNING THROUGH ARTICLES

VIKTOR Eighty-one.....eighty-two....(HE TURNS A PAGE)...eighty-three.

LYUDA What are you doing?

VIKTOR Counting the mentions of Comrade Stalin in today's Pravda.

LYUDA Honestly.

NADYA When we first came back here, you bit our heads off if we even mentioned –

VIKTOR I'm sick of it, aren't I?

NADYA Then tell me, did Lenin really write a will disowning Stalin?

ZHENYA Did you hear that from your lieutenant?

NADYA So what?

ZHENYA Stick to kissing.

VIKTOR Much less dangerous.

NADYA We have to talk about something.

ZHENYA So what are his philosophies?

NADYA Why do people all have to believe in something? Your Krymov and his communism, Grandmama in the workers – it's stupid, we're going to live without beliefs.

ZHENYA You and the lieutenant?

NADYA In three weeks he'll be at the front. Here's his philosophy: alive today, dead tomorrow.

ZUBAREV Nadya!

A MOMENT'S SHOCKED SILENCE. THEN:

ZHENYA Only weeks ago, I was living in Kuibyshev, about to go to the front to visit Piotr. We seemed so inevitable.

NADYA (ENTHUSED) I know how you feel.

ZHENYA And then, the next moment, I'd feel so – he felt so alien. We don't have any friends in common, we don't like the same things.

LYUDA So what if you like Chekhov and he likes Dreiser?

VIKTOR God help us, Dreiser.

LYUDA (TO VIKTOR) You're not helping.

ZHENYA You're right, it doesn't matter. He's special, wise, there's a peasant kindness in him.

LYUDA You snob.

NADYA That's not what she means.

ZHENYA Can you see me pouring out tea for colonels' wives, generals'?

VIKTOR (TEASING) I can actually.

ZHENYA Shut up.

LYUDA You don't even know if Krymov loves you, forgives you even.

ZHENYA I know he needs me, in the Lubyanka he thinks of me every single day.

NADYA (ADMIRING) How do you know that?

ZHENYA It's funny, I just do.

LYUDA How old are you? [= *how childish*]

ZHENYA It's not my age, you know what I am, don't you?

LYUDA I don't want to say.

ZHENYA A small dog of female gender.

LYUDA Exactly.

NADYA (BURSTING OUT OF HER) A bitch?

ZHENYA Yes!

AND THE THREE WOMEN LAUGH.
AS IT STOPS

VIKTOR I wish I knew what you find so funny.

BUT THE THREE WOMEN JUST BURST OUT LAUGHING AGAIN

VIKTOR What did I say? (HE DOESN'T GET IT) What?

WHICH JUST MAKES THEM LAUGH MORE
OVER THIS, DETERMINED:

VIKTOR Zhenya, you must know, I don't care what anyone thinks,
that someone living in my house is trying to help an arrested
person. I don't give a damn. This is your home.

ZHENYA (TOUCHEd) Thank you, Vityenka, thank you.

CUT TO:

SCENE 15. MOSCOW: THE LUBYANKA: INNER PRISON: CELL.
NIGHT.

KRYMOV IS LYING ON HIS BUNK
KATS'BOGEN DROPS DOWN FROM HIS

KATS'BOGEN Gave you a hard time?

KRYMOV How long was I gone?

KATS'BOGEN Three days.

KRYMOV Seventy-two hours and now I can't sleep.

KATS'BOGEN The conveyor belt.

KRYMOV What?

KATS'BOGEN They put you on the conveyor – that's what we call it.

KRYMOV Mmmm.

KATS'BOGEN Injections?

KRYMOV Where's Dreling?

KRYMOV He got fifteen years.

KRYMOV (REALISING) My God.

KATS'BOGEN He had his fingers crossed for ten, but....

KRYMOV (JUMPING UP) I can't believe it. I can't – I can't – My God,
My God.

KATS'BOGEN What?

KRYMOV GOES OVER AND HAMMERS ON THE DOOR

KRYMOV I've got to speak to the investigator. I'll sign anything.

KATS'BOGEN What are you doing?

KRYMOV (STILL HAMMERING ON THE DOOR) Come on, come on.

KATS'BOGEN (TRYING TO STEER HIM FROM THE DOOR) Don't do this.

KRYMOV I have to find out – I'll sign anything if they just – something he asked me, I've just realised – about something Trotsky said to me, just to me, no-one else heard.

KATS'BOGEN Then how did they know?

KRYMOV I told my wife. Zhenya, the only woman in the world who knows it.

KATS'BOGEN That's - [*sad*] – it happens.

KRYMOV (BANGING ON THE DOOR) If they'll confirm it was her denounced me, I'll sign anything.

KATS'BOGEN Slow down.

KRYMOV I'll say I'm a saboteur, an agitator, whatever you want, just say it was her who –

WARDER You'll do your talking when you're called.

KRYMOV I want to –

KATS'BOGEN He's alright, I'll get him quiet.

WARDER 'Dbetter.

KATS'BOGEN Over here, you're –

KRYMOV What am I doing?

KATS'BOGEN Quite.

KRYMOV I'm going crazy.

KATS'BOGEN It happens.

KRYMOV How could I think she'd do that?

KATS'BOGEN That's it.

KRYMOV Of course she didn't. It's my fault our marriage didn't – but she'd never do that, not my Zhenechka.

KATS'BOGEN That's right.

KRYMOV And you know, I've been thinking, one day, one day, the NKVD will change, and they'll secretly gather everything good about people, everything that's good will go in their files. They'll still listen to phone calls, and read letters, and get people to speak honestly – but only to make sure they get every last detail of everything good and faithful and honest that they've done. The Lubyanka will be a place where faith in humanity is strengthened. Not destroyed.

KATS'BOGEN I think you're right. And once this marvellous, radiant dossier has been compiled, the NKVD agents will pick you up, you'll be brought here, and you'll be beaten up just the same.

KRYMOV Really?

KATS'BOGEN Oh yes, definitely.

CUT TO:

SCENE 16. MOSCOW: LUBYANKA: WAITING ROOM ON KUZNETSKY
MOST. AFTERNOON.

ZHENYA IS AT THE WINDOW

ZHENYA Last time I was here you said the investigation was
completed.

CHEKIST It's continuing.

ZHENYA You said I should wait for an announcement.

CHEKIST Then you were misinformed.

ZHENYA Maybe you should check again.

A DANGEROUS MOMENT.
THEN THE CHEKIST SIGHS

CHEKIST Name?

ZHENYA Him? Krymov, Nikolai Grigorevich.

CHEKIST SIGHS AS HE CHECKS THROUGH THE FILE CARDS

CHEKIST Nikolai Grigorevich?

ZHENYA Yes?

CHEKIST The investigation is continuing.

ZHENYA You just said –

CHEKIST That parcel for him?

ZHENYA Yes.

CHEKIST I'll take it.

ZHENYA You'll take a parcel?

CHEKIST What did I just say?

ZHENYA For N.G.Krymov?

CHEKIST Are you doing this on purpose?

ZHENYA Sorry, no, yes, here it is. I've written a full list of contents. I've filled in the form with full list of everything that –

CHEKIST (OPENING HIS SHUTTER WINDOW) If it isn't in order, it'll be destroyed.

ZHENYA It's in order. I'm sure it is.

THE CHEKIST TAKES IT

ZHENYA Thank you.

CHEKIST Don't thank me.

ZHENYA Comrade.

CHEKIST If it isn't in order, it will not be given to the prisoner.

ZHENYA Thank you.

CHEKIST Don't – (HE STOPS HIMSELF) Next. Come on.

ZHENYA MOVES BACK ALONG THE QUEUE

ZHENYA (WHISPERING TO EACH PERSON SHE PASSES) They took my parcel. They've taken my parcel.

QUEUERS Well done.
Lucky you.
Sometimes it means –
Maybe they'll take mine.
It's parcels today.

ZHENYA He'll know I'm here. (LOUDER:) I'm here, Kolya. I'm here.

SOLDIER Quiet there.

ZHENYA

Sorry. (THEN WHISPERED TO LAST QUEUER, SHE
CAN'T STOP HERSELF:) They've taken my parcel.

CUT TO:

SCENE 17. MOSCOW: THE LUBYANKA: INTERROGATION ROOM.

KRYMOV HAS BEEN BRUTALLY BEATEN UP
SLEEP-DEPRIVED

DOCTOR I am sorry, I am very disinclined to give this man another injection.

NKVD INT’GATOR Comrade Doctor, I would like to continue my questioning.

KRYMOV I can go on. No injection. Ask me anything. But I won’t sign a confession.

NKVD INT’GATOR Injection, please, doctor.

DOCTOR I will not.

NKVD INT’GATOR (GIVING UP) Take him back.

KRYMOV I will carry on.

A MOMENT, THEN TO SOLDIERS:

NKVD INT’GATOR Take him away.

SOLDIERS LIFT KRYMOV AND CARRY HIM BACK TO HIS CELL.
THEY MARCH DOWN THE CORRIDOR.

FROM A DISTANCE, DOWN THE CORRIDOR

WARDER That Krymov you got there?

SOLDIER I don’t know.

KRYMOV (YES) Krymov, N.G.

SOLDIER Parcel for you, Krymov. You need to sign for it.

KRYMOV (NEW BURST OF DESPERATE ENERGY) Give it to me.

SOLDIER Sign here first.

KRYMOV TRIES TO SIGN

WARDER That the best you can do?

KRYMOV My hand, I think, it's broken.

WARDER That'll have to do then, won't it?

KRYMOV (TRYING TO GRAB THE PAPER BACK) Does it say – does it say who it's from?

WARDER Usually on the form – (READING) - somebody called Yevgenia Nikolaevna.

KRYMOV Zhenya.

SOLDIER Come on.

KRYMOV (DISBELIEVING) She's sent me a parcel. My Zhenechka has sent me a parcel.

SOLDIER Big deal.

KRYMOV (WEEPING WITH EXHAUSTED JOY) My God, My Blessed God. You're there. Zhenechka.

