

The Siege[©]

By Jason Blackwater

Adapted from the novel

By Helen Dunmore

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First Read Cast

Cast	Character(s)
Julia Thompson	Anna
Megan Borkes	Kolya=
Hannah McGinlay	Marina
Meghan Moroney	Evgenia
Katy Williams	Katya, Big Woman, Zina
Meghan Knight	Darya, Elizaveta, Saw Woman, Mother
Jandrea Novak	Young Woman, Nyusha=, Galya, Knife Woman, Mum,
Jenny Harrell	Mitya=, Older Woman, Raisa, Fox Fur Woman, Grisha=
Gregg Baker	Andrei
Brandon Roberts	Mickhail
Michael Knight	Arkady, Pavlov, Fedya
Alex Mrazek	Colleague, Customer, Pavel, Lamp Man
Casey Tregeagle	Driver, Militia Man, Stall Holder, Candle Man

= Denotes Child

Scene 1

[It is an afternoon in June 1941. On one part of the stage we see the dacha of ANNA, KOLYA and MIKHAIL. In the other we see the afternoon scene of the local square of the town, people picnicking, lovers on the bridge etc. in the Dacha, MIKHAIL is asleep in bed.]

V.O: Classified.

 Regarding the future of Leningrad.

The Fuehrer has decided to have Leningrad wiped from the face of the earth. The further existence of this large town is of no interest once soviet Russia is overthrown. Finland has also similarly declared no interest in the continued existence of the city directly on her new frontier.

The original demands of the navy that the shipyard, harbour, and other installations vital to the navy be preserved are known to the Armed Forces High Command, but in view of the basic principles underlying the operation against Leningrad it is not possible to comply with them,

The intention is to close in on the city and blast it to the ground by bombardments of artillery of all calibers and by continuous air attacks

Requests that the city may be handed over, arising from the situation within, will be turned down, for the problem of survival of the population and of supplying it with food is one, which cannot and should not be solved by us. In this war for existence, we have no interest in keeping even part of this great city's population.

Naval Staff

Berlin

29th September...1941

[The outside scene changes to an area at the borders of the town. June 1941. An allotment by a dilapidated, country house. KOLYA is playing in the earth with some old-looking tin soldiers]

Kolya: What time are we eating, Anna?

Anna: You must be more independent, Kolya.

Kolya: (singing to himself) In-de-pen-dant! (to Anna) What's that, Anna?

[KOLYA puts out his feet for ANNA to put his boots]

Anna: You can put them on yourself.

Kolya: (resuming his game) Attack! Attack! The reds are attacking...and the whites! The whites are retreating, their commander fat-ally wounded!

Anna: Kolya! Don't roll in the mud!

Kolya: Don't talk in your nursery voice.

Anna: What?

Kolya: Talk to me in your home voice

Anna: I'll show you nursery voice. *Children, what is the meaning of this disturbance?*

Kolya: (Laughing) You sound like Elizaveta Antonovna.

Anna: Let's not talk about her. Listen, do you know what radish seed looks like? Because I'm going to need you to plant some; radishes, spring onions and lettuce. And then, before you know where you are, we'll be eating our first salads.

Kolya: Can I pick them?

Anna: First you have to plant them. We'll start in this bit over here, where I've dug. You remember, you have to rake it over carefully, then make the lines with a stick to show where the seeds have to go...they're called drills

Kolya: I know

Anna: And then you can put in the seeds. But not all at once, mind – just a little pinch of seeds in your fingers, like this

Kolya: (peering into the brown paper bag with the seeds in) It's all dry and dead.

Anna: No, it's not dead. Don't you remember last year? Inside the seed there's a tiny germ of life, waiting until we put it in the soil. Once the sun warms it up and the rain softens it, it'll start to grow.

[KOLYA yawns with genuine tiredness]

Never mind, Kolya. Just put the seeds in and see what happens. Maybe you'll find radishes growing by magic

Kolya: By magic. Is this drill deep enough, Anna?

Anna: It's perfect. When the radishes are big enough, you can pull them up. You know how Dad likes them on a saucer, with the leaves arranged around them. You could do that.

Kolya: He'll be surprised that I grew them all by myself won't he?

Anna: If you're going to say you grew them yourself, then you have to take care of them. Weed them, and water them if they need it. I'll show you what to do.

Kolya: Can I go and play?

[KOLYA runs back to his soldiers without waiting for an answer from ANNA]

Attack! Attack! Attack! The tanks are on the way

Scene 2

[In the dacha. MIKHAIL is in one half of the small, crudely partitioned studio room. He is lying in bed, very weak. ANNA and KOLYA are in the other half. ANNA is preparing to leave]

Mikhail: ...and for god's sake don't be late! She's quite capable of refusing to see you, if you are.

Anna: Father, I told you to rest.

Kolya: I want to come with you!

Anna: You know you can't. We talked about it yesterday.

Kolya: I'll be so quiet she won't even know I'm there.

Anna: No, Kolya. Marina Petrovna hasn't asked you. And anyway, you're going fishing with dad, aren't you?

[he had forgotten. ANNA watches the two pleasures fight in his face]

And when I come back you can show me what you've caught

Kolya: you're better at catching fish than dad

Anna: you'll be fine. Just don't let the fish see your shadow.

Kolya: Why not?

Anna: Because if he sees your shadow he knows you're waiting to catch him.

Kolya: Anna.

Anna: What?

Kolya: I won't move. I'll be so still the fish will think I'm a tree. Like this.

[KOLYA lies perfectly still, his hands across his chest. ANNA is about to tiptoe out of the room, but somehow she can't leave him like this, lying on his back, with his hands folded, so still. It looks wrong, unnatural]

Anna: Kolya?

Kolya: (springing up, glaring at her) I shut my eyes so you could go! You keep saying goodbye and you never go! I hate it when you do that!

Scene 3

[MARINA PETROVNA'S dacha. MARINA is dressed in a cream, silk dressing gown. She is smoking nervously. ANNA arrives]

Marina: Anna. I've been waiting for you.

Anna: I'm not late am I?

Marina: No you're not late. But I don't see many people. It's always a shock, so I prepare myself.

[ANNA notices subtly that MARINA'S cigarette hand is trembling slightly]

I know, I'm looking older. Country air supposed to be good for one, but I'm not so sure. And you've grown up, Anna. I can still call you Anna, can't I?

Anna: Of course you can.

Marina: You must have been fifteen or sixteen when I last saw you

Anna: Sixteen. I'm twenty-three now.

Marina: And your father tells me you work as a nursery teacher.

Anna: I'm not qualified to teach. I'm an assistant, that's all.

Marina: But you draw. I've seen your work. It's good.

Anna: I'm an amateur. I've no training.

Marina: you've come. That's what matters. You know the house, of course. Have you decided where you want to draw me?

Anna: It's bright in here at this time of day, isn't it? I'd forgotten...the light's good in here...I want to try something, marina petrovna. Is it alright to move the sofa?

[MARINA nods and ANNA drags the sofa forward, pulling it to the angle she wants]

could you sit here for a moment.

[MARINA sits with a stiffness that shows how little she likes being told what to do. She's on the edge of the sofa, knees together, dissociating herself from her body as if to say *this is your idea, not mine*. The composition is exactly as ANNA knew it would be]

Marina: I don't want to be drawn sitting down.

[she stands]

It feels wrong.

Anna: A standing pose is tiring.

Marina: I don't mind that. We can have breaks, I suppose.

Anna: Of course.

[ANNA pushes the sofa back against the wall. She turns to find MARINA standing in a pose that isn't a pose at all. Hands loose at her sides, head plumb straight to the line of neck and spine. ANNA knows this is how she should stand]

I'll do some preliminary sketches. Just to get the pose and the room, the basic composition. Can you stay like that for twenty minutes?

Marina: Of course

[Time passes]

Anna: There. That's it for the moment. Rest.

[MARINA moves to look at the sketches]

Marina: It's going to be good

Anna: Yes...after all, you're the one who has to live with it, the drawing I mean.

Marina: Yes, yes of course.

[MARINA walks over to the window. ANNA watches her in the light]

(without turning) We'll have tea. I've got some cherry jam my nana made last season. You must be hungry —

Anna: You've no veg...

Marina: (turning) — and then I'll sit for you.

Anna: You mean stand, Marina Petrovna?

Marina: Yes, I mean stand. But now I want you to tell me all about your father. What does he think of the situation?

Anna: The situation?

Marina: Poland. France. The Scandinavian countries. Greece, Austria, Belgium — need I go on?

Anna: Oh, I see...I can't, I simp... We're at peace. We have a pact with them.

Scene 4

[GENERALS WINTER AND HUNGER STORY?]

[DARYA ALEXANDROVNA enters on to the street]

Darya: Mitya! Mitya! Mitya! Where are you? Come here this instant

Anna: (to herself under her breath) He's here with kolya...stupid woman

Darya: (rising to a panicky shriek) Mit-ya!

[ANNA bundles up her sewing and rushes to the verandah steps]

Anna: Darya Alexandrovna?

[DARYA is too out of breath to speak. She has obviously run from some distance]

Mitya's fine, Darya Alexandrovna. He's only playing with Kolya – look they're just over there. I thought you knew he was up here with us –

Darya: haven't you heard? Haven't you heard the radio?

Anna: No –

Darya: It's war. They've attacked, the devils, just when we weren't expecting them. War. Don't you understand?

Anna: The Germans?

Darya: Of course it's the Germans! You don't think we'd be attacking ourselves, do you? They're dropping bombs on us already, the bastards.

[ANNA looks to the sky. It's clear]

They've bombed Kiev. Holy Kiev, would you believe it? And other cities, they say. It was Molotov himself who told us.

Anna: Molotov? Are you sure?

Darya: Of course I'm sure

Kolya: no! that's my piece of wood.

Darya: The children –

Kolya: you've had your turn

Mitya: Give it

Kolya: it's not fair! Anna!

Anna: I'd better sort them out.

[DARYA holds her by the arm]

Darya: At least they're the age they are, my Mitya and your Kolya. They're too young to get dragged into it. But my nephew - you know, our Vasya – He's your age, twenty three. God alone knows where they'll be sending him off to.