AND FADE OUT

END

“fortress stalingrad”

episode by jonathan myerson

cast

STEPAN SPIRIDONOV, Director of the Stalingrad Power Plant

PAVEL ANDREYEV, watchman at the Power Plant

VERA SPIRIDONOVA, Spiridonov’s daughter, 22, pregnant

NATALYA ANDREYEVNA, Andreyev’s daughter, 25

ALEXANDRA SHAPOSHNIKOVA, Spiridonov’s mother-in-law

MAJOR ALEXEI BYEROZKIN

LIEUTENANT PETER BACH

ZINA MELNIKOVA, 17, Russian civilian

SERGEANT EISENAUG, late 30s

GENERAL von PAULUS

GENERAL SCHMIDT, his Chief of Staff

COLONEL ADAM, his adjutant

SCENE 1. STALINGRAD. CENTRAL POWER STATION. NOVEMBER.

STEPAN AND ANDREYEV ARE SITTING IN THE OFFICE ABOVE THE WORKS.

IN THE BACKGROUND, THE GERMAN ARTILLERY IS SPORADICALLY SHELLING.

VERA IS WRITING TO HER FATHER.

VERA It was really nice of them – they realised I couldn't go any further and some workers from the Barrikady found me this hostel.

STEPAN (CUTTING OVER HER, TALKING TO ANDREYEV, EXASPERATED) She's still there, just the other side of the river.

VERA (LETTER CONTINUING) It's an old trawling barge, converted into a dormitory. We're moored right up against the bank.

ANDREYEV You want to get her to Leninsk.

VERA Of course, we're completely stuck in the ice now.

STEPAN (FLIPPING) She's due in a week, less - would you let her travel a hundred kilometres?

VERA One of the other evacuees used to be a nurse at Beketovka, and if anything, you know, happens, they can get a doctor – the field station is only four kilometres away.

ANDREYEV Well... [*not so bad*]

STEPAN Four kilometres through a Fritzzy barrage? How long's that going to take?

VERA We've got our own stove, plenty of hot water. Please don't

worry.

- STEPAN Why am I going to worry? She makes her own choices.
Never listens to me.
- ANDREYEV That all that came? No other post?
- STEPAN Mechanic from a ferry brought it.
- ANDREYEV No word from Moscow?
- STEPAN (ANGER BURSTING OUT) What's the point of us staying
here? What's the point?
- ANDREYEV Party says - Drink your tea, Stepan Fyodorovitch.
- STEPAN I kept this power plant going for almost three months of
daily bloody... [*bombardments*]...Never dropped output
below twenty-hundred.
- STEPAN LIFTS HIS CUP BUT HIS HANDS ARE SHAKING
- ANDREYEV We all know that.
- STEPAN I'm the only Director left on this side of the river.
- ANDREYEV Twenty-five, boss, hardly never dropped below twenty-five.
- STEPAN Bloody Stukas, ripped the heart out of us.
- ANDREYEV No-one's blaming you for that.
- STEPAN What's the point of us sitting here? The place is gutted but
we're waiting to get – [*our arses blown into the Volga*]
- AND THREE MORTAR SHELLS LAND IN THE TURBINE HALL.
THEY WAIT FOR THE DUST TO SETTLE.
- ANDREYEV Alright?
- STEPAN You think that's the first time I've ever - ?

BUT ACTUALLY HIS NERVE IS ENTIRELY SHOT.

ANDREYEV Don't think much of Fritz's intelligence. Waste of good bombs.

STEPAN This is a waste of our time, Pavel Andreyevich. A waste of everything. My daughter's in a barge on the Volga, my power plant's kiboshed but they won't give me a permit to depart -

ANDREYEV Just wondered if...(HE IS RUMMAGING IN HIS BAG) if maybe you'd like a drop of this?

HE PRODUCES A BOTTLE OF VODKA.

STEPAN Where did you get that?

ANDREYEV Platoon of sappers down by the Kurgan.

STEPAN (AMAZED) They gave you their vodka - ? [*ration*]

ANDREYEV Did I say they'd given it me?

HE HAS MEANWHILE Poured A GLUG INTO STEPAN'S TEA

ANDREYEV Drink up, boss. Don't want this wasted and all.

STEPAN DRINKS.
IT CALMS HIS NERVES A LITTLE

ANDREYEV Your papers'll come soon. Any day.

STEPAN And yours.

ANDREYEV Don't worry about me.

STEPAN I do.

ANDREYEV I mean - I'm not going.

STEPAN Moscow says you're allowed to -

ANDREYEV I'm...long as I'm here I can still...I've still got Varvara.

STEPAN [*What about?*] Your daughter-in-law, your grandson, in Leninsk?

ANDREYEV Thought, soon as things quieten down, might get to our old place. Through the Tractor Factory.

STEPAN Pavel.

ANDREYEV Varvara did all our little garden, I've got to tell her how it's doing.

STEPAN (GENTLY) There's nothing left down there.

ANDREYEV The apple trees, I know, they won't, but maybe the young maple. Tough buggers maples.

STEPAN There isn't a –

ANDREYEV And we buried some stuff. Sewing machine. Some pickled cabbage. She'll want to know it's alright.

STEPAN Pavel.

ANDREYEV Bit of mould, you'd expect that.

A MOMENT.

STEPAN (NEW DETERMINATION) Friday, that's when I'm going, whatever they say.

ANDREYEV You could ask Nikolay Grigorevich. He's NKVD, he'd know if it's right for you to stay.

ANOTHER MORTAR LANDS
AFTER:

STEPAN Bastards.

HE POURS HIMSELF ANOTHER SHOT, BUT HE IS SHAKING AGAIN

STEPAN I could get a car, get Vera to Leninsk or Akhtuba or – I could
get us all a car.

ANDREYEV My Varvara bottled that cabbage. You think I'm letting
Fritzy get it all? She'd never forgive me.

AND CUT TO:

SCENE 2.INTERVIEW, RECOLLECTING LATER.

ADAM

At that time I was Colonel-Adjutant to Freidrich Paulus, General of the Sixth Army of the Wehrmacht. By November 1943, all our forces were funnelled into the fighting in the city. Not only the best soldiers and tanks but the attrition rate, appalling. Life expectancy on the front line – three, four days. A week. The city is on the River Volga, at the point of a shallow V. All German troops were focused at that point. Our two flanks, running South and North-West, away along the river, mostly our allies – Romanians, Croats, Italians. Not as well trained, not remotely as well equipped. We knew we were overstretched. General Paulus knew. But Hitler insisted the city was taken. And Stalin insisted it wasn't. We fought for every building, sometimes for each storey of each building. The winter was coming in and we were almost at stalemate. We couldn't crush the last pockets in the city and so we didn't control the river crossing. Of course our flanks were vulnerable. But surely the Russians were like us, all their men and materiel pumped into the city. Whenever we discussed it, the possibility of a counter-attack, on our left or right flank, on either side of the city, I could see Paulus was concerned. Schmidt, our Chief of Staff, he refused to consider it. He was a true believer, Hitler was always right. Paulus, he wasn't like that, but he didn't dare disobey either. And by late November, the weather was appalling so we weren't expecting anything.

SCENE 3.SIXTH ARMY HQ, GOLUBINSKA. A FARMHOUSE. DAY.

COLONEL ADAM, PAULUS' ADJUTANT, IS REPORTING TO PAULUS.
PAULUS IS ATTENTIVE, PUNCTILIOUS, CAUTIOUS.

SCHMIDT, HIS CHIEF OF STAFF, IS THE OPPOSITE.
BUT ADAM'S VOICE REVEALS BARELY SUPPRESSED PANIC AND SHOCK.
A PHONE IS RINGING NAGGINGLY IN THE BACKGROUND.

ADAM The Third Romanian is in total retreat.

SCHMIDT What did we expect? They're tribesmen.

ADAM Dumitrescu reports that Russian tank numbers as
"overwhelming".

SCHMIDT (SARCASTIC) Our glorious allies.

PAULUS (BUT) We sent him the 48th Panzer.

ADAM There's a problem. With mice.

SCHMIDT They're scared of - ?

ADAM They have eaten through the wiring. General Heim reports
that he has only twenty-nine serviceable vehicles.

SCHMIDT That's enough.

ADAM And only enough fuel for eighteen kilometres.

PAULUS Did they make no contingency plans?

SCHMIDT (ABSOLUTE) We can hold. They'll blast those T34s right
back to Mongolia.

WHEN PAULUS SAYS NOTHING:

ADAM General? Something serious is happening.

PAULUS I do not wish to withdraw troops from the city.

SCHMIDT There's no need. Stalin cannot possibly have enough
reserves to mount a serious offensive. This is a feint, a scare
tactic, drawing us off.

PAULUS Where is the 24th Panzer?

ADAM Snow drifts, sir, slowing their progress. The tracks seem not to be suitable. (FINALLY EXASPERATED BY THE PHONE:;) Excuse me, sir.

HE STEPS ASIDE TO ANSWER THE NAGGING PHONE (*TEXT TO FOLLOW*)

SCHMIDT These Panzer men, do they never think ahead?

PAULUS (CALMER) And we did?

SCHMIDT The Russkies don't have the tanks, don't have the fresh infantry to launch a genuinely –

ADAM (INTERRUPTING) Excuse me, sir.

SCHMIDT I was talking, Colonel Ad -

ADAM OP reports enemy tanks on the west bank of the Don.

PAULUS (AMAZED) To our west?

ADAM Less than forty kilometres from here, General.

SCHMIDT Who's ready to move?

ADAM There is the remnants of the –

PAULUS (CUTTING ACROSS) General Schmidt, inform the staff. We will relocate to Gumrak.

SCHMIDT Retreat?

PAULUS Army HQ cannot be threatened.

SCHMIDT This is a feint, they're planning something in the city.

PAULUS Adam, prepare my plane. Schmidt, all unnecessary papers should be burned.

CUT TO:

SCENE 4. OPPOSITE STALINGRAD: A BARGE MOORED ON THE
EAST BANK OF THE VOLGA. NOVEMBER. DAY.

THE VOLGA ICE IS CREAKING AGAINST THE HULL AND ICE FLOES ARE COLLIDING IN THE RIVER.

TWO PILOTS HAVE JUST WALKED INTO THE BARGE.

VERA You've just come from the airfield?

PILOT 1 Took down two Junkers this morning.

PILOT 2 (FRIENDLY BANTER) I'm claiming that second one.
Slapped his tail right off.

VERA (OVER THIS) Do you know Pilot Officer Viktorov?

PILOT 2 With the 53rd?

VERA (EXCITED) That's him. Flies a Lavochkin.

PILOT 1 'Course we know him.

VERA Will you tell him I'm here? His wife.

PILOT 2 Doesn't he know?

VERA This is his son. Tell him he's the father of a son. I need to
know – what shall we call him? This is his son, you've got to
tell him.

BUT OVER THIS

SERGEYEVNA Vera. Verochka.

VERA (FROM HER REVERIE) Sorry?

SERGEYEVNA Look who's here. He's found you.

VERA (TRYING TO FOCUS) What?

SERGEYEVNA Here. Your Dadda.

STEPAN Verochka. My darling.

VERA Daddy.

STEPAN Is this my...is this...?

VERA We haven't got a name yet.

STEPAN Doesn't matter.

VERA I knew your papers'd come.

STEPAN (LOOKING ROUND) Is this where he was born? On
this...hulk?

VERA Moscow said you could leave, yes?

STEPAN (AVOIDING THIS) You've made me a grandfather – let me
hold him.

VERA Don't wake him.

STEPAN He's...he's very...(CHOKING DOWN TEARS)...your mother
would be...

HE TURNS AWAY SO SHE CAN'T SEE HIS FACE

VERA Daddy. It's alright.

STEPAN (TRYING TO CLEAR HIS VOICE) Your mother would
have...she should be here –

VERA (CLOCKING HIS ANXIETY) Daddy?

STEPAN Bloody Germans, never let up.

DURING THIS, THE BABY HAS BEGUN TO CRY

SERGEYEVNA Little tyke, he's hungry.

VERA I don't think I'm ready.

SERGEYEVNA 'Course you are. We'll get you warmed up, here's some tea.

VERA Where did you get that?

SERGEYEVNA Don't worry about that. Someone wants you to have it. Come on.

STEPAN I'll go over to Party Central, get us some stuff.

SERGEYEVNA Alright for you people.

STEPAN We'll share it out, comrade.

SERGEYEVNA Come on, get on him the tit, don't let him fight.

VERA I'm so tired.

STEPAN Are you well enough?

VERA I'm –

SERGEYEVNA She's fine.

STEPAN I'll get up the party, there must be someone there I know, get us some sugar, bit of fat.

VERA You'll try ask about him?

STEPAN Air Force has got better things to do than –

VERA I need to know what we should call him.

FROM ALONG THE BOAT:

MEN & WOMEN Quiet! Shhhh. Shhh, there.

A CRACKLING WIRELESS, BEING TUNED IN

NEWSREADER - a successful offensive in the Stalingrad area. Several days ago, our forces launched a major attack against the Fascist forces. Our brave troops are advancing along two fronts, north-west of the city and to the south.

BY NOW THE PEOPLE ON THE BARGE ARE STARTING TO REACT SIMULTANEOUSLY:

PEOPLE Yes, it's happening.
Thank you, Comrade Stalin.
They're doing it, our boys are doing it.
We're going to push them all the way back to Berlin.
WEEPING
LAUGHING
They said it was about to happen.
You could tell, the soldiers were all getting ready.
Was wondering why it had gone so quiet.

NEWSREADER (CONTINUING UNDER THE ABOVE) Without a shot being fired, our brave tank regiments have recaptured the Don crossing at Kalach. Our infantry is reported to have seized several railway stations and the Fascist Commander is said to have evacuated his headquarters at Golubinskaya. Heavy fighting is reported around Abgasarovo. The offensive is continuing on all fronts.

STEPAN See, Verochka, it's almost over.

VERA Do you think....?

STEPAN What?

VERA Do you think, when the attack is over, do you think he'll....?

STEPAN He'll walk in here. He'll say "Where's my wife." Everyone'll say "Over there, over there, with your son." They'll crowd round him, embrace him, thank him, call him their own son. They will, my Verochka, they will.

CUT TO:

SCENE 5. SIXTH ARMY HQ. NOW AT GUMRAK AIRFIELD.

IT IS A HIVE OF ACTIVITY, THE HQ ITSELF STILL TAKING SHAPE

SCHMIDT They what?

ADAM By all accounts, the division's been using Russian tanks as a training tool, T34s.

SCHMIDT So these dunderheads just waved Ivan over the bridge, let them seize the bank?

ADAM One enemy tank was subsequently destroyed.

SCHMIDT One? Colonel?

PAULUS If they have the bridge at Kalach, there is nothing to stop the two armies uniting.

SCHMIDT They do not have the manpower for a complete encirclement.

ADAM We are being surrounded.

PAULUS As usual, the Russians have made masterly use of the bad weather.

SCHMIDT We form a hedgehog defence and await resupply.

ADAM How?

SCHMIDT Reichs-Marshal Goering himself has committed the Luftwaffe to deliver three hundred tons a day.

PAULUS Truly?

ADAM It is not possible. Sir. We must fight our way out while the men still have food and fuel.

PAULUS I have already cabled the Führer.

SCHMIDT (*If*) We march west, it'll be Napoleonic, they will pick us off

on all sides.

PAULUS It is also academic. (PASSING IT TO HIM) His reply, Adam. Read it.

ADAM “Führer Order: Sixth Army will hold positions despite threat of temporary encirclement. Keep rail communications open as long as possible.” (ALMOST DESPERATE) Don’t they know they’ve already taken the railway line?

SCHMIDT The Führer is correct. It is a temporary encirclement. The same happened in France. We will be relieved. And these puny Russian tank units will be obliterated.

ADAM For the last nineteen hours the Luftwaffe have been unable to even fly reconnaissance. How are they going to ship three hundred tons a day? We currently have less than twelve days’ rations.

SCHMIDT When the cloud lifts – a day or two – Russkie lines will be sitting ducks.

SCHMIDT AND ADAM REALISE THAT PAULUS HAS NOT SPOKEN.

ADAM General?

PAULUS Hedgehog defence. As the Führer has ordered.

ADAM Army Group agrees - we must break out.

PAULUS But they have been unable to convince the Führer. We work to do, Adam.

ADAM Sir.

CUT TO:

SCENE 6. INTERVIEW. RECOLLECTING LATER.

HITLER'S ORDERLY

ORDERLY

I remember that night. We were in East Prussia. The Führer had been in the operations room all day. Listening to Zeitzler, Jodl, Weichs on the radio, all of them telling him to order a retreat from Stalingrad. In the end, he decided – you know what he decided.

He stood up, asked for his raincoat. It was my job to follow him - at a distance, so as he wouldn't know. It was raining. Sort of drizzle. As he passed me, he said something about cold air.

But it wasn't that. I knew him better than that. It was Stalin. The Georgian shopkeeper. And somehow, after two years of fighting, nothing but victories, Stalin was getting on top. All we had done – I mean, all he had done – and now these Russians. That's why he needed a walk.

And then the strangest thing happened. I could see it – I knew him too well – his shoulders. He was out there, deep in the forest, and all round him, out of sight, a hundred troopers ready to protect him, to die for him, but he – he's there in the forest – he got the frights. I could tell. Like he was trapped in the wood and the wolves were moving in. He turned round and walked back but too fast, like he was almost running, you know, but not. Something had spooked him.

CUT TO:

SCENE 7. INTERVIEW. RECOLLECTING LATER.

STALIN'S SECRETARY

POSKREBYSHEV It was me took the message. That the German armies were – the encirclement was complete. Our two armies linked up, firing flares, sharing sausage, vodka. Not like you see in the newsreel, that was all done again later. Less than a hundred hours and the German Sixth Army was surrounded. I went over and told the Comrade General Secretary. He just sat there, sort of half-closed his eyes, like he was going to sleep. Not what I expected. Stood there, tried not to breathe. He didn't need to say anything, you see. He knew this was his moment. He had beaten Hitler. But it was more, he'd beaten everything – the famines, the deportations, the work camps, everything. Everything was gone. Because he knew, didn't he?, he knew no-one condemns the victor. It's not like he smiled or anything but as soon as I saw what he was thinking, the ends of my fingers, they went cold.

CUT TO:

SCENE 8. INSIDE GERMAN LINES.

IT IS BELOW FREEZING, WITH A CONSTANT SLICING WIND. EVERYONE IS WRAPPED IN GREATCOATS AND RAGS AND BLANKETS.

THERE IS EFFECTIVELY NO VEHICULAR TRAFFIC.
VERY DISTANT ARTILLERY AND OCCASIONAL MACHINE GUN BURSTS.

A GROUP OF SOLDIERS HAVE A FIRE BLAZING UNDER A CAULDRON.
MEANWHILE OTHER SOLDIERS ARE HACKING AT A DONKEY'S CORPSE.

BACH IS APPROACHING ACROSS THE GROUND

BACH (CALLING OUT) Soldier! Soldier!

EISENAUG (STANDING TO ATTENTION AS BEST HE CAN) Sir.

BACH (RECOGNISING HIM) It's you, Sergeant.

EISENAUG Sir.

BACH What is this?

EISENAUG A horse, sir.

BACH This isn't the Stone Age, you know, Sergeant.

EISENAUG The men, sir, not had meat for three days.

BACH It's a donkey. Isn't it?

EISENAUG The men, sir.

BACH We are soldiers of the Wehrmacht, Sergeant. We are the builders of the New Germany, the glory of the nation. We've marched from Calais to Tobruk, from - (HE STOPS HIMSELF) – Carry on, Sergeant.

AFTER A MOMENT:

EISENAUG It was the quarter-master suggested it, sir. Says the meat

stays good, out here in the cold.

DURING THIS A MOTORCYCLE AND SIDECAR DRAWS UP ALONGSIDE.

DRIVER Lieutenant Bach?

BACH Yes.

DRIVER To report to Army HQ.

BACH Me?

EISENAUG Sent a bike. You're honoured.

DRIVER (SHALL WE GO?) Sir?

AS HE CLIMBS INTO THE SIDECAR.

BACH Boil it well, yes?

EISENAUG We'll save you some, sir.

BACH Well. Yes. Thank you.