Anna: I'm sure Vasya will be fine, Darya Alexandrovna.

Darya: It's always the same. The high up ones start things. But it's us who have to finish them off. No offence, mind – when I say “High-up ones” I don't mean anything by it. You know that, Anna Mikhailovna

Anna: I know. It's the shock. You don't know what to think.

Darya: They'll be swallowed up, those Fascists, that's what they'll be. They don't get away with it. Our lads'll soon beat them off, under comrade Stalin's leadership.

Anna: Of course.

[There is a pause between them as FATHER comes with a piece of broken guttering]

Darya: Anna Mikhailovna, I don't reckon I'll be able to oblige you with that honey after all.

Anna: But –

Darya: It's the bees. I ought to have told you before, our bees've not been doing as well as they should. It's those late frosts. We had to light fires in the plum orchard to drive the frost away. I thought we'd have honey to sell this year as usual, but the way things are, we're going to need it all for the family

[DARYA leaves with MITYA]

Anna: Father. We must leave straight away. We've got to get back to Leningrad as soon as we can.

Scene 5

[Digging at the Luga line]

Katya: (to Anna) They just left her there, they didn't even put anything over her.

Arkady: All right, girls, you've reached your target here. We're moving on. You've been reassigned to fortifications at the railway station. Get going!

Anna: (to katya) It's alright, katinka. There's no big rush. Here, have a swig of my tea.

Katya: Are you sure? Don't you want it yourself?

Anna: I'm offering it to you, you've brought nothing with you.

Katya: I'm sorry...

Anna: Don't be. Drink. Go on, have some more. The sugar will give you energy.

Arkady: Do you ladies think this is a tea party? Get your backsides over here now! Get in line.

[They walk. There is the sound of shelling in the distance]

Anna: It's alright, Katinka, They're miles away. You can tell from the sound of the engines.

[They walk further. A sound of an aircraft comes from the distance and gets louder as it flies overhead. Someone from the crowd alerts the rest that it is a russian plane.]

Katya: We could die out here! *We* could die. And no-one will cover us either!

Evgenia: (calmly) Yeah, Ain't that a shame?

Older Woman: And so he brooded:
From here, we shall menace the Swede,
Here we shall raise a city that will taunt
Our haughty neighbour

Evgenia: Pity it isn't a swede this time!

Young Woman: Don't spoil it! Let her go on.

Older Woman: Nature has fated us to cut here
Our window on to Europe, gain our foothold
To stand firm by the sea

Evgenia: (muttered, to Anna) Only the window's got broken, and the rain's pissing in.

[Behind, at the station, we see a crowd of children being bundled on to a train. They are dressed in clothes far too thick for the weather. Very few are crying. Anna scans their faces for one she recognises from the nursery]

Poor little sods

Anna: Have you got children?

Evgenia: Me? No. I had a kid, but my mum looked after him, and now he thinks my mum is his mum if you know what I mean. I don't interfere. It would only upset him. What about you?

Anna: I've got my little brother, Kolya.

Evgenia: Your mother's dead then?

Anna: That's right. She died when he was born.

Evgenia: So you've brought him up. I bet he thinks you're his mum, really. It's the one that sticks around that counts, with kids.

Anna: We do talk about her. Our mother.

Evgenia: Yeah, but talk doesn't add up to much, does it? Where's he now?

Anna: Back in Peter. A friend's looking after him.

Evgenia: He'll be alright, then. You a student?

Anna: No. I'm a nursery assistant.

Evgenia: I'd have had you down as a student. You've got that educated look about you. (Quickly, to Katya) Watch out! Those bricks are coming down!

[The brick wall bulges and bursts outwards. They jump back, all but KATYA who is in a dream]

Anna: Katya! Get out of the way!

[KATYA doesn't see and the bricks tumble down on top of her]

Oh my god!

Evgenia: Get her out quick.

[They pick the bricks off of her frantically and pull her clear as carefully as they can with the load of bricks]

She's gone

Anna: Gone?

Evgenia: Dead

[They carry her body towards the shade]

Somewhere the kids can't see.

Anna: Someone had better tell Arkady Konstantinovich

Evgenia: We ought to pull the rest of that wall down first. The tank traps've got to be finished by tonight

Scene 6

[A barn. It is night and the Luga workers are trying to sleep. The light of a hurricane lamp casts long shadows on the walls]

Anna: One rifle between six, she said. What kind of talk is that? My Piotr's out there with sanitary department. Don't tell me they'd take all those men if they hadn't got enough rifles for them.

Evgenia: Some people will believe anything.

[a shell hits, not far away]

Voice 1: How close was that?

Voice 2: If you count after the flash, like thunder, you can work it out

Voice 3: Don't be so stupid, of course it doesn't work like thunder.

Voice 1: Oh my god, that was close.

Evgenia: Come on girls, I want my sleep if you don't. Here, this is what you do. Wrap your blanket round your head, tight, that's the way. Fold it over your ears, just like your Mother used to do. You'll soon drop off.

Voice 3: until they drop something on the barn

Evgenia: What sort of talk is that?

[silence]

If they drop a shell on the barn you'll be fine, as long as you've got a blanket round your head. It's just a question of having the correct attitude.

Voice 1: you shouldn't...

Evgenia: All I do is put my blanket around my head, think about the high-up ones who are looking out for us the way they always do, and I drop off right away, just like a baby. Nothing to worry about.

[she punches the pillow she has constructed from straw and a liberated waiting room curtain]

Here, Anna, there's room for two on this. Bring your blanket over here. This is proper luxury, this is. Proper luxury.

Scene 7

[The Dacha. It is a month previous, late at night. There is a knock at the door. ANNA approaches the door, sticky with sleep]

Anna: Who's there?

Marina: It's me. Marina Petrovna

[ANNA slides open the bolt, turns the key twice and opens the door. MARINA is standing with a large, heavy-looking bundle]

Can I come in?

Anna: Quick...

[MARINA comes inside and ANNA closes the door]

Marina: Your father...

Anna: No, he's not here. He's gone off with the People's Volunteers.

[Pause]

Marina: I'm sorry. I'll go.

Anna: You can't go now, in the middle of the night. You'll get picked up. Or they'll trace you back to us and we'll all get picked up. Come in here. Let me take that.

Marina: Be careful, won't you. There are glass jars in there. But I shouldn't have come. I wouldn't have come if I'd known. I thought your father would be here.

Anna: He's gone. Everyone's gone to fight. I think he's somewhere near Kingisepp, but I'm not sure. You know they called for volunteer reinforcements?

Marina: Yes, of course.

Anna: And so he went. He's in the people's volunteers

Marina: Of course, he would go... That's just like him. Have you heard anything from him?

Anna: No. But I didn't expect to, with things the way they are.

Marina: (looking around the room) So here I am, after all this time...
[she picks up a photograph of Anna's Mother]
It's very like her

Anna: I know.

Marina: Thank god, that Vera knows nothing of all this.

Anna: No.

Marina: Anna, I've got something to ask you, a great favour. But you must say no, if it's impossible. I shan't be offended.

Anna: You want to stay here.

Marina: Yes. Only for a day or two. I've had to leave the dacha. A friend has offered me a room, but I'll have to wait until her children are evacuated. It should be on Wednesday. And with the Germans breaking through, I wanted to be sure to get into the city as soon as possible, before I was cut off.

Anna: They'll never get as far as your dacha. They can't get that close to Leningrad.

Marina: My old nurse has gone to Mga. She's got family there. But this is where I belong. This is where I should be, here in Leningrad. So if you could let me stay, just for a couple of nights – I can sleep anywhere. And I shan't go out, so there won't be any risk to you. And look...
[she goes to the bundle and unwraps it]

Food. I brought everything I could. Here, have these Jars of honey.

[Two jars of dark honey, two jars of lard, a greasy packet of smoked trout, dried mushrooms, dried cherries]

This is pork fat. And the billberry jam is last year's. It's full of vitamins. I brought as much as I could carry.

Anna: Marina Petrovna, we can't take this...

Marina: Don't you know that food is the only thing that matters in a war? The only thing. You must put all this away, Anna. You're going to need it. You're too young to remember what it was like last time. Such terrible sufferings...but you were only a baby then.

Anna: I can't let you give us so much.

Marina: Don't worry. There's still some food left in the bundle. I shan't go to my friend's empty-handed. But I'm not making any conditions, Anna. Whether I stay here or not, this food is for you and kolya, for your mother's sake.

[Pause]

Anna: Of course you can stay here

Scene 8

[A bed is made up on the leather sofa. MARINA and ANNA are sitting at a table by the window]

Marina: Thank god you don't live in a communal apartment any more, Do you remember it, Anna? All those little Slatkin children crawling around under the table, pinching people's ankles while your mother and Lydia Maximovna talked about childcare theory. And there was that poet – what was his name, the one who was no good and kept plonking himself down at the end of the table to copy out his poems, just when the supper was ready. He had a perfect instinct for it. And then someone would have to go and unblock the lavatory on the landing for the hundredth time, because the little Slatkins kept throwing things down it. What an impossible life for a woman like your mother.

Anna: We liked it. At least, I think we did. I haven't thought about them for years, the Slatkins, I mean. I wonder if they're still in Leningrad.

Marina: Lydia Maximovna is doing very nicely, writing screenplays for Lenfilm. She'll have been evacuated, with the rest of the company. But of course she hasn't come near your father for years. She's much too canny for that.

Anna: What about the children?

Marina: You wouldn't guess that she'd ever had any children. She's remade herself, Anna – She's an object lesson to us. What a pity we can't all do the same.

[ANNA starts to pack the jars away in a cupboard. She stops. She unpacks the full jars and clears the cupboard of several empty jars. She packs the full jars into the back of the cupboard and covers them with the empty ones. Hiding them]

Scene 9

[Baltic station. Teenagers are lining up to get on trains]

Kolya: Are we going on a train?

Anna: No, we're not going anywhere. Not yet, anyway.

Kolya: I bet I could be a good fighter.

Anna: They aren't going to fight. They're going to build defences.