AND THE DRIVER GUNS THE ENGINE AND IT DRIVES AWAY.

MIX FROM THIS ENGINE SOUND INTO:

SCENE 9. SIXTH ARMY HQ: SCHMIDT'S ROOM.

BACH IS EXAMINING THE MAPS.

SCHMIDT You've not seen the maps before?

BACH Sir.

SCHMIDT We're on an island, Bach, except this – out here - it's not the ocean, it's hatred. Pure vicious beasts.

BACH And some snow.

SCHMIDT Everyone suffers. They're cold too.

BACH I'm sure, sir.

SCHMIDT The Fuhrer has asked us to stand firm.

BACH What about General Manstein? He's breaking through to us, yes? We heard he had new weapons, new armour?

SCHMIDT Tell me about your men, in your company. We need to know if they will stand firm.

BACH They're... they will stand firm.

SCHMIDT Mutiny? Any talk of suicide?

BACH One man in my company. Never a reliable sort.

SCHMIDT Are you a member of the party, Lieutenant?

BACH (AVOIDING) My men won't mutiny.

SCHMIDT That's what the Fuhrer has given us, you see, that's the strength. We've cut out the infected tissue, we've cut out the healthy tissue which might get infected. These apes could encircle Berlin itself and there'll be no rebellion. For that, we can thank our leader.

BACH We can.

SCHMIDT There's a list, Bach. They've put me in charge. People allowed on a plane in the event of...We need good solid officers.

BACH Sir, I –

SCHMIDT Have a good drink before take-off. Those Russian ack-acks seem to have the airfields –

BACH Sir, I wish to stay with my men.

SCHMIDT Lieutenant, I –

BACH Thank you, sir.

THEY BOTH STAND. UNEASILY.

BACH Sir, any possibility of a bike back to – ?

SCHMIDT You were lucky before. Seydlitz has all the petrol and he'll shoot anyone who even sniffs at it.

BACH I see.

SCHMIDT First time in my life, I'm powerless.

BACH (SALUTE) Thank you, sir.

AND HE WALKS OUT AND DOWN THE HALL AND

PAST:

SCENE 10. SIXTH ARMY HQ: COMMAND ROOM.

A BUSY ROOM, PAULUS IN THE MIDDLE.
CALM BUT DESPAIR UNDERLIES IT ALL.

PAULUS What is delaying them?

ADAM Colonel Hunersdorff report describes "inexhaustible supplies of Russian armour".

PAULUS Manstein said five days.

ADAM He took the village, Verkhne-Kumski.

PAULUS That controls the river?

ADAM (PAINFUL ADMISSION) But was forced to withdraw due to lack of fuel.

PAULUS We must prepare to link up.

ADAM Sir.

PAULUS Are the 53rd Mortar in position yet?

ADAM Digging in.

PAULUS And the Panzers?

ADAM General Hoth has so far assembled seventy-three.

PAULUS Seventy-three?

ADAM Manstein will break through.

PAULUS Of course, he will.

ADAM Manstein won't abandon us.

PAULUS We can rely on him.

CUT TO:

SCENE 11. A DUG-OUT. INSIDE THE GERMAN LINES. DAYTIME.

BACH LIES ON A BUNK, BEHIND A MAKESHIFT CURTAIN. ZINA SITS AT THE END, DARNING, HUMMING A (LESSER KNOWN) ARIA FROM CARMEN. BEYOND THE CURTAIN A WOMAN IS PESSTLING CORN IN A MORTAR.

ZINA, SPEAKING PIDGIN GERMAN, IS ACCENTED COMPARED TO HER PREVIOUS APPEARANCE, THERE IS NOW AN EDGE OF DEFIANCE TO HER, EVEN TRUCULENCE. DISTANT, SPORADIC SHELLING.

BACH What's she doing?

ZINA Woman?

BACH The old woman.

ZINA She find corn. Little seed. She make smaller.

BACH It stinks.

ZINA She find in petrol.

BACH Christ.

ZINA You not bring food no more.

BACH Last week I brought you two biscuits.

ZINA I say Thank You.

BACH You gave one to her.

ZINA She hunger pain.

BACH Doesn't mean she's any hungrier than you.

ZINA She old woman.

BACH You've got more to live for.

ZINA (FLIPPANT) I die.

BACH Don't say that. Come and lie back next to me, that'll warm me up.

ZINA I no want do that. (SEX)

BACH Just lie here. That's all. Come on.

ZINA I not fat German girl. Why you want – ?

BACH Come here. Come on.

ZINA LIES DOWN

BACH Not very comfortable, is it?

ZINA Comfutbale?

BACH This bed. Well, it's not a bed, is it? It's a door.
(SCRATCHING AT IT) A little bit burned round the edges too.

ZINA Peter?

BACH What?

ZINA I first?

BACH What?

ZINA You first girl?

BACH My number one girl, yes.

ZINA No. First. You come to me, you have girl? In German?

BACH I told you - Maria. That holiday in the Spessart.

ZINA You and Maria – you bed?

BACH That's not the sort of thing a gentleman discusses.

ZINA Peter.

BACH Why do you want to know?

ZINA Tell.

BACH Why's it suddenly so important?

AFTER A MOMENT:

ZINA Not important.

BACH You look so young when you talk like that.

ZINA I young.

BACH But your face, your neck, they're so thin, makes you look older, look worried.

ZINA I give you happy, yes?

BACH I – I don't know how this happened -everything I've done – growing up, my friends, the books I read, school, university, Maria, yes, my time in Holland, France and then here, last summer – it all leads to this. All of it. Leads to you. To this hole in the ground, this old door, these thin thin shoulders.

ZINA Showlduz?

BACH It was all just a prelude.

ZINA Slow. Talk slow.

BACH Your hair. It smells of life, of happiness.

ZINA My hair go. Look (SHE PULLS OUT A CLUMP) no more hair.

BACH Don't do that. Don't pull it out.

ZINA You do that. You soldier. (THE TEARS COME) All you soldier. All you.

BACH Don't, Zina, don't, Zina.

ZINA No food, no cloths. Everything good before. Now my hair – look.

BACH I'll get you something to eat. I promise.

ZINA You forget.

BACH Next time we get some meat. I promise.

ZINA You forget.

BACH Sing to me, Zina, sing to me. One of your special songs.

ZINA You give food?

BACH I promise.

THROUGH HER TEARS, SHE STARTS SEMI-SINGING AN ARIA (JEWEL
SONG FROM FAUST)
AS SHE SINGS:

BACH That's good. Zina. My Zina. Thank you.

USE HER SINGING TO MIX INTO:

SCENE 12. GUMRAK: SIXTH ARMY HQ.

PAULUS IS DICTATING
A SECRETARY TYPING

PAULUS In the very next few days the supply situation can lead to a crisis of the utmost gravity. I still believe however that the Army can hold out. On the other hand, if a corridor is cut through to me – it is still not possible to tell whether the daily increasing weakness of the Army will allow the area around Stalingrad to be held. I have ordered daily rations to be cut by half. We stated a need of seven hundred tons resupply daily, the Reichsmarshal promised us a minimum of three hundred tons. Across the last five days, the Luftwaffe has delivered an average of –

ADAM Eighty-eight tons.

PAULUS Eighty-eight tons per day. Is the Fuhrer aware of this?

HE STOPS.

PAULUS End there. (TO ADAM) You'd better apologise for the paper. (AND THEN:) No, don't. Goering will just send us three tons of best vellum.

CUT TO:

SCENE 13. EXT. STALINGRAD: GERMAN LINES. NIGHT.

BACH IS MAKING HIS NIGHTLY INSPECTION OF HIS SECTION OF THE LINES.

IT IS WELL BELOW FREEZING. EVERYONE IS DESPERATELY COLD.

THE SILENCE IS PALPABLE, ALMOST SHOCKING.

FROM THE RUSSIAN LINES COMES THE SOUND OF A HARMONICA PLAYING BUT ALSO, BURIED UNDER THAT, THE NEAR-RHYTHMIC SOUND OF METAL STRIKING FROZEN EARTH.

BACH (LISTENING) What is that?

EISENAUG They told me what it was called.

BACH (CONFUSED) What?

EISENAUG Something like Balaika-ba-shushush.

BACH Not the tune. Under it, listen.

THEY LISTEN FOR A MOMENT.
THEN, ALMOST SIMULTANEOUSLY:

BACH They're digging.

EISENAUG It's digging.

BACH (ALMOST SIGHING) Won't they stop?

EISENAUG You check in the morning, bet their trench is ten metres closer.

BACH It's like the earth itself is moving against us.

EISENAUG (TOO DEEP FOR ME) If you like, sir.

BACH Sorry. No, sorry.

DURING THIS, A SMALL PUTT-PUTTING PLANE HAS BEEN APPROACHING.
THIS ENGINE NOISE THEN CUTS OUT.

EISENAUG (SHOUTING) Down! Everyone, down!

BACH AND EISENAUG DROP TO THE GROUND AND THERE IS A SMALL EXPLOSION SEVERAL METRES AWAY

BACH (SHOUTING ALONG THE TRENCH/LINE) Casualty report! Casualty report!

FROM EACH CLUSTER OF MEN:

GERMAN All well.

GERMAN Nothing to report.

GERMAN All good.

EISENAUG Probably landed in the comms trench.

THEN, FROM THE RUSSIAN LINES:

RUSSIAN (SHOUTING, ACCENTED, HIS FEW WORDS OF GERMAN)
Hey, Fritz! Fritzzy, yes? You like that? You like bang-bang?

BACH Why's no-one shooting at him?

EISENAUG (DRY) Does this look like an attack?

RUSSIAN (CONTINUING) Fritz, Hans, want chicken, want egg?
Russian glug-glug? Come get. Come!

BACH Very funny.

PETENKOFFER (DISTANT, SHOUTING BACK FROM GERMAN LINES)
Hey! Ivan!

EISENAUG (SHOUTING) Get that man down!

PETENKOFFER (CONTINUING) Don't shoot! Just got to see my mother again. Here you have my machine gun, I'll have your hat. Go on, fair swap.

EISENAUG (YELLING) Quiet in the lines! That man to me!

BACH Leave them.