Kolya: I *would* fight, if I was grown up. Why don't you fight Anna?

Anna: Because I've got you. I can't leave you on your own, can i?

Kolya: No, you can't leave children on their own, because they might get lost and not be able to find themselves.

[MARINA enters waving a ration book]

Anna: what's that?

Marina: I've found you. Look, it's all arranged. I told them I was here in Leningrad to release a worker for volunteer duty.

Anna: But Kolya...

Marina: I'll look after Kolya. It's ridiculous the two of us stuck in the dacha looking after one child. I can't dig my own garden with my back. But if

you go...he'll be fine with me. We'll get on with building our fort, won't we, Kolya?

Kolya: Will we get it finished by the time she gets back?

Marina: I expect so. Come on. It's time to go home.

Scene 10

[The women are asleep in the barn, all except ANNA who is turning, trying to get comfortable next to EVGENIA. The ground shakes. The women start up, clutching blankets]

Voice 1: Oh my God, what was that?

Evgenia: Just the shelling, same as always. Getting a bit close isn't it, girls? What about you, Anna? Did you have a nice sleep, duckie?

Raisa: Duckie! Why d'you have to talk like a village girl, when you're a leningrader like us?

Evgenia: 'Cos I am a village girl really, only I came to the city when I was eight, to make something of myself. What's wrong with us village girls, anyway? At least we know how to dig, which is more than I can say for some.

[EVGENIA mimics Raisa's ineffectual pawing at the earth]

Raisa: Can't you think of anything better than making fun of people who are doing their best? Listen to that shelling. They're right on top of us.

Evgenia: That's our artillery. Can't you tell the difference? We're answering back. Those bastards aren't going to have everything their way.

[She stands up and twists her hair into a knot]

Come on then, my darlings, that's enough tarding yourselves up – time to get on with the digging. The Germans aren't going to wait while we clean our fingernails.

Scene 11

[Outside Anna's dacha. ANDREI ALEKSEYEV hesitates before lightly rapping on the door. He takes a step back, politely. A light goes on in the dacha but no footsteps can be heard. ANDREI sees the light under the door and hears light footsteps quickly shuffling around inside. He knocks again and the door opposite opens. He feels the draught and turns around

to see FEDYA, a big, pale-haired man in a vest and bulging muscles, just staring at him before slowly closing his door again. He boldly steps up to the door]

Andrei: I'm a friend of your father's

[The door opens so quickly he tumbles in. He falls against ANNA who is naked under a cotton dressing gown. He hesitates for the tiniest of moments and draws himself upright]

Anna: Who are you? What are you doing here?

Andrei: It's alright – I'm a friend of your father. Andrei Mikhailovich Alekseyev

[ANNA shrinks back from him]

Anna: Oh my god, you've come, you've come...

Andrei: (realising) No, it's not that. He isn't dead, I promise you. He's alive. He's in the Erisman Hospital, with a shoulder wound. He came back with me in a hospital truck.

Anna: Is it bad?

Andrei: It's not good, but it isn't dangerous. He had a concussion, which can be more of a problem, but there doesn't seem to be a skull fracture.

Anna: You're a doctor?

Andrei: Not yet. Fourth-year medic.

Anna: He got himself shot! I should have known, I should have stopped him going.

Andrei: You couldn't have stopped him going.

Anna: What's that supposed to mean? He's got a son who is only five years old, did he tell you that? Or did he just forget about Kolya, the way he always does when it's not convenient? And now on top of everything else, he's got hurt. People are getting hurt all over the place who shouldn't even be there; they're not doing any good, they're just getting killed and then someone rolls them up in an old curtain if they're lucky and they get left for the Germans, like logs of wood. Well, thank god, you brought him back. And now he's wounded and – I'm sorry. I should be being grateful to you.

Andrei: Should we... Can we go inside? I've got to get back to the hospital in a minute, but I'd like to talk to you.

Anna: Don't go in there. Marina Petrovna's asleep. Come in the kitchen. Hush, we mustn't wake Kolya – he's been having bad dreams.

Andrei: It's a nice apartment.

Anna: We have two rooms. Seventy-five square meters. We're very lucky, although I don't know how long we'll be able to hold onto it.

Andrei: A man like your father needs his space

Anna: What?

Andrei: A writer, I mean. Even in the dugout, he wrote pages and pages, just as if he was sitting at his desk.

Anna: What happened to it?

Andrei: It's alright, I've got it here. That's why I've come – well part of the reason. I didn't want it lying about in the hospital.

Anna: No.

[he reaches into his breast pocket and pulls out the sheets of closely written note paper]

Thankyou. But why don't you sit down?

[she sits him down at a little folding table and begins to prepare tea]

And I don't suppose they gave you anything to eat.

[she begins to slice half a loaf of black bread kept in a sheet of muslin overnight]

Well, you'd better have something here.

Andrei: Watch that knife

Anna: What?

Andrei: you'll chop your finger off if you're not careful.

[She looks down at the loaf and then back at him with a small, reluctant smile]

Anna: He's really going to be alright? You're sure about that?

Andrei: Sure.

Anna: I'll go back with you. There are all sorts of things he'll need...

Andrei: Leave it for a few hours. He's asleep. He's had his wound probed, and they removed the shrapnel. He'll be knocked out at least until this afternoon. Anyway, it's chaos down there. Stretchers all over the corridors, calls going out for blood, temporary theatres being set up all over the place. This is the first time I've been able to get off duty.

[ANNA rummages around in the cupboard. ANDREI watches her. ANNA spreads a little honey on the bread for him]

Anna: Here, eat this.

[They eat bread and drink tea in silence. ANDREI is hungry and eats quickly]

Go ahead if you like. I don't mind.

Andrei: What?

Anna: Dip your bread. We all do here – me and Kolya, even Marina Petrovna.

Andrei: I shouldn't be eating your ration.

Anna: I gave it to you. Eat it.

Andrei: When I was in the dugout with your father, I used to dream about sitting in a kitchen, drinking tea.

Anna: I know.

Andrei: You know?

Anna: I was there until two days ago. Farther back from the line than you, but not very far. We were digging an anti tank trap when the shells finally came too close even for us. Six women were killed, and then they ordered us out of the sector. We got a train back to Leningrad, just as if we'd been on a camping holiday. Except that the train was so full we weren't sitting on seats, we were packed in so tight that even if we fell asleep we didn't move an inch, we stayed upright. And the guard kept yelling, "Get those heads inside the window or they'll be knocked off!"

[Quiet moment between the two of them]

They pulled us back along the line; they couldn't use us there anymore, so we came home. I don't know what's going to happen next.

Andrei: We'll consolidate...

Anna: Yes.

Andrei: Did you know them? Those six that were killed, I mean. Were they friends of yours?

Anna: Not really. Only one, who was killed earlier on. She was like a child, even though she was fifteen. She should never have been out there. She used to get me to brush her hair for her.

Andrei: You must have been close.

Anna: No, I didn't like her much. She was pretty, but she was spoiled. You know the type. Father in the Comintern, food parcels delivered to the apartment, summer camp at government resorts. I don't suppose she ever stood in a queue in her life. But it wasn't her fault.

[beat]

I keep on thinking about her. You know the way you are at fifteen. Too much of some things, and not enough of others. Nothing had begun to add up for her, she wasn't even really a person yet, and she was dead. And we wrapped her up in a waiting room-curtain, with roses all over it. The worst thing is that the roses looked so terrible. As big as cabbages, and the colour of mud.

Andrei: Don't think about it.

Anna: Why not?

Andrei: It'll stick. You can't go on remembering the curtains.

Anna: Maybe it should stick.

Andrei: But not in you.

[He looks up at her]

Anna: Have some more tea.

Andrei: You have to protect yourself. Not become heartless, I don't mean that. But when I first went on the wards, there were things that I couldn't get out of my head for weeks. After a while I realized it wasn't possible to

be a doctor that way. You have to keep something inside yourself, that can't be used up and taken away from you.

Anna: And you've got that?

Andrei: I'm trying to. I suppose it's the same for you, working in a nursery with all those children. Your father told me about it. You must have to work out a way of responding to them without being eaten alive.

Anna: How strange that you knew that. Most people, my father, for instance, can't see that my work involves anything of the kind. They see all the routine and all the physical stuff you have to do. "all that drudgery" he calls it. But they don't imagine there can be any challenges. We go on and on about the workers, but because we're all supposed to be improving ourselves all the time, and getting qualifications and making progress, we still can't really value work unless it has status. So although my boss doesn't understand anything about the children at all, in fact she doesn't even like them, she's the one who fills in the reports and makes decisions. And everyone accepts that this is the way it should be.

Andrei: Or maybe just that this is the way it is.

Anna: It's worse than that. We bow down to diplomas as if they were icons.

Andrei: Perhaps you're right...

Anna: I'm just prejudiced because I haven't got any. Diplomas, I mean. And I'm sure I'll be as bad as everyone else when it comes to Kolya. I'll be shoving him on to get as many qualifications as he can. It won't be hard for him. He can read already. He's a real Levin.

Andrei: And you're not?

Anna: No, I'm not like them. All the Levins do brilliantly at school, and they love writing. Nothing is quite real to my father until he's written it down. But I was nothing special at school.

Andrei: Like me.

Anna: You're a medical student.

Andrei: Yes, but I've had to work at it. You wouldn't believe how I've had to work. But once we're applying theory, I'm fine. It's a great feeling when patients come in and you notice a tiny thing about them – the colour of their eyeballs, or the way they stoop to the side. Even before they've started telling you what's wrong, you've got an idea. That's what I like.

Anna: Yes.

[ANNA watches him drink the last of his tea and stand. He puts down the cup and takes a piece of paper from his pocket]

Andrei: This is the ward, and the name of the surgeon in charge. I've written it all down. You can come later. He'll be awake then. But don't be alarmed if he's running a fever. It's very common, at this stage, and it doesn't mean there's an infection.

Anna: (nodding) Of course, I understand.

Andrei: Goodbye

Anna: Goodbye

Andrei: Perhaps, when you come to visit your father...

Anna: I should have thanked you. It was such a shock when you came, and I thought you might have been...

Andrei: It was stupid to come so early. I ought to have thought. It was just that I wanted to tell you straight away that he was all right.

[He notices he is holding her hand. He slowly folds her hand into a fist]

Well, goodbye

Anna: Yes.

Andrei: Do you like dancing?

Anna: Yes

Andrei: Me too.

Anna: We'll go one night shall we? If the bands are still playing.

Andrei: They're still playing at the Astoria. We could go there. You have to queue but it's worth it.

Anna: Alright.

Andrei: Well, goodbye.

Anna: Goodbye.

Scene 12

[The District Evacuation Centre]

Anna: Elizaveta Antonovna, two more unaccompanied children...

Elizaveta: So you're back, are you? About time. Can't you see I'm in the middle of important calculations? Now, I'll have to add these columns up again. Take them into Hall Two with the other processed children, but for pity's sake don't go and get them mixed up with the unprocessed groups. And if you could *kindly* stop those boys from running in and out of the end room. I can't concentrate with all this noise.

Anna: Some parents are asking if it's true about the railways being bombed. Have we heard anything

[ELIZAVETA looks up sternly but says nothing. ANNA turns and goes into the corridor where, on a bench, two girls, 3 and 5 are sitting with their rucksacks. The younger, Olenka begins to cry and the older NYUSHA reaches into her sisters pocket and pulls out a piece of grey rag]

Nyusha: Mum let's her have it when she cries.

Anna: It's the best thing Nyusha. Your mother wouldn't want her to cry all the time. Give her the rag whenever she wants it.

[She beckons them and takes them both by the hand]

Now let's get you two sorted out. You'll be going into that room first, with all the others, so you can be divided into groups for the journey. We'll make sure you stay together. You'll be going on a train, you know that, and we're sending plenty of food with you so there's no need to worry.

Nyusha: Mum's made our sandwiches.

Anna: I know. But maybe there are children who haven't brought anything. We have to look after everyone. What's your little sister's name?

Nyusha: Olenka. She doesn't talk.

Anna: But you can tell when she's hungry and when she wants to go to the toilet?

Nyusha: (nodding importantly) Yeah, I can tell. She sort of pulls me when she wants things.

Anna: That's good. Now, in here, just wait on these benches and we'll be as quick as we can. Move up a bit, the rest of you, there are two more who want to sit down.

[A BIG WOMAN wearing trousers and a party blouse enters]

Big Woman: Transport for Sortirovochnaya station is leaving NOW, with a capacity of fifty accompanying adults and one hundred and fifty children. Form queues in the courtyard immediately.

Anna: Quick, all of you get off that bench. follow me.

[Panic seizes the halls. Then a surge for the door]

Mind the children! They're getting crushed! (to the children) Get in tight behind me. Hold on to each other. (to the crowd) Citizens, please, for heaven's sake – these children are going to get hurt.

[no-one takes any notice. ANNA spots the BIG WOMAN in the party blouse]

Comrade! These are the children of essential workers!

Big Woman: (booming) This is no way to behave! All of you stand to one side and let these children through at once.

[Willingly, they do. Children are passed hand to hand over the crowd's heads until they reach the courtyard. ELIZAVETA is arguing with one of the lorry's drivers]

Elizaveta: Comrade! Not only are you choking us, but you are wasting precious fuel.

Driver: (calmly) No, the way it is with these engines, it's more *efficient* to keep them running.

Elizaveta: Oh, of course, if it's a question of *efficiency*...

[The lorries are filled with children and some mothers. Drivers leap out of their cabs to fasten the bolts, joking with the children. They return to their cabs, put them into gear and slowly pull away]

Elizaveta: It's chaos! It's complete chaos! If only people would follow instructions. Well, don't just stand there. We've got another hallfull to deal with.

Scene 13

[Anna's Dacha]

Anna: You mustn't spend so much, Marina. I'll never be able to pay you back.

Marina: We are not going to be able to eat money.

[she opens her shopping bag]

Two hundred grammes of lumpfish roe!

Anna: Marina! What did it cost?

Marina: I keep telling you, money's not going to mean anything soon.

[MARINA joins KOLYA in crouching over a pot of wallpaper paste. They did strips of newspaper and lay them over the framework of Kolya's fort]

Kolya: Am I doing it really well, Marina?

Marina: Really well. Look how smooth you've made that wall.

Kolya: The walls have to be high, don't they, so the enemies can't climb over them.

Marina: That's right. One more layer should do it, Kolya, then we'll leave it to dry. We can start painting tomorrow.

[MARINA wipes paste and newsprint off of her hands. KOLYA emerges himself in his creation]

Anna: Listen, Marina, I'm going to try it.

Marina: It can't be worth the risk.

Anna: It would be. Think of everything I could bring back. I'll take the panniers, and my basket, and I can balance a couple of sacks on the handlebars.

Marina: But, Anna, the militia are stopping everyone who come into the city now. What if they think you're a spy?

Anna: As long as I've got my papers with me, I'll be alright. They'll let me back in.

Marina: If they don't shoot you first.

Anna: I'm going tomorrow. It'll be fine.

Marina: What about work?

Anna: If I volunteer for tonight, I could come off shift at noon. I'll come back here, get the bike, allow three hours to get there, then three hours to come back at the end. I'll be home before dark.

Marina: Listen if you're really going to go...

[She goes to the couch and pulls a puukkuun, a Finnish hunting knife, out from under the pillow]

There. You'd better take that. I had it sharpened.

Anna: Where did you get it?

Marina: Take it, you don't know who might be around.

Anna: There won't be anyone, they've all left. It's a dead zone now.

[she feels the weight of the knife]

Who did it belong to?

Marina: No-one. I bought it.

Anna: Don't tell my father that I've gone.

Marina: Of course not.

Anna: We can tell him afterwards, when we've something to show for it. I'll get him some radishes, if there are any left.

Kolya: What are you going to tell me afterwards?

Marina: No, not you. Anna was talking about someone from work.

[ANNA goes into the other room where MIKHAIL has been sleeping]

Anna: Father. Wake up. You have to drink.

[Pause]

Wake up.

Mikhail: Anna. What are you doing?

Anna: Trying to wake you up. Here, have some water. Your lips are cracked.

Mikhail: Anna, make me some tea.

Anna: You're not really supposed to have tea. It's too stimulating.

Mikhail: (not recognising the word 'stimulating') What's that you say?

Anna: Don't worry, I'll get you some. A little glass of tea can't do any harm.

[She goes for the tea. When she returns MIKHAIL appears to be dozing but ANNA clinks the glass with a spoon and he is awake]

Mikhail: Did you put in two lumps of sugar?

Anna: I'm going to put another pillow behind you, then you'll be able to drink it.

[He struggles into a seated position]

Here you are

[Trembling, he takes the handle of the glass, purses his lips and sips the tea]

Mikhail: Good tea

Anna: Try a little more

[It takes him a little time to drink the small amount of tea]

Mikhail: That was good

Anna: We'll try lime-flower tea next time. You know how much you like it.

Mikhail: Yes, I do like it.

Anna: I'll just take this out and, then I've got some porridge for you.

Mikhail: I'm not really hungry, Anna, *moya dusha*. Just tired.

Anna: 'My soul' ...

Mikhail: Onegin's uncle

Anna: What?

Mikhail: Me. I like him. Are you wondering when the devil will come to me?

Anna: No. I'll just carry on gloomily spooning out the medicine.

Mikhail: At least you haven't forgotten your Pushkin

Anna: No, at least I haven't forgotten that.

Scene 14

[ANNA returns on her bike to the city. She is stopped at a sentry-post by a young Leningrader MILITIA-MAN]

Militia-Man: Your papers

[ANNA proffers them. She doesn't speak or smile. The MILITIA-MAN plants his forefinger onto her signature]

Your papers appear to be in order. What have you got in all those bags?

Anna: Produce

Militia-Man: Open up the bags.

[She unties the sacks and opens the panniers. He lifts up the onions and potatoes carefully so as not to bruise them]

Stuff you've grown yourself?

Anna: Yes.

Militia-Man: Off to market with it, are you?

Anna: No, It's for personal use.

Militia-Man: Personal use.

Anna: Yes.

[She smiles at him complicitly]

But you wouldn't believe the weight of all these potatoes. I'll never get this lot home. I could do with lightening the load a bit.

[He stares at her]

They're too heavy. I've got too much in the sacks.

Militia-Man: Potatoes, is it?

Anna: And onions. Onions keep well.

[She unhooks a pannier from the bike and passes it to him]

Perhaps you need to examine this.

[He takes the sack and takes it into his post. After a short while, he returns, swinging the empty bag]

Militia-Man: Everything's in order, but don't try it on again.

[Pause]

Not bad, your onions. My gran used to grow onions like that.

Anna: So did mine. That's how I learned.

Militia-Man: Yeah, Beautiful onions, she was famous for them. Alright, then, on your way.

Scene 15

[ANNA gets to within a hundred metres of her home when she see ANDREI]

Anna: Andrei Mikhailovich! Is that you?

Andrei: (smiling) Anna. I thought I'd missed you. I've just been to your apartment, but Marina Petrovna told me you were out.

Anna: (smiling) Yes.

Andrei: I've got a few hours off. Listen, shall we go and have a drink somewhere? Maybe a dance, like we said?

Anna: I'll have to take the potatoes home first.

Andrei: What?

Anna: All this stuff. I've been to the dacha.

Andrei: You've been out of Leningrad?

Anna: Yes, I told you, to the dacha.

Andrei: Don't you know how close they are? There's going to be another major advance any day. What if you got caught up in it?

Anna: I didn't see anything.

Andrei: And you could have got stopped on the way back in.

Anna: I knew what I was doing.

[Long pause]

Andrei: Sorry

Anna: No one tells me what to do.

Andrei: I can see that.

Anna: You think I didn't work out the risks? Who is going to look after Kolya, if I don't? Look how much food I got.

Andrei: Are you alright?

[ANDREI falls into step alongside ANNA as they wheel the bike back to her block]

Anna: I'm fine

Andrei: You don't look alright.