- EISENAUG It's a serious problem, sir.
- BACH You know, when I was in the hospital, when I was there, I don't know what it was, the drink, the other men, I decided I wanted to join the party.
- EISENAUG Sir?
- BACH Why did I do that? I wrote to my father, told him.
- EISENAUG That's up to you, sir.
- BACH I've never arrested anyone, I'm not the sort who – I've never shot a woman or a child. Why did I do that?
- PETENKOFFER (DURING THIS ARRIVING AND STANDING TO ATTENTION) Private Petenkoffer, reporting, Sergeant.
- EISENAUG Was that you, soldier? That fur hat business?
- PETENKOFFER (INADEQUATE EXCUSE) Bit of fun, sir.
- EISENAUG Turn out your knapsack, soldier.
- PETENKOFFER Sarge?
- EISENAUG (ALL BUT RIPPING IT OFF HIS BACK) Turn it out.
- BACH (WHILE HE DOES SO) Is this really necessary, Sergeant?
- EISENAUG (SNATCHING AT A PAPER-WRAPPED PACKAGE) What's this, soldier?
- PETENKOFFER It was Emerich, Sarge. He sorted it – my razor for two packets of kasha and a lump of bacon fat.
- BACH Russia and Germany have been trading for centuries, Sergeant.
- EISENAUG I'll deal with this, thank you, sir. (TO PETENKOFFER) Is that right, trading with the enemy?

PETENKOFFER We didn't even get our ration yesterday, Sarge.

EISENAUG Don't you answer me back, boy. And stand to attention in front of your commanding officer.

PETENKOFFER STRAIGHTENS

EISENAUG On report, soldier. You'll face court martial for this.

PETENKOFFER Sarge, we're bloody starving up there. We get less than –
[*two hundred grams of bread*]

HE GETS NO FURTHER BECAUSE A SINGLE SNIPER'S SHOT RINGS OUT.
ALL THREE FALL TO THE GROUND.

BACH (INSTANTANEOUS) Sniper!

EISENAUG Down! Sniper! Down!

A MOMENT'S BREATHING AND THEN NOTHING BUT SILENCE
AND THEN:

BACH (ALMOST TEARFUL) Bloody hell. Bloody hell. Bloody hell.

EISENAUG (SHOUTING) Burial detail, over here, move it.

BACH (EXPLODING, SARCASTIC) Where are you going to bury him, Sergeant? Where? How are you going to dig a hole?

EISENAUG (CORNERED) I don't know, sir.

BACH Right. (THEN:) Right. (GETTING UP) Let's get him shifted.

CUT TO:

SCENE 14. EXT. VOLGA BANK. DAY.

THERE IS CEASELESS TRAFFIC ALONG THE ROAD AND THE SLOW
INCESSANT TRAMPING OF GERMAN POWS ON THEIR WAY EAST.
RUSSIAN SOLDERS ARE GOADING THEM ON [*GOADS TO FOLLOW*]

BYEROZKIN IS BEING DRIVEN IN AN OPEN-TOP CAR WHEN HE SEES HIS
FRIEND.

BYEROZKIN Stepan! Stepan! (TO DRIVER) Stop, stop here. Stop.

AS THE CAR SLOWS AND STOPS

STEPAN Alexei?

BYEROZKIN (GETTING OUT OF THE CAR) What are you doing here?

THEY EMBRACE

STEPAN Been up to the Party. Said I could pick up transport here.

BYEROZKIN I heard you'd (LOOKING FOR THE RIGHT WORDS:)
crossed the river.

STEPAN (UNCONVINCING) It'll all get sorted.

BYEROZKIN You've got somewhere, somewhere warm?

STEPAN Three rooms. This side of Leninsk.

BYEROZKIN I can go to our quartermaster. Got more tinned crab than
you can shake a -

STEPAN We're alright.

BYEROZKIN It's your grandson.

STEPAN (DOWN) He's healthy enough.

BYEROZKIN What's wrong, Stepan? We've stopped them. This is the
moment.

STEPAN That's it. Since it went quiet. The baby, the safety, I thought I would get back to being the man I was before –

BYEROZKIN (CUTTING ACROSS THIS, SHOUTING OUT) Hey, you there! Stop that. (TO STEPAN) Sorry, Stepan.

RUSSIAN COLONEL (MEANWHILE, DISTANT TO HIS SOLDIERS) Look at the storm-trooper now. Shit-trooper more like, eh? (HE KICKS HIM AGAIN)

BYEROZKIN (CALLING OVER, STEPPING FORWARD) Stop that, please, Comrade Colonel.

R/COLONEL (OUTRAGED) Are you addressing me, Major?

STEPAN (SOTTO) Alexei, leave him.

BYEROZKIN A Russian doesn't kick a man when he's down.

STEPAN Alexei, let's –

R/COLONEL Who do you think I am then? Not a Russian?

BYEROZKIN You're a coward and a - [shit]

R/COLONEL (MOVING FORWARDS AGGRESSIVELY) Are you calling me -

BYEROZKIN (VERY QUICKLY) My name is Major Byerozkin, Inspector of Operations for Stalingrad Sector HQ.

A BREATHLESS MOMENT.

THEN:

STEPAN I'm sure what the Major meant –

R/COLONEL Very well, Major Byerozkin, you will be hearing from me.

THE R/COLONEL TURNS AND STRIDES AWAY, SHOUTING:

R/COLONEL Get those wankers moving, Sergeant! Want this road clear by sunset or you're going to the Arctic with them. Get that man picked up. (TO GERMANS) You two, yes, you two, pick

him up.

RUSSIANS Quick.
Move it, move it.
Move it up.

STEPAN Hell's bells, Alexei. They're all looking at you.

BYEROZKIN Don't care.

STEPAN The Germans, I mean. You want people to think you're on
Fritz' side?

BYEROZKIN Give me a cigarette.

AS STEPAN DOES SO

STEPAN They didn't have to come here. They didn't have to -

BUT BYEROZKIN'S HANDS ARE TREMBLING TOO MUCH

STEPAN (LIGHTING IT FOR HIM) Give me the matches. Here.

BYEROZKIN INHALES

STEPAN Give me a gun, I could shoot one of them 'like that'.

BYEROZKIN Then we should have done that in Forty-One, shouldn't we?
Instead we dropped our guns and ran away.

STEPAN We didn't invite them here.

BYEROZKIN We let them do this. To my son, to your wife, to -
everything.

CUT TO:

SCENE 15. INT. GERMAN DUG-OUT. NIGHT.

THREE GERMAN SOLDIERS IN THEIR BUNKER.
 A STOVE IS BURNING AND ONE OF THEM IS SPLITTING WOOD WITH HIS
 BAYONET.
 THEY ARE SIPPING MUGS OF WATERY SOUP.

GERMAN 2 (SPITTING) This tastes like – d’you boil this?

EISENAUG That’s the thing, you got to keep it simmering, ever so gentle.
 That gets rid of the sweat smell.

GERMAN 1 Bollocks, you got to put the meat in when it’s still frozen,
 knock on it like wood, straight into boiling water.

GERMAN 2 Stinks like a sweaty armpit on a –

GERMAN 1 It’s the sappers get the best food. Nick it off the Russkies.

EISENAUG No wonder they get the best girls.

GERMAN 1 Used to care about that, not any more. Don’t even think
 about it.

GERMAN 2 Can’t get it up, eh?

GERMAN 1 Just want to see my children.

GERMAN 2 What’s wrong with you?

GERMAN 1 Not any more, not even waking up. Don’t miss it neither.

SUDDEN, RIGHT ACROSS THIS:

EISENAUG (STANDING) ‘Tention.

THE DOOR IS OPENING AND BACH AND GENERAL SCHMIDT ARE COMING
 IN, FOLLOWED BY TWO SOLDIERS CARRYING A CRATE. THE SOLDIERS
 SPRING TO ATTENTION.

SCHMIDT Good evening. At ease. Please.

BACH At ease, men.

GERMANS Sir.
 General.
 Evening, sir.

SCHMIDT Put it down there, come on, open it up, lads.

SCHMIDT SITS AND THE TWO SOLDIERS OPEN UP THE PACKING CRATE WITH THEIR BAYONETS. DURING WHICH:

SCHMIDT I'd like to wish you all a Happy Christmas, for tomorrow.

GERMANS Thank you, sir.
 You too, sir.
 Happy Christmas to you, sir.

SCHMIDT (TO HIS SOLDIERS) Right, that's it, boys, get them out.
 Pass them round.

THE SOLDIERS ARE NOW PASSING OUT SMALL CELLOPHANE WRAPPED PACKETS.

THE GERMANS TAKE THEM, UNWRAP THEM, MUTTERING, IN DELIGHTED HOPE AND EXPECTATION:

GERMANS I am starving.
 Chocolate, can't remember when I last.
 Toffee. Just the smell.

DURING THIS:

SCHMIDT (PROMPTING) Lieutenant.

BACH (FOR MORALE) The General would like you to know, the pilot who flew these in, a Heinkel, crash-landed, at Pitomnik. Didn't make it himself. But he knew what his cargo was, wanted to get them here. For the battalion.

THEY HAVE NOW UNWRAPPED THEM.
 EACH MAN IS HOLDING A BABY CHRISTMAS TREE, WRAPPED IN TINSEL.

GERMAN 1 (QUIETLY, HOLDING IN HIS DISAPPOINTMENT) A little bit of tree.

SCHMIDT The smell of German Christmas, men. Breathe in. Smell that resin.

GERMAN 2 A little Christmas tree.

EISENAUG (DISCIPLINE, QUIET) Order. To order.

GERMAN 1 Look, these things, on them, little fruit drops.

GERMAN 2 ‘Sright.

THE MEN EAGERLY SNATCH OFF THE DROPS AND SUCK THEM

BACH Save them, boys, gently now.

GERMANS Got strawberry.
Lemon. Maybe lime.
Cherry, black cherry.

SCHMIDT It’s Christmas, men. A time to reflect. We’ve come this far. This division. We’ve been together, we’ve fought, we’ve triumphed, we’ve rejoiced, we’ve mourned.

GERMAN 2 (OVER SCHMIDT) You can smell it. I can smell the forest.