[They walk, happy in each other's company]

Anna: (after a short while) My feet aren't really this big. You know how it is. I couldn't get the right-sized boots last winter.

Andrei: You should see mine. But luckily, as it's dark, neither of us need worry.

[They reach her stoop]

Anna: If you wouldn't mind waiting here with the bags, while I take the bike up. It's not safe to leave them here.

Andrei: I'll carry the bike up for you.

[He shoulders the bike. She slings a pannier on each arm and holds the basket]

Anna: I'll have to come back down for the sacks.

Andrei: You wait here while I take the bike up. I'll come back down and help you with the rest of the stuff.

[He puts the bike down and takes a handkerchief from his shirt pocket]

If you'll allow me there's something on your cheek. Mud, I think.

[He tries to rub the mark off but it won't budge]

Anna: If you spit on the handkerchief...

Andrei: You don't mind?

Anna: No.

Andrei: There.

[He wipes firmly]

It's all gone.

[Pause]

I wanted to come before.

Anna: I know.

Andrei: I couldn't. It's been crazy...

Anna: I know

Scene 16

[The communal bathroom of the dacha. ANNA quickly checks to see if anyone is around and strips to the waist. She looks for some soap but she has forgotten it. In her rush she sluices her face, arms and neck with the cold water. There's a knock at the door]

Marina: (through the door) Anna, It's me. I've brought you some soap.

[ANNA opens the door and in MARINA'S hand is an expensive looking soap]

It's jasmine.

Anna: Where did you get that from? (Beat) Thank you. Is Andrei alright?

Marina: He's talking to your father. But I don't know where to put the potatoes. If they go down into the cellar they'll be stolen, but it's too warm for them in the apartment. They'll sprout.

Anna: I'll think of something.

[ANNA washes herself with the soap, turning her back to the door but MARINA doesn't leave]

Marina: Let me help you. I'll do your hair.

Anna: Thank you.

[MARINA sees Anna's green dress hanging over the edge of the small bath]

Marina: I like your dress

Anna: (brushing her badly knotted hair) I made it. I'm good with my hands.

Marina: Here, let me help you. We all do our own hairstyles and make-up in the theatre, you know.

Anna: I thought someone else did it.

Marina: You need to know how to do everything yourself. There are all those years before you qualify for a dresser...and all the years afterwards, too. There aren't any guarantees in the theatre. A few good years might be all you get. Look, this colour will suit you. Do you like it?

Anna: I don't wear lipstick.

Marina: I know. But with your skin, you can take quite a dark red. As long as it's red which hasn't got any blue in it.

Anna: I don't like the feel of it on my lips.

Marina: Try it. You'll be surprised at the difference.

[MARINA applies the lipstick to ANNA'S lips, blots it and applies again]

I'd like to try taking your hair right off your face, and putting it up.

[She takes Anna's hair and demonstrates]

Like this. It needs more lift. I haven't got any setting lotion, but you should be alright without it. Your hair's nice and thick with plenty of body.

[ANNA turns her head in Marina's grip on her hair]

Did I pull your hair?

Anna: No, it's fine.

Marina: There, have a look in the mirror.

[ANNA looks without looking]

Anna: Thank you, Marina, I couldn't have done it like that. Tell him I shan't be a moment.

[MARINA understands and leaves. ANNA closes the door firmly behind Marina, goes back to the mirror, reaches into her hair and finds the hairpins that Marina had put in it and pulls them out. She takes a piece of newspaper from the spike by the toilet and wipes the colour from her lips. She smiles, close to the mirror. ANNA goes back into the apartment]

Anna: (Mouthing to Marina) *It fell down.*

[ANDREI is asleep on the couch]

Kolya: He went to sleep when I was showing him my fort. Can you wake him up again, Anna?

Marina: It's the heat of the apartment

Anna: Yes.

Marina: They've only been sleeping three hours a night.

Anna: Did he tell you that?

Marina: Yes. He was explaining why he couldn't come before.

Anna: He didn't need to explain. I knew there'd be a good reason why he didn't come.

[KOLYA fits his soldiers carefully into the entrance of the fort]

Kolya: There, they're on guard now. Aren't you going to wake him up?

Anna: Not just yet. But if you're a good boy and play quietly, you can stay up a bit longer.

Scene 17

[ANNA and ANDREI are walking together in the blackout]

Anna: We're talking as if they're bound to attack.

Andrei: What else can happen now? It's inevitable.

Anna: How many more nights like this will there be? Don't you feel it? It's like a weight pressing down on us.

Andrei: It's the blackout.

Anna: I was never afraid of the dark when I was little.

Andrei: I can't stand it. It's like living inside a box.

Anna: That's because you're Siberian.

Andrei: Of course. Everything's because I'm Siberian.

Anna: Do you wish you were there?

Andrei: No.

[He turns and clasps her. They kiss deeply, exploring each other's mouths. ANNA, suddenly twists in his arms, pulls back, puts her hands on his shoulders and pushes him sharply away]

Anna: Not like that. Not yet.

Andrei: I'll be careful.

Anna: You won't. I've already got Kolya, I don't want to get caught for another baby.

Andrei: But I'm...

[A burst of sound cuts across them]

What was that?

Anna: Only a whistle.

Andrei: There's something going on.

[They freeze, listening]

It's the Militia

[A faint drone of a plane]

Anna: Is it theirs? Can you tell?

Andrei: They'll only be dropping leaflets. You must get back.

Anna: And you.

Andrei: There's a doorway here.

[They back into the doorway. Several streets away, there's a burst of anti-aircraft fire and then silence as the drone fades into the distance]

Anna: It's coming soon.

Andrei: Yes.

Anna: They'll need you at the hospital.

Andrei: Yes, I must go.

Anna: Tell me why you didn't come before.

Andrei: (stroking her face) I couldn't come.

[He kisses her, her head in his hands]

I couldn't leave the hospital

Anna: How bad is it?

Andrei: I can't tell any more. It all seems normal to me now.

Anna: Yes, that's it isn't it? Everything becomes normal so quickly, until you look back and see how far you've come away from how things used to be.

Andrei: Maybe not so far at all yet, compared to how far we've got to go.

Anna: Don't say that.

[They stand close for a while, not touching. She combs Andrei's hair with her fingers]

Andrei: You know I wanted to?

Anna: To come? Yes.

Andrei: And then I saw you today, on your bike, with all those sacks.

Anna: I didn't think you'd seen me, that's why I called to you.

Andrei: But I had.

Anna: You're just saying that.

Andrei: I swear I had. I knew you were there. Didn't you see me smiling?

Anna: It was dark.

Andrei: Not quite dark.

Anna: We must go.

Andrei: Yes.

[They step out of the doorway and turn onto the street]

Anna: You know, in the blackout, the pavement feels so uneven. And yet it looks so smooth by daylight.

Andrei: There's going to be a curfew any day. This might be the last time we can walk round like this.

Anna: Tell me about Irkutsk

Andrei: You're not interested in Irkutsk. You're a Leningrader.

Anna: You're a Leningrader now. You live here.

Andrei: Yes, but I can go away. Real Leningraders can't. Wherever they are, no matter how beautiful it is, no matter how happy they are, they're always

pinning to be back. They can't live without a cold in their head, and someone's boot on their neck.

Anna: You're telling me there's no boot on your neck in Irkutsk?

Andrei: It's a question of degree. God and the Tsar are farther off, as they say.

Anna: But here in Leningrad, they're our next-door neighbours. You're right. We're all packed in together, and we don't trust one another. We have to suspect everyone. If you've got a bigger room than someone else in a communal apartment, you've got to watch your back in case he denounces you to get a hold of it himself. I keep thinking, how did we get to where we are? Nobody wants it, so how did it ever happen? I look back, and I can't see how we got here.

Andrei: It's not so bad. The people in my apartment aren't like that.

Anna: Only because you don't notice it. It's that pure Siberian air you carry around with you. Don't be fooled. There'll be someone in your apartment watching you. There always is.

Andrei: With the Germans so close, all those other things will stop.

Anna: Let's not talk any more.

[They finally reach Anna's apartment again]

Andrei: Here we are.

Anna: I know. Not the Astoria, is it?

Andrei: We'll get there one day, I promise

Anna: We always seem to be standing in doorways.

[He pulls her close to him, they close their eyes and kiss, tenderly]

Andrei: It's raining.

Anna: Yes.

[Their embrace strengthens. He pulls up her dress, sliding the ruck of the dress over her thighs.]

Andrei: You know I wanted to come.

Anna: Yes, yes.

Scene 18

[In the apartment checks that KOLYA is asleep and then goes into the other room, the dark room where MIKHAIL sleeps. She switches on the shaded, low-watt lamp beside his bed and examines his face]

Marina: It's me. Do you want to talk?

Mikhail: What about?

[Silence]

What are you doing?

Marina: Nothing. Kolya's asleep. Anna's gone out.

[MIKHAIL blinks impatiently, forcing himself to come into the present]

She's gone out with your friend, Andrei.

Mikhail: Yes.

[He moistens his lips, gingerly]

Marina: Is your shoulder hurting?

Mikhail: No.

[Pause]

Marina: You know that the Germans have broken through.

Mikhail: They took Kingisepp. We couldn't stop them.

Marina: They are almost at Pushkin.

Mikhail: (whispering) That's impossible.

Marina: You would think so. But they are here. They have encircled us.

Mikhail: Why are you telling me this?

Marina: Why not? Why should you be the only man in Leningrad to have the luxury of not knowing it? You have a son who is five years old.

[A flicker of amusement lights his face]

Mikhail: You're a hard woman, Marina.

Marina: It's about time someone was hard on you. I'm not going to let you lie here and give up. You aren't dead yet. You haven't lost your children. You haven't been arrested. You've got your papers and your ration card, and God knows there are enough families jammed into one room who would kill for this apartment. You've got Anna slaving morning to night, and on top of that carting back potatoes and onions so you won't starve to death – at least, as long as you deign to open your mouth and swallow the food she puts in it – and all you can think of is what a pity it is that she's not an intellectual. Well, thank God for that, when you look at the way most of the Writer's Union have behaved over the past few years. You could get up. You could be better. You just don't want to. You *refuse* to heal yourself.

Mikhail: My God, Marina, this is like having Jesus in the bedroom. You'll be telling me to take up my bed and walk next.

Marina: You may laugh. Alright, look at me. My career is finished. I'm turning into an old woman. I've lost years when I should have been playing roles I'll never play now. There may be Germans in my dacha by now, smashing up my furniture for firewood. Here I am back in Leningrad, worse off than when I was eighteen. But Misha, for God's sake, let's stop making such a tragedy out of it. We've done far too much of that. Other people have lives, but we just keep on having emotions. We think things have been so terrible, but we're alive. We're not even in prison. With any luck our former colleagues will be too busy filling their store-cupboards to spare any time for denouncing us. (beat) I've got a ration card on the black market, and I've got somewhere to live, because your daughter's had the generosity to take me in. I'm in good health. I know how to keep Kolya happy. And I want to be here, with you. But you...

[Pause]

You are not trying.

Mikhail: I'm dying, Marina.

Marina: By choice.

Mikhail: You can't say that.

Marina: I can say anything I want to you. You are letting it happen. *I know*, you loved Vera. *I know*, they stopped publishing you. *I know*, they wounded you.

Mikhail: Marina...

Marina: You don't even notice the people who love you. To you, they are nothing. You don't value yourself, and that belittles everyone who loves you.

Mikhail: But you know, Marina, it does hurt.

Marina: I do know. But it hurts because you're not dead yet. You've got to promise that you'll let us help you. No more letting soup dribble down your chin into that scrub of a beard you won't let us shave.

Mikhail: Dribble?

Marina: Yes, dribble. And very unattractive it looked, I have to tell you. People of our age, Misha, can't permit ourselves to behave like useless old fools. It was one thing wiping your backside when you first came back from hospital, but I'm sure Anna doesn't want to make it a permanent arrangement.

Mikhail: Marina, I... I really don't know what to say...

Marina: You must get up. Every day you spend in bed is weakening you. Your muscles are wasting. Even if it hurts you must get up and walk around the room.

Mikhail: Did Andrei tell you all this

Marina: In a way. He said there's a point in every illness where the patient needs to cooperate. And you've reached that point.

[Pause]

Go to sleep now

[He nods. She strokes his hand as he falls asleep]

We'll be fine, you'll see Misha. It'll all be alright, as long as you don't ever believe that you're going to be beaten.

Scene 19

[Anna's Dacha. There is two sharp knocks on the door. ANDREI'S signal]

Andrei: Anna

[ANNA enters the hallway]

Anna: I was just on my way out

[ANDREI touches her cheek]

I've got to go straight away, Andrei. I'm late.

Andrei: Let me see your hands...you must cover those blisters, and put some iodine on them. They'll become infected if you get soil into them.

Anna: They'll soon harden

Andrei: I'm trying to help you.

Anna: I'm fine. Come in and see Kolya for a minute. He was asking when you were coming.

Andrei: But you haven't got time.

Anna: No.

[suddenly, ANNA grabs him and pulls him into a short, passionate kiss and rests her forehead on his nose for a moment]

You never shave. Isn't that always the story with us, no time to do anything or go anywhere? As soon as I wake up, I already feel as if I've been running all night. I never do anything properly. Last night I dreamed I was booked onto the Moscow train, but even though I knew it was leaving in less than an hour I had so many things to do that I couldn't stop myself from doing them. I was cutting up a blanket to make a lining for Kolya's jacket, and my mother was standing in the doorway with her arms folded, watching me. And then she said, "don't you know what time it is, Anna?" just as she used to do when I was running around the apartment trying to find my homework on a school morning.

Andrei: The Moscow train, huh? They brought in two little boys last night. Brothers. They were sleeping in the same bed when their apartment was shelled. One of them had his legs crushed, the other had a ruptured

spleen. I don't think they'd have had much of a chance anyway, but all the theatres were full when they were brought in, so that was that.

Anna: Did you get the morphine delivery?

Andrei: In the morning. Military flight. Anna, please, don't go for a minute. Let me hold you.

[He grasps her through the thick coat]

What perfume is that?

Anna: It's Marina's soap. There's only a sliver of it left.

Andrei: I'll get you some more.

Anna: Andrei, please.

Andrei: You love me. Say you love me.

Anna: It's not the right time

[He pulls back. Her face is sullen]

You think I can do everything. Well, I can't. I have Kolya in there, and my father. They've got to be fed, and kept clean, and their clothes have to be washed, and Kolya's boots have holes in them. They're too small anyway, but I can't get another pair. I've got to find felt boots for him for the winter, or he'll get frostbite, but god knows where I'll get those. And now the bread ration's gone down again...I hear things...

Andrei: What things?

Anna: It's not just the bridges that are being mined. It's everything. So, if the Germans do break through, they won't find anything left. It'll all be blown up. The whole city. Rather than let them have it...

Andrei: That's just a rumour...How could we destroy Leningrad?

Anna: The person that told me was a Party member. He was at school with me. He says they're mining everything there in the northern sector. If they're doing that there then it must be the same across the whole of the city. There are detonators ready, just waiting.

Andrei: The whole city?

Anna: Yes.

[Pause]

Andrei: But how can there not be Leningrad any longer? It's impossible

Anna: Yes, it's impossible but I believe him. He knew what he was saying. We'll blow it up rather than let them have it.

Andrei: You can't think about all that, Anna, You've just got to think about now.

Anna: That's what I'm trying to do but then you come and you wake everything up. You make me feel things again and I want to talk to you about them.

Andrei: That's good isn't it? What's the point of being alive if you don't feel it? You might as well be under an anaesthetic.

Anna: Andryusha, it's different for you. I've got my father, and Kolya. I've always had a child holding my hand, and I'm not even a mother. Sometimes I think I never will be. This'll be my life, this'll be what I have if we don't all die. Don't you understand? I'm not complaining I'm just telling you how it is. They are my responsibilities. Look at my father. Do you think he'll ever be...

[Pause]

He won't be able to work again. And he'll need someone at home to look after him when I'm at work. I won't be able to leave him alone. How can we afford that, on what I earn? Or is Marina going to stay? That's good in a way, but on the other hand, I'm never alone, I've never got time when someone isn't wanting something, expecting something.

Andrei: You don't need to think about it all now?

Anna: Why are you saying that? Are you saying that because he's going to die? Is that what you're trying to tell me?

Andrei: No, Anna. Of course not.

Anna: Well...I'm sorry, Andrei. I get angry. I'm not angry with you, but you see why I can't let myself think about other things now. I can't think about how I feel.

Andrei: You want to. I know you want to.

Anna: Yes, but that's not the point. Anybody can give way sometimes.

Andrei: For God's sake Anna. What's that supposed to mean?

Anna: I don't know how to say it. It's this. You make me weak. I'm afraid you'll weaken me.

Andrei: I would never let you get pregnant. You know how careful I am.

Anna: That's wonderful. That solves all my problems. Doesn't it occur to you that not being pregnant really isn't all that much to hope for out of life?

Andrei: Anna. Anna. Let's not quarrel

Anna: I know. But you should be with your patients and I should be digging ditches.

Andrei: In a minute.

Anna: You know I want you to stay. You know that.

Andrei: Yes.

Anna: But we have to make sacrifices

Andrei: Mmm

[His is unbuttoning her jacket. He undoes the buttons of her blouse and traces down to find her nipple. She kisses him arching her back so that her breast fills his hand]

Anna: Marina, Kolya and my father are all within three metres of us. They can even hear us breathing.

Andrei: You don't want to make any more sacrifices.

Anna: You know I do. But i can't. I must go.

[She does up her blouse and jacket and looks up. A sudden naked smile]

It's so stupid isn't it? All the things we want, and all of the things we could have. And we might never be able to have any of them. You remember Katinka, the girl who died, the one I told you about? She was *outraged* by the idea that she might be going to die. Because that wasn't what she had been promised. After all, she was only fifteen, and all her life everything had gone so well. Death was something that happened to other people, like failing an exam. Sometimes I think we should do everything, now, all at once, without stopping to think, because this

might be the only time we've got. And I don't know if I hold back because I'm sensible, or because I'm scared.

Andrei: I would never hurt you.

Anna: You might. And I might hurt you. I don't want any of that to happen.

Andrei: It won't happen.

Anna: But sometimes I think I'm better on my own Andryusha. Safer. I know this will sound stupid, because as you see I'm surrounded by people all the time. But I've always felt as if I were alone. No, that's not right, I mean *on my own*, ever since my mother died.

[he folds his arms around her. In the Dacha, FATHER struggles to sit up and swing his legs over the side of the bed. He rests. He reaches slowly for his tea, first one hand, then another. He brings the tea to his lips and lets the tea slosh off his lips, too weak to swallow a mouthful. The effort of holding the cup becomes too much and he puts the tea down again]

Mikhail: That's very good, Kolya. Just look at the way you've drawn that tank turret.

Kolya: But I can't do the gun's properly, Dad. Do you know how to draw guns?

Mikhail: Give me the paper. Gently now. I'll have a try.

END OF ACT 1

ACT 2

Scene 20

[An office. PAVLOV is sitting at his desk. A mountain of files and loose sheets surround him on the table-top and on the floor. A colleague is standing with him]

Pavlov: It can't be done, it's impossible.

Colleague: Really? Can't you? But of course you can if it's a big enough sheet.

[Silently, PAVLOV passes him a large sheet of fine quality paper and watches his colleague fold it. Once. Twice. Three times. It's easy but at the eighth fold the man looks up pained but still smiling]

Do you know, you're quite right. I never would have believed it.

Pavlov: Even if that paper were as big as Lake Ladoga, it would still wouldn't fold. We cannot change the laws of nature. It's the same with the reserves.

Colleague: I'm sorry?

Pavlov: Our reserves. Here. According to these figures, at present we have twenty-five thousand pigs in the Leningrad area. Some on the hoof, some already slaughtered. Sounds a lot doesn't it?

Colleague: I should say so.