SCHMIDT We’ve eaten every sort of food and we’ve – let’s be honest – we’ve tried every sort of woman.

GERMAN 1 (OVER, OF THE TREE) It’s like...like...(HE SWALLOWS)

SCHMIDT (WITH LESS THAN TOTAL CONVICTION) And we’ll see plenty more Christmases. We will continue our march, we will defeat all Germany’s enemies, *** make our homeland safe for our wives, our children, our grandchildren. We are building something great here, an empire that will last a thousand years and show the world that German....

STARTING AT *** GERMAN 2 HAS BEGUN TO SING

GERMAN 2 O Christmas Tree, O Christmas Tree,
Your branches green delight us.
They're green when summer days are bright;—

They're green when winter snow is white.
 O, Christmas Tree, O Christmas Tree,
 Your branches green delight us!

O Christmas Tree, O Christmas Tree,
 You give us so much pleasure!
 How oft at Christmas tide the sight,
 O green fir tree, gives us delight!
 O Christmas Tree, O Christmas Tree,
 You give us so much pleasure!

AND THEN, GRADUALLY, THE OTHERS JOIN IN

GERMANS CONTINUING THE VERSE ABOVE

UNTIL SCHMIDT HIMSELF STOPS SPEAKING

SCHMIDT JOINING IN

BUT IT IS HALTED BY A SUDDEN SALVO OF KATYUSHAS LANDING
 NEARBY, CLOUDS OF EARTH SHOWERING DOWN ABOVE.
 THE BUNKER IS BARELY IN DANGER BUT THE NOISE IS DEAFENING.

IT STOPS ALMOST AS SUDDENLY.

AND THE MEN ARE NOW SOBBING.

SCHMIDT (TRYING TO GET IT GOING) Come on, men – O Christmas
 Tree, O Christmas Tree

EISENAUG (THROAT LUMP) Sing with the general.

SCHMIDT SINGS AND THE MEN TRY TO HIDE THEIR TEARS AS THEY
 TAKE UP THE SONG AGAIN.

FADE OUT AND MIX TO:

SCENE 16. LENINSK. HOUSE: COMMUNAL KITCHEN. DAYTIME.

VERA IS PREPARING A MEAL.
THE BABY IS ON STEPAN'S LAP.

VERA What do you mean?

STEPAN The People's Commissariat summons me, I go.

VERA Maybe they just want to talk about rebuilding the power station.

STEPAN (UNCONVINCED) Probably.

VERA Daddy, you left one day before the we counter-attacked.

STEPAN I left without permission from Moscow. I deserted.

VERA The power station was completely bombed out. What was the point of sitting there?

STEPAN Not One Step Back.

VERA You're not a soldier.

STEPAN We're all important. It's about...(ALMOST TEARFUL) I would have stayed if I could.

VERA Will you pop in to see Zhenya?

STEPAN She wrote to me. She's gone to Moscow.

VERA What?

STEPAN I don't understand either.

VERA That's funny, because I had a letter from Grandma, saying apparently people are being interviewed, asked about Auntie Zhenya and Kolya.

STEPAN 'Least that means he might still be alive.

VERA Daddy.

STEPAN He's a brave man, what are we supposed to think?

VERA He'll speak to the Commissariat for you.

STEPAN I couldn't ask him to – (REALISING) - why were you writing to Grandma?

VERA (DARING ANNOUNCEMENT) I want her to come and live with us. Wherever we are.

STEPAN You asked her?

VERA Her flat is completely destroyed, you said Alexei told –

STEPAN There won't be room for –

VERA (*She's*) Your mother-in-law. Mitya's great-grandmother.

STEPAN (ABASHED) It was just, I've offered room to Pavel Andreyevich as well, from the Power Station, maybe even this daughter-in-law of his.

VERA Grandma's living in one room in Kazan, eating the soup in the public canteen –

STEPAN We aren't even back in the city yet.

VERA The Germans have stopped shooting, everyone says. We'll have back it soon enough.

A MOMENT

STEPAN You two'll be alright? While I'm away?

VERA Snug as a bug, Dad.

STEPAN Your mother used to say that.

VERA I know. I know.

CUT TO:

SCENE 17. ZINA'S BALKA. INSIDE THE GERMAN LINES. NIGHT.

BACH IS ON HIS KNEES, KISSING ZINA'S FEET, DESPERATE, PASSIONATE. DISTANT, SPORADIC GUNFIRE.

ZINA Stop, please, stop.

BACH Let me, let me show you what you mean to me.

ZINA Get off. Stand up.

BACH I love every part of you. Let me worship you, show you how much I -

ZINA Stop, Lieutenant. (ITALICS TO SHOW UNACCENTED BECAUSE SHE IS 'SPEAKING RUSSIAN') *Are you drunk? You're not, I know you're not drunk.*

BACH (TALKING FAST, GABBLING) It's like this wave, Zina, listen to me, this great tidal wave which has carried me here – I used to think it was so important, my country, National Socialism, the Führer, but, you know, it's all nothing.

ZINA *What are you talking about? Stop. Slowly. Let go of me, for God's sake. Please.*

BACH You are so precious, so important, so much more important than anything, my family, my mother, my Maria, my country. (THROUGHOUT, ZINA SAYS 'STOP' AND 'PLEASE') They've thrown up these walls – can't you see, Zina? – these huge huge walls, two great nations, yours and mine, these huge walls, this anger, this hatred, and then they've added more walls, a great curtain of fire, solid steel and still they can't stop us. Don't you see how important that is? We, you and me, have a love which is greater than all that. Thank you, thank you so much for letting me know this, this special love we have, before I - before we - before I die.

ZINA (GRABBING HIS FACE, STOPPING HIM) *What are you talking about? What you stupid stupid little German? You're not supposed to do this.*

- BACH (OF COURSE NOT UNDERSTANDING HER) You don't understand me, do you? What are you trying to say, my love?
- ZINA *You're the master-race, you're not supposed to look like this – I've never seen you look so helpless. Any of you, you never do this. And I don't want to see you do it neither, now stop it. Please. Now.*
- BACH Everything about you is perfect. It is so honest, so real, so natural.
- ZINA (COOLLY PUTTING HIM DOWN) *Now you look like some Russian, grovelling and begging and –*
- BACH You are the one I was meant for.
- ZINA *I'm not going start feeling anything for you. You thought we were going to stay together forever? Stupid.*
- BACH Just this one moment, knowing that love – the idea of love, the thing that's going through me – that's what is more important than anything else, that we have something greater than all these armies and guns and planes and bombs, it'll last me forever.
- ZINA (HALF ANGRY, HALF SAD) *Look, we're in a war, you're the enemy, I'm the prisoner, of course it wasn't going to last forever.*
- BACH I want to kiss your knees, your feet, let me stay here.
- ZINA Look me.
- BACH This is all I need.
- ZINA Old woman hear.
- BACH I don't care.
- ZINA What do? *What's happened to you, Peter?*

BACH Can't you see? Nothing's changed. Nothing at all. It's me, I've realised. This is –

ZINA (DEFIANT) *I am not in love with you.*

BACH What's that?

ZINA *I refuse to fall in love with you. I refuse.*

BACH Thank you. Thank you, Zina, thank you.

ZINA *Oh God. My God.*

CUT TO:

SCENE 18. SIXTH ARMY HQ. UNIVERMAG DEPARTMENT STORE:
BASEMENT. DAY.

PAULUS (APPROACHING) Colonel?

ADAM Sir. I spoke to a tank officer outside. He has gone to get a General. I think.

PAULUS Thank you.

ADAM Did you sleep much?

PAULUS What do you think?

SCHMIDT (ENTERING, BRISKLY, SURPRISED) What's going on?

ADAM I have just spoken to - We are arranging a surrender.

SCHMIDT This is not possible.

PAULUS I have a starving army, a frozen army.

SCHMIDT We fight.

PAULUS I have an army without ammunition.

SCHMIDT You will be the first Field Marshal of Germany to surrender.

PAULUS I refuse to shoot myself just to satisfy the pretensions of that man.

A MOMENT

SCHMIDT You refer to the Führer?

ADAM For God's sake, Schmidt, we're done.

SCHMIDT General Schmidt.

PAULUS Two months ago I wanted us to break out, to force a corridor through to the South West.

SCHMIDT We were ordered to form a Fortress. We are doing that.

PAULUS It's a camp for armed prisoners of war, Arthur.

ADAM All our telephone lines are cut. Our only contact with Army Group is through a teleprinter.

SCHMIDT We have posterity to consider.

PAULUS I will not martyr a hundred thousand more. Enough boys have died 'so that Germany could live.'

SCHMIDT (ALMOST SNEERING) You're so glad you've been proved right.

PAULUS Yes, we should have been allowed to fight our way out in that first week. But I am also about to surrender my army.

SCHMIDT Sir, listen to me, they're savages, we can't trust them to –

PAULUS They're savages who've won.

SCHMIDT Goebbels is right – the Fuhrer is too great, even for the German people.

ADAM You idiotic, pig-brained –

PAULUS Adam, don't. Don't.

SCHMIDT (DARING HIM) Soldier?

SILENCE.

THEN, FROM ALONG THE CORRIDOR:

RUSSIANS (IN 'GERMAN', ACCENTED) Fritzy?
Where are you?
Come out, hands up.
Where are they?

ADAM Sounds like they're here.

PAULUS Let's get on with it then. Shall we?

CUT TO:

SCENE 19. STALINGRAD. RUBBLE-STREWN STREET. DAY.

GERMAN SOLDIERS ARE EMERGING FROM THEIR BUNKERS, FLINGING THEIR WEAPONS ONTO CLATTERING PILES, AND THEN FOOT-DRAGGINGLY 'MARCHING' AWAY.

RUSSIAN SOLDIERS CONSTANTLY SHOUTING AND ORDERING THEM.

RUSSIANS Move it.
 Keep in line.
 Faster, come on, move it.

BYEROZKIN Keep them in line, Sergeant. It's a long walk.

AN INTERPRETER APPROACHES BYEROZKIN

INTERPRETER General Wegler is ready to see you, Major. Has the full divisional –

A SINGLE SHOT RINGS OUT, AND THE CRY OF A WOUNDED MAN

BYEROZKIN What's that? (CALLING OUT) What's going on over there?