Pavlov: But we are consuming meat at the rate of two hundred and fifty tons a day. Tell me, how long will we be able to continue to fold that particular piece of paper?

Colleague: Forgive me, I don't know exactly how much a pig actually weighs.

Pavlov: Then find out. These are things we must all know. I want to know exactly what Leningrad holds. No rough calculations. No fantasies about how many cabbages may lie still unharvested in suburban gardens. I don't want optimism. Detail. No rounding up of figures. No hoping against hope that supplies might 'get through' when it is impossible to for them to get through. We have got to know facts, not what we think will happen or hope will happen. For a start we must put out of our minds any hopes of further supplies reaching us for the foreseeable future.

Colleague: But, excuse me, surely it's still possible to bring in supplies by water, over Lake Ladoga.

Pavlov: Not enough. The supply chain is too weak, and we haven't got the infrastructure. There are not enough landing-stages or barges, and the railway line is hopelessly inadequate. We'll exploit that route as far, but our boats are sitting ducks for German bombers. For the time being I have decided to discount from calculations any supplies which may reach us from the Ladoga route. We must be realistic. Facts are our business, not pious hopes. We have three and a half million people to feed for an indefinite period, and at the present rates of consumption we won't do it. The ration must be cut again.

[a FEMALE COLLEAGUE enters with a folder. Pavlov takes it without glancing up. The FEMALE COLLEAGUE turns on her heel and exits]

Colleague: Excuse me, how long do you calculate the blockade will last?

Pavlov: How should I know? The duration of the blockade is not within my area of competence. Not only do I not know the answer but the answer doesn't even interest me. I have not been sent here to speculate. Facts are what I need.

[Pause]

We must continue to fold the piece of paper. Even when it becomes impossible. Here. Please add your thoughts

[PAVLOV passes the colleague the paper he's been waiting for. The colleague casts a speculative eye over it]

Colleague: Leather articles?

Pavlov: Some nourishment can be obtained from leather. Of course we have to set against that nourishment the energy which is required to boil the leather until a stock can be extracted. Apparently a type of beef jelly can be made from top quality leather. This is the type of information people will require, as time goes on. So, please, add your thoughts. It's possible that I have missed something.

Scene 21

[Home. there is no fuel, the electricity is off]

Kolya: It's snowing!

[KOLYA coughs with the exertion of running to the window]

Anna: How many times have I told you not to thrush about like that! Now, breathe out slowly. That's good, you're doing fine. Another big breath. You should keep your gloves on, Kolya.

Kolya: But we're indoors.

Anna: Yes, I know you don't usually wear your gloves indoors but see how cold it is. Marina?

Marina: Yes?

Anna: What do you think about the burzhuika?

Marina: I don't know. how much are they asking for it, now?

Anna: Three days' bread ration, or a kilo of sugar and two hundred grammes of lard. Plus five hundred roubles.

Marina: The money's not a problem. I've got that.

Anna: You can't have much left

Marina: No, not a lot, but I've certainly got five hundred

Anna: But a kilo of sugar! A whole kilo! But without the burzhuika, and with winter coming...

Marina: Is it extra for the stove pipe?

Anna: Yes, another two days ration, or you can make it up in sugar or coffee

Marina: But on the other hand, if we wait until it gets colder, the price will go up. And maybe they'll run out of burzhuiki and we won't be able to get one at all.

[KOLYA begins to cough again]

He should be wearing his fur cap. A high percentage of heat is lost through the head.

Anna: I know but he keeps pulling it off, don't you, Kolya?

Kolya: It's stupid, wearing a cap in the house. Everyone will laugh at me

Anna: I bet they're all wearing their caps now, Alyosha, and Share, and all your friends. They'll all be wrapped up just like you. Listen, I'll pull up a corner of this blanket and that'll keep your head warm. Like a soldier's helmet. No, don't wriggle. You'll feel much better.

Kolya: Tell me what Alyosha's doing now. Will he be at nursery?

Anna: Nobody's at nursery now. It's closed.

Kolya: I thought I was home because I was ill

Anna: No, you've been home since long before you were ill, don't you remember? Because of the Germans. It would be too dangerous to go to nursery, with all the shelling, even if it was still open.

Kolya: I wish you *would* buy the burzhiuka, Anna. I'm so cold.

Anna: I know.

Kolya: When's it time for dinner?

Anna: Not yet. but Marina's going to make some of her special drink

[MARINA checks on a sleeping MIKHAIL]

I'll go now. You're right, all the stoves might be gone in the next few days with the snow falling

Marina: We'll have to move your father in here. We can't possibly keep more than one room warm, and it's much too cold for him in there.

Kolya: Where are you going, Anna?

Anna: I'm going to get something wonderful for us. A little stove with a long pipe that goes out of the ventilation window. We'll be able to burn wood in it, and keep warm even when there's no electricity

Kolya: Can i light it?

Anna: Of course you can, but you have to be very careful, because we can't waste matches.

Kolya: Anna, will you bring me something to eat?

Anna: I don't think I can. I don't think I'll be able to carry anything on the sledge except the stove. It's very heavy.

Kolya: But I'm so hungry. Please, Anna, can't you just get me a few sweets? You can put them in your pocket and they won't weigh anything.

[ANNA sits beside KOLYA and hugs him for a long time, only partly to warm him]

Anna: Don't tire yourself, my little one. Conserve your energy. I'm off then

Marina: Be careful. you know how rough it's getting down there

Anna: I'm taking my father's silver cigarette box, in case there's any more vitamin powder

Marina: Does he know?

Anna: No. He would want us to sell it. But I don't think he needs to know.

Marina: I wish you weren't going alone. Listen, take this.

Anna: But Marina, this ring must be worth thousands of roubles. You can't just give it away —

Marina: It's worth a stove pipe anyway. put it in your pocket, not in the bag, so they don't see it. Then you can bring it out if the bargaining gets tough. But take care who sees it.

Anna: (seeing an inscription in the ring) Did you play Cordelia?

Marina: Obviously

Anna: You should keep this

Marina: Oh Anna, I've played so many roles. I kept it for the stone, not for the inscription. Besides, I never identified with the character. I am much too aggressive. I would have taken Lear by the shoulders and shaken some sense into him. That kind of vanity amounts to madness, don't you think? All of us are to grovel on the floor declaring our love for our great leader. But of course you have to find a way into every part.

Anna: I'll be back as soon as I can

Marina: Be careful. Take care of yourself

Anna: Don't forget Kolya's message

Marina: No, I won't forget

[ANNA leaves]

Scene 22

[Sennaya Market]

Stall holder: (turning an ornate gold locket in his fingers) I'll give you a hundred grammes for it, that's all, take it or leave it

Customer: But it's worth —

Stall holder: Take it home and eat it, then.

Evgenia: Anna!

Anna: Oh my god, Evgenia, you frightened me!

Evgenia: I saw you by Lavra's stall. Don't go near there again. He's dangerous

Anna: Who's Lavra

Evgenia: Don't look, the one with the meat. What're you doing down here, anyway?

Anna: I'm looking for a burzhuika.

Evgenia: Got the price? They won't take money, you know.

Anna: I've got it

Evgenia: Come with me. I know the woman who trades them. She had two, the last time I went by. Her name's Galya, not that she'll want you to know her name. But she knows me. She doesn't want to get in wrong with me, in case things turn out different from expectations

Anna: What d'you mean?

Evgenia: Galya's canny enough to realise we might not all die. She's done all right out of the war so far, but the customers she's screwed into the ground won't forget her, if any of them are still alive, that is. The only thing that people like her are afraid of is life returning to normal. She knows I'll be back to see her, unless she treats me right. I'm not going to die. Is your kid all right?

Anna: He's at home.

Evgenia You keep him there, Anna. don't let him out. The streets around here aren't safe for kids. Let's go and get that stove

[They arrive. GALYA is moving her head this way and that]

Looking for her bloke. Her minder. She got set on the other day when she wouldn't sell for a kilo of bread.

Anna: Do you come here a lot?

Evgenia: I'm here most days. Here, Galya, this is a friend of mine. She wants a stove and a stove pipe. She doesn't want any of your rubbish either.

Galya: Stoves and stove pipes are sold separately.

Evgenia: Not to me and my friends they aren't

Galya: What's she got?

Anna: I've got a kilo bag of sugar —

[EVGENIA silences here with a kick or a shove]

Evgenia: My friend will give you the sugar for the stove and the stove pipe.

Galya: Don't make me laugh. I could get twice that. These burzhuiki are like gold dust these days.

Evgenia: You could, but it wouldn't do any good

Galya: What are you saying? Are you threatening me? Piotr, come over here!

Evgenia I'm not threatening anyone. We're neighbours aren't we? Good neighbours. And we want to go on being neighbours. Neighbours've got to sort things out themselves, haven't they? We can't always be running off to the authorities, or our lives won't be worth living. Did you know, Anna, they aren't bothering with arrests or trials or any of that stuff now? Anyone who looks like a speculator, they just get shot. Stopped on the street, open your bag, and if you've got stuff in there you shouldn't have, that's it, you're a speculator. No more questions: Bang. Galya knows that, don't you, Galya? Neighbours need to stick together in times like this. We've all got to help each other, that's the way it goes.

Galya: A kilo of sugar and three days' bread ration. I'm giving it to you.

[ANNA turns her bag away from GALYA, removes the sugar and bread and pushes the remainder to the bottom of the bag]

Evgenia: Give us the stove first.

[she pulls the stove from under the stall]

Where's the stove pipe?

Galya: Here

Evgenia: That section's cracked. Do you want to poison her?

Galya: Most of those I sell don't even have a pipe

Evgenia: My friend's buying a pipe, one with four sections. The other one, the one you've got tucked away behind the stall. The one that's not cracked. That's the one she's paying for.

[Grumbling, GALYA fetches it]

Get it on the sledge, Anna.

Galya: I want my payment first

Evgenia: You'll get your payment when my friend's got her stove fixed on her sledge

[EVGENIA holds onto the bread and sugar while ANNA fixes the stove to the sledge, she covers it with a torn sheet]

You ready now, Anna?

Anna: Yes.