FROM THE DISTANCE:

CORPORAL (SHOUTING BACK) Fritz officer, said he didn't know about no surrender.

RUSSIAN (ALSO SHOUTING BACK) Some bloody German.

BYEROZKIN (STARTING TO MARCH OVER) Anyone hurt?

CORPORAL (SHOUTING BACK) Sergeant. Flesh wound. Upper arm.

BYEROZKIN (ANGRY SHOUT) Bring me that man now. That's out of order. (TO INTERPRETER) I want you here, see what he has to say.

INTERPRETER Sir.

BYEROZKIN (AS THEY CROSS THE RUBBLE) And get those children out of there, what are they bloody doing down there?

INTERPRETER Nothing much stops them, sir.

BYEROZKIN Tell them this is a military zone. Tell them there's –
(WALKING OFF) - tell them something.

AS BYEROZKIN APPROACHES:

CORPORAL (APPROACHING) Comrade Major, this is the officer what
shot at the Sarge.

BACH (ACCENTED, SCARED) Bach, Lieutenant, 76th Infantry.

BYEROZKIN (MEANWHILE TO INTERPRETER) Give me your gun.

BACH No, please. Please, no. (NOW UNACCENTED BECAUSE
HE'S SPEAKING GERMAN, TERRIFIED) *I woke up. I
thought it was an attack. I'm very sorry, please, I meant no
harm. Please, sir, I had no idea that -*

BYEROZKIN (OVER THIS, AS BACH CONTINUES) What's he bloody
saying?

INTERPRETER He says that he woke up and –

BYEROZKIN (COCKING THE REVOLVER) I don't want to know. I don't
want to hear any more. (TO BACH) Shut up, you.

BACH *I would never break the terms of –*

BYEROZKIN (GETTING ANGRY) Be quiet.

BACH (AT THE MOMENT OF DEATH) *Zina, I love you. Zina, I
love you. Zina, Zina -*

BYEROZKIN FIRES THE REVOLVER.
SILENCE.
BACH SWALLOWS.

BYEROZKIN (HE HAS GOT HIMSELF UNDER CONTROL) Now do you
understand me? Fritz? Be. Quiet. (TO CORPORAL) You,
take this man to the assembly point. I want him there safely.
I want him untouched. I'm holding you personally
responsible, Comrade Corporal.

BACH (RUSSIAN ACCENTED) Thank you, thank you, thank you.

BYEROZKIN BREATHES OUT. HANDS BACK THE REVOLVER.

BYEROZKIN The General's ready, you say? What's his name again?

CUT TO:

SCENE 20. STALINGRAD: SPIRIDONOV'S FLAT: KITCHEN. DAY.

THE FOUR OF THEM ARE TRYING TO EAT.
THE BABY IS GRIZZLING.

ANDREYEV It's a bloody disgrace.

VERA You have to appeal.

STEPAN Central Control might turn around and say the sentence is too lenient.

VERA I thought – everyone at the Party knows you stayed till the last day –

STEPAN Day before.

ANDREYEV And you only went over to see your little Mitya.

STEPAN And they've let us come back here, use the flat.

VERA Do you want me to go and testify?

STEPAN That wouldn't be –

ANDREYEV So appeal to Central.

ALEXANDRA It's my fault. I shouldn't be here.

VERA Don't be silly, Grandma, it's nothing to do with –

ALEXANDRA (SAYING THE UNSAID) They know about Kolya, don't they?

STEPAN They'll be checking our mail.

VERA What are you talking about?

ALEXANDRA I should never have let Zhenya write to me here.

VERA Will someone please tell me what –

STEPAN Kolya Krymov has been arrested.

VERA (WHAT?) He's a commissar, he fought against the Whites.

STEPAN He's in the Lubyanka. Zhenya has been trying to visit him.

VERA (*But*) They were divorced years - [*ago*]

ALEXANDRA I know, I know. Now she – she wrote to Stalin, did I tell you?

STEPAN [*Great*] I see.

VERA And because of that – ?

STEPAN No-one can risk being kind to me.

VERA That's madness. Our whole family is - ?

STEPAN It's just a Severe Reprimand. I could have been put on trial.

ANDREYEV But you're the only one knows this power plant, knows how to –

STEPAN I probably belong in a nice little peat-burner somewhere beyond the Urals.

ALEXANDRA I'm sorry, Stepanushka.

STEPAN It really could be – I don't belong here any more.

VERA Do any of us?

STEPAN It's just – it's silly really – it's when I realised I wouldn't get – they're doing a medal 'For the Defenders of Stalingrad'.

VERA (SHOCK) They can't – [*stop you getting that*]

STEPAN They made it quite clear.

ANDREYEV You have mine, Stepan Fyodorovitch.

STEPAN (*As If*) Pavel.

ANDREYEV Won't take No.

A MOMENT OF REFLECTION.
THE BABY STARTS YOWLING AGAIN.

VERA Quiet, Mitya, please.

ANDREYEV Maybe we should get this place tidied up.

STEPAN What's the point?

ALEXANDRA You used to be so energetic, Stepushka. So practical.

STEPAN (TO AVOID THE QUESTION, OF THE BABY, WHO IS
STILL YOWLING) He's hungry.

VERA We're all hungry.

STEPAN He doesn't understand why.

VERA He doesn't have to carry milk and wood up three flights of
stairs either. Trying to get past stairs covered in –

SHE IS INTERRUPTED BY A KNOCKING/BANGING ON THE FRONT DOOR.
AS STEPAN GOES TO ANSWER IT.

STEPAN We expecting anyone?

VERA Don't think so.

STEPAN OPENS THE DOOR.

STEPAN Hello?

NATALYA (OUTSIDE DOOR) I think my father-in-law might be here?

STEPAN Are you sure you've got - ?

ANDREYEV (GETTING UP) Natalya?

NATALYA Papa.

NATALYA ENTERS THE ROOM, A BLAST OF VITALITY.

SHE EMBRACES ANDREYEV.

STEPAN You're Natalya then?

ANDREYEV Where's little Volodya?

NATALYA Lovely to see you too, Papa.

ANDREYEV Where's my grandson?

NATALYA I've left him with Auntie Sophia.

ANDREYEV First you squabble with my wife, now you can't even get on with my –

NATALYA (LOOKING ROUND) This is so nice. What a lovely flat.

VERA Hello, I'm Vera.

NATALYA I've heard all about you. And this is going to be little Mitya.

VERA He's a bit grumpy right now.

NATALYA (TAKING AND JOGGLING HIM) Come here, little noisy boy.

ANDREYEV What about your own son?

NATALYA He's much better off back in Leninsk.

ANDREYEV Then what are you doing - ? [*coming here?*]

NATALYA What's all that rubbish all over your stairs? We'll have to get that cleared up, won't we?

STEPAN Well...

NATALYA And maybe you and me, Vera, we could go and see a film tonight. I saw a poster, they're rigging something up outside the Central Station or something.

VERA I'm not sure.

ALEXANDRA You should go, Vera, I'd go myself if –

STEPAN She's right. Go.

NATALYA We're all widows and widowers, aren't we? We've got to go on living. See a bit of life. Put on a bit of slap.

VERA Let me take him. (WALKING AWAY, TO THE BABY) There, there, Mityenka, your Mummy's not a widow, is she?

NATALYA (YIKES) Did I say the wrong thing?

ANDREYEV (SEMI-SOTTO) When didn't you?

NATALYA (A BUNDLE OF ENERGY) Alright, maybe I'll make a start on that rubbish. Where shall I put my bag? What a lovely stove.

CUT TO:

SCENE 21. DRIVING THROUGH STALINGRAD. DAYTIME.

ANDREYEV IS DRIVING

ALEXANDRA See? New Director's not so bad.

ANDREYEV It's Stepan Fyodorovich he's lending it to.

ALEXANDRA Doesn't matter, and he didn't even want to be paid for the petrol.

ANDREYEV He'll get it back some other way.

ALEXANDRA (LOOKING OUT THE WINDOW) What was that?

ANDREYEV That's the shops, you remember, along the side of the station.

ALEXANDRA It's all bricked up.

ANDREYEV Fritzie's did that. You see those holes they're getting their bread through?

ALEXANDRA That's not how it used to be.

ANDREYEV That was for machine-guns. Them little holes.

ALEXANDRA There's children playing in those bunkers. It must be dangerous.

ANDREYEV Where else they going to live?

THEY SOUND CHANGES AS THEY BUMP UP ONTO AN ASPHALTED ROAD

ALEXANDRA They've even started sorting the roads.

ANDREYEV They've got plenty of prisoners for that.

ALEXANDRA (SUDDENLY SEEING SOMETHING) Oh my God.

ANDREYEV (THEN LOOKING) Well, yes. There's bodies everywhere. If you think about it. They'll be digging them out for years to

come.

ALEXANDRA But the children. They're just running past. Jumping over.

ANDREYEV Once you seen one.

ALEXANDRA We'll hear from Seryozha soon.

ANDREYEV 'Course you will.

ALEXANDRA And what was this? On the left.

ANDREYEV Don't you know it? - that's the Univermag.

ALEXANDRA The department store?

ANDREYEV Paulus had his HQ in the basement? That door, that's where he walked out of, hands up, shaking all over.

ALEXANDRA I bought Marusya a wrist-watch there. For her birthday. Seryozha, his first skates, they had the sports department on the first floor.

ANDREYEV Not any more they don't.

ALEXANDRA They should let people live there.

ANDREYEV That'd be too sensible.

ALEXANDRA They're hanging their washing out in the open and they haven't even got houses to live in.

AS HE TURNS OFF ONTO A RUBBLE ROAD

ANDREYEV You did say down Gogol, didn't you?

ALEXANDRA (REALISING WHERE THEY ARE) Yes, Here. Stop. I didn't realise.

ANDREYEV Just here?

HE BRINGS THE CAR TO A HALT.

ALEXANDRA That's it. (SHE THROWS OPEN THE CAR DOOR AND LOOKS UP) Look. You can see the walls of my flat. The green in the bedroom. That blue, there, that's my kitchen.

ANDREYEV Very nice. Wonder what colour the floor was. Or the ceiling. Or the stairs. Or the roof.

SHE IS MEANWHILE STEPPING OUT OF THE CAR.

ALEXANDRA It's like a bit of lace.

ANDREYEV Amazing you've still got walls.

SHE WALKS FORWARD OVER THE RUBBLE

ALEXANDRA I'm seventy, you know. All this and I'm still alive. (SHE IS TALKING TO ANDREYEV) What's going to happen to everyone? My Lyudmila? Her husband's in such trouble. What will it do to their girl? She's such a bright little thing. I suppose Zhenya's going to follow her ex-husband to Siberia. There may be good people in the camps, maybe they were right. There are good people at the bottom of the Volga too. And little Vera, all this trouble with her father when she should be thinking about her baby. Why can't any of them be happy, Pavel? (SHE TURNS, WONDERING WHERE HE IS) Pavel?

ANDREYEV (DISTANT BUT APPROACHING) Coming, Alexandra Vladimirovna.

ALEXANDRA (NOW KNOWING HE CAN'T HEAR HER) Oh Pavechka. Why is the future so...why can't we know what's going to happen?

ANDREYEV (CLOSING) Look, found this.

ALEXANDRA What?

ANDREYEV Little thimble. Bit rusty. I was just digging round. Thought it might be yours?

ALEXANDRA Let's say it was, shall we?

A MOMENT, THEN:

ANDREYEV Time to go back?

ALEXANDRA We can say, at least we found this thimble.

CUT TO:

SCENE 22.INTERVIEW, RECOLLECTED MUCH LATER.

VERA

No, I did see her again. I almost couldn't believe it. I was walking down the street – streets didn't have their names back yet, it was by the Kurgan - and I saw her crossing the road ahead of me. I shouted. "Zina!" She didn't turn round. I shouted louder "Zina, it's Vera, stop! Zina Alexeyevna!" That time she turned round. She was so thin, her cheeks were like - her hair had fallen out.

I said – it's stupid – "You survived." She smiled, I mean not like a full smile, it was more like she was embarrassed. I asked "Where were you?" It was what we all asked then. She did this shrug. Didn't say anything.

I tried to keep her talking, telling her about Daddy's troubles and us moving and – it was rubbish, she wasn't interested. Finally, I saw she was looking at the baby and I said "This is Mitya." She touched him, she stroked his head, and that was the first time I said it, I said "His father was a pilot. He was shot down. They couldn't recover the body." She was the first person I'd wanted to tell.

That was when she looked at me, I mean really looked up at me, didn't try to avoid my eyes.

I haven't seen her since.

CUT TO:

SCENE 23. SPIRIDONOV'S FLAT. MORNING.

THEY ARE FINISHING PACKING, GETTING READY TO GO.
ALEXANDRA IS FLUSTERED, VERA IS FRACTIOUS.

ALEXANDRA Where's the bread?

VERA In that bundle, like you told me.

ALEXANDRA It'll go dry.

VERA Got a better idea? (THEN, REALISING) I'm sorry,
Grandma.

ALEXANDRA I'm sorry, darling, come here.

VERA Why don't you come with us all the way to the new place?

ALEXANDRA I need to go to Kuibyshev, see my daughter. You read her
last letter.

VERA When you've seen her?

ALEXANDRA Maybe.

FROM THE DOORWAY, TENTATIVE

WORKER Excuse me?

ALEXANDRA Yes?

WORKER Is the Comrade Director here?

ALEXANDRA You mean the former Director?

WORKER Comrade Spiridonov.

ALEXANDRA Through there. Try not to get in his –

STEPAN (APPROACHING) Who's this? (SEEING) Vladimir

Pyotrovich.

WORKER Came to say goodbye, Comrade Sir.

STEPAN (HE'S DRUNK) Very good of you. Very splendid of you.

WORKER We're going to miss you.

STEPAN You're not. I'm a coward and deserter and not fit to run any establishment.

WORKER (BAFFLED BY THIS) The turbine room, we clubbed together, thought this might make the journey go a bit quicker.

VERA (SNATCHING THE BOTTLE) He doesn't need any more of that.

STEPAN (SNATCHING IT BACK) I'll be the judge of that. (MOVING OFF) Come on, Comrade, come and drink a toast with me.

WORKER (MOVING BACK) Ought to be going. New Director's got all the teams meeting. In your off – in his office.

STEPAN Stay well, Comrade.

WORKER (GOING) You too, Comrade Director.

VERA Let's hope no-one else comes round.

STEPAN They're paying their respects.

VERA And you're too drunk to know it.

STEPAN A few toasts.

ALEXANDRA Get back in there.

STEPAN Where are the pies?

NATALYA (APPROACHING FROM THE STAIRS) Here they are. Everyone sit down.

ALEXANDRA Have we got time? Aren't we leaving in – ?

NATALYA Plenty of time, he's not due here until three.

AS THEY ALL MOVE ACROSS TO THE TABLE, SIT DOWN, SHARE OUT CUTLERY

VERA (TOUCHING THE PACKETS) They're still hot.

NATALYA Best Russian oven left in Stalingrad.

ALEXANDRA You - you know everyone with everything.

NATALYA I just talk to people. Come on. Sit down, let's tuck in. You've got days of cold dry food ahead of you.

VERA Come on, Dad.

STEPAN I'm not hungry.

VERA Natalya went all the way to Barrikady to get these baked.

STEPAN Where's the drink?

ALEXANDRA Don't give him any.

NATALYA Where's father?

STEPAN Pavel Andreyevich. Comrade Pavel!

ANDREYEV (COMING SLOWLY UP THE STAIRS OUTSIDE) I'm coming. I'm coming.

STEPAN (JOKING) God knows why the new director wants to keep him.

ANDREYEV I heard that.

VERA Eat, Dad, eat something.

STEPAN (POURING ANOTHER SHOT) I am.

ANDREYEV (COMING TO THE TABLE) This your doing, Natalya?

ALEXANDRA Who else?

ANDREYEV You should be feeding this to your son. You should be –

NATALYA I'm going to go back to Leninsk.

VERA Really?

NATALYA I'll go back and then we'll see.

ANDREYEV See what?

A MOMENT. A SILENCE.

NATALYA I don't know. (TEARS COME) I just thought we'd see.

ANDREYEV Don't want you fussing over me.

NATALYA I didn't mean – (TO HIDE HER UPSET) – eat the pies
before they go cold.

SILENCE AS THEY EAT
THEN SUDDENLY

STEPAN Where's my leather suitcase?

VERA By the door.

STEPAN (STANDING) You sure?

VERA (PULLING HIM BACK DOWN) Absolutely. Please, Dad.

A SILENCE.

ALEXANDRA There's nothing harder than saying goodbye to a home where
you've suffered.

THEN:

STEPAN Wish I could go and just sit in my office one more time.

ANDREYEV He's had it repainted.

VERA Already?

ANDREYEV He's a lout, that man.

STEPAN He's alright. He'll look after you.

ANDREYEV He's got them Fritzie's building him a new house and half the workers are still living in dug-outs, eating seeds.

STEPAN You know what I mean.

ANDREYEV He's not half the man you are.

NATALYA Do we have to talk shop?

STEPAN I ran away. It's my fault. As though I ever deserved the Defenders' medal.

ANDREYEV You was the only director stayed on the right bank throughout the battle.

STEPAN What about...? Well, maybe.

VERA A year ago, we were all eating pies in Grandma's flat on Gogol Street.

ALEXANDRA There were so many of us then. Now look.

ANDREYEV We routed the Germans.

ALEXANDRA At a price.

STEPAN The Fascist storm-cloud has been vanquished. Few weeks ago, sitting here, we could hear their tanks, now they're – where are they?

ANDREYEV About four hundred kilometres west, news said.

VERA Someone else was sitting right next to you, Pavel Andreyevich.

ANDREYEV Good man.

- STEPAN (NOT TO BE STOPPED) I phoned the First Regional Secretary. Just wanted to say good bye. "The Comrade is unable to speak to you. He's engaged."
- VERA And that young lieutenant, the friend of Tolya's, sitting next to Seryozha, opposite you, Grandma.
- STEPAN (RELENTLESS) "I'm leaving today" I said, "As you well know." "Then you may address him in writing," he says.
- ALEXANDRA O Seryozha.
- VERA We'll hear soon. I know we will.
- STEPAN Bugger them all. Bugger all the buggers. I'm the only one who stayed this side of the river. They were all in their snug little dachas, nicely out of range.
- VERA And Kolya. Uncle Kolya was with us, wasn't he?
- ALEXANDRA He'll be back with us soon. All a big mistake.
- STEPAN Natalya, I've got to say this. (NOW HE IS GETTING MAUDLIN) Go to Leninsk, get your little boy, come and join us in the Urals. You shouldn't - no-one should be on their own.
- NATALYA I - that's very -
- STEPAN You too, Pavel Andreyevich. Come with us.
- ANDREYEV Begin a new life at my age?
- STEPAN He should, shouldn't he, Verochka? This is all that matters, isn't it - family? Your little baby. Being together. It doesn't - who cares about work or getting sacked or the way they talk about me - we've got to stay together, we've got to -
- VERA Dad. Daddy. Daddy.

BURSTING IN OVER THIS:

BYEROZKIN Right, everyone ready? The truck's downstairs.

STEPAN (VOICE WOBBLY) Come on, Comrade Major, drink a toast with us.

BYEROZKIN On duty?

STEPAN The Germans have gone. Drink, here.

BYEROZKIN The men are here for your luggage.

STEPAN Then we'll sit down and drink a toast. Got to sit before we go.

VERA I'll go and tell them what goes where.

ALEXANDRA Don't forget the bags from the bedroom.

NATALYA I'll wrap the pies. You'll take the rest with you, won't you?

STEPAN Where are they all going?

BYEROZKIN You've got a train to catch, Stepan.

STEPAN I don't want to.... [*leave this place*]

ALEXANDRA (TO CALM HIM) It's alright, Stepan, it's alright, it doesn't matter, it's life, that's all, just life.

STEPAN Is it?

ALEXANDRA That's all. It's how life is. That's all.

END