Evgenia: All right then, Galya, there's your sugar and there's your bread. Mind out for those patrols on your way home. They don't think any more of shooting a speculator than of shooting a pigeon. There aren't any pigeons around anymore, 'cos they've all been eaten, and there's plenty of speculators. Not many as nice and plump as you, though, are there, Galya? Maybe we can eat speculators for a change? We could have a little chat with Lavra about it.

Galya: Watch what you're saying

Evgenia: I know what I'm saying. And so do you. You mind what I say, Galya, bang!

[they set off]

You'd better get off home quick.

Anna: Evgenia, here.

[ANNA offers her the lard and 500 roubles from her bag]

You have this. I'd never have got the stove without you

Evgenia: (taking the lard) I don't need the money

Anna: Evgenia, how's your mother, and your little boy?

Evgenia: He's had this same cough everyone's had. Mum bought some cod liver oil for him but it's all gone. There's nothing else wrong with him, once he gets rid of his cough. Only hunger.

Anna: If that woman had been on her own, I'd have taken the stove, knocked her into the snow, and run.

Evgenia: Yeah, I reckon she knows that. That's why she keeps Piotr close at hand. She has to give him a cut, of course, but I should say he's worth it. If even a nice girl like you is thinking of bashing Galya over the head and running off with her stoves, there'll be plenty who'd do much more than think about it. Me, for a kick off.

Anna: Have you got a burzhuika?

Evgenia: I got one off Galya two weeks ago, when it turned cold.

Anna: So, you're doing all right? I mean, you've got money? You're still working?

Evgenia: I've got my job, thought the power's been off so much we're only on about twenty percent production. I'm still on a worker's ration, which is the main thing. But I'm working with my left hand as well.

Anna: Where?

Evgenia: You know. Down the market

Anna: Oh. I see

Evgenia: Quick, aren't you? Mind you, they say hunger slows down the brain. Two hundred grammes is the going rate at the moment. You can guess what type of man has two hundred grammes to spare these days. They're a real portrait gallery. But I'm not much of one for men anyway, as you know, so it doesn't make a lot of difference to me. Whereas bread does. And I don't really — I don't really notice it all. D'you ever get that feeling, Anna, as if things won't still be there when you reach out to touch them?

Anna: Yes

Evgenia: It's lack of vitamins, that's what it is. We're suffering from what polar explorers get. Only we're not going to discover anything except that if you don't eat, you end up dead. When I was short for the stove, Galya found me a bloke with a thing about red hair. So she's not all bad, is she? Even though I agree that she'd be a lot better looking arse over tip in a snowdrift.

Anna: We'll fix that up for her one day, shall we?

Evgenia: Just wait till all this is over. The German bastards'll be running in one direction, and those Sennaya bastards in the other. There'll be some arses kicked then, I can tell you. But Listen, Anna. Don't you even think about going in for what I'm doing. Shits like Piotr will mince you up in a week, if you don't know how to deal with them. And you don't, anyone can see that. You get home with that stove. I'll see you again. On the patriotic day workers' arse-kicking, if not before

[EVGENIA turns and disappears into the snow]

Anna: — Bastards! I don't care what you do! You can all go and fuck yourselves, you fucking bastards! See If I care!

Scene 23

[The dacha. KOLYA is kneeling beside the stove, ANNA beside him]

Anna: Hold it there, wait till it catches

Kolya: It's lit! It's lit! It's on fire! I lit it properly, didn't I, Anna? We've got loads of stuff to burn, haven't we, Anna?

Anna: Yes, loads of stuff

[ANNA leaves the dasha, crosses the hall to their neighbours and raps on the door. it opens. ZINA is behind it with a baby in her arms.

Anna: Have you that saw you spoke about? I hate to —

Zina: No, go on, we're not using the saw today anyway

Anna: If only I'd brought the chopper from —

[her gaze lingers moment on the lethal looking brick fireplace close to the ventilation window

Zina: There's no fire risk, you see, there's a layer of stones under the brick, and my Fedya's put a sheet of steel underneath that. My Fedya's such a wonderful worker. practically a Stakhanovite.

[FEDYA, pushes past them, giving ANNA a withering look, into the hall and off to work]

Anna: Why don't you come in to us, you and the baby? Once we've got the burzhuika going, it'll be a lot warmer than in here.

Zina: Oh no, thank you, we're fine as we are. With our little fire, it gets quite warm. He's hungry...

Anna: Are you still feeding him yourself?

Zina: Yes, but I don't know if he's getting enough. Can you remember what your Kolya weighed at three months?

Anna: About eight kilos, I think

Zina: He only weighs four and a half. And he was such a big baby when he was born, do you remember?

Anna: Yes, he was. Let me have a look

[she pulls back the shawl. the baby has a newborn's hands, purplish and thin. ANNA touches his cheek]

Is he drinking water?

Zina: No.

Anna: You could boil a little on your fire, and let it cool. Have you got any sugar?

Zina: No.

Anna: Or honey? Anything sweet?

Zina: We haven't got anything?

Anna: Zina, I can let you have a hundred grammes of sugar. Have you got a baby's bottle?

Zina: I got one when he was born, but I've never used it.

Anna: Boil up the water, and quarter fill the bottle. While the water's still hot, add a teaspoon of the sugar until it dissolves. Then give him that every hour, even if you have to rouse him. If he doesn't suck at first, put the water on your finger until he gets the taste of it, then he'll suck.

Zina: But he's sleeping so well. he's sleeping right through the night now.

Anna: That's because he's so weak. He shouldn't be sleeping like that. You have to rouse him. Flick the soles of his feet with your fingers if he won't wake: like this. Once he's got a bit of energy he'll start to suck more strongly. The stronger he sucks, the more milk you'll make. And you must rest all you can. Wrap yourself up in everything you've got, and drink plenty of water. You'll make more milk if you conserve your energy

Zina: Anna Mikhailovna, tell me, when are they going to lift the blockade?

Anna: I don't know

Zina: Doesn't your father know anything? he's a writer, isn't he?

Anna: We don't know anything. how could we? My father was wounded defending the motherland. He can't even get out of bed, how do you think he can possibly know anything?

Zina: I'm sorry, Anna Mikhailovna, I didn't mean anything —

Anna: I'll go and get that sugar. And thanks again for letting me use your saw. I'll bring you your share of wood once we've finished chopping up the dressing table.

Zina: A dressing table — how nice! I've always wanted one of those

Anna: It was my mother's

Zina: It doesn't seem right, does it, all this?

Anna: You go and lie down. When I come back with the sugar I'll knock on the door twice so you know it's me. Tuck him in beside you, and open the shawl so he gets the warmth of your body. They can't maintain their body temperatures as we can.

[ANNA returns to her apartment]

Kolya: It's getting hot

[ANNA goes to the kitchen and taking the last bag of sugar, careful measures a hundred grammes and pours it into a cup]

Marina: what are you doing?

Anna: oh! — Marina! you nearly made me spill it. I'm just, measuring some sugar

Marina: For whom?

Anna: For the baby next door. Zina's baby. He's starving

Marina: You can't do that.

Anna: I've got to. He's malnourished, and he's dehydrated. In this cold he could easily die.

Marina: So what are you going to do about it, Anna? What about all those other babies? Are you going to trawl up and down the street knocking on doors until you've given away all our food to people who are going to die? and then you can come home and watch Kolya die.

Anna: It's only a hundred grammes

Marina: A hundred grammes is a hundred grammes. It's not "only" anything.

[MARINA goes and sits on the edge of MIKHAIL'S bed]

Anna: But Zina's our neighbour. We can hear the baby crying. She's only across the landing, and she hasn't got a clue what to do. He's going to go to sleep and not wake up at all if he doesn't get some calories into his body soon.

Marina: Anna, you are the ones that matter. You and Kolya. Don't you understand this?

Anna: Only us?

Marina: You still don't see, do you, what it's going to be like? You still don't understand. It's going to go on like this, getting colder and colder, with less and less food. No one's going to come and help us. And I don't intend to watch you all die.

Anna: (stifling a confusing laugh) You might die first.

Marina: People don't die just when they want to. I'm the type who'll go on to the end. It's pure selfishness, you're quite right. I can't face seeing you die one by one before me. So put the sugar back in the bag.

Anna: No, I can't do that. I've told Zina she can have a hundred grammes. But that'll be the end of it. She'll have to manage on her own after this. Everything else is for Kolya.

Marina: Even if she comes knocking on the door with that baby

Anna: Even if she does

Marina: Good because you have a responsibility, you know.

Anna: To what?

Marina: To stay alive, of course.

[in this moment, the light catches MARINA just so as she's reading quietly to MIKHAIL. ANNA grabs a sheet of paper and begins to draw her. after a time, perhaps a long time, indicated as such by some lighting change or other, there are two raps at the door. It's ANDREI]

Anna: what happened?

Andrei: That crazy idiot Borya made a fire in our apartment, and then he fell asleep and it went through the floor boards. They managed to put it out, but the smoke's wrecked everything. Both mattresses caught fire.

Anna: Oh my god, is Borya all right?

Andrei: He's inhaled smoke, so he's not feeling too good. But he'll survive. The Antonovs will take him in.

Anna: He didn't lose his ration card?

Andrei: No.

Anna: You can stay here. Of course you can. But it's too far for you to walk all the way to the hospital from here. Surely they'd give you a bed there?

Andrei: All the way I was thinking what I would do if you weren't here

Anna: Where else should I be?

Andrei: I know. But anything can happen these days. I suppose I could find a cot somewhere at the hospital, but it's so full. We've got patients on the floor, in the corridors, jammed up next to dead bodies

Anna: You can stay here. We'll work everything else out later. Come in. My father and kola are sleeping, but Marina's awake. You wouldn't believe how warm it is now we've got the burzhiuka.

[She takes him in, moves the drawing from the arm of the chair and ANDREI sits, closing his eyes]

(to marina) He's staying here. He hasn't anywhere else. His rooms been burnt out

[MARINA nods softly]

Marina: (reading) 'Tis time; descend; be stone no more; approach;
Strike all that look upon with marvel. Come:
I'll fill your grave up: Stir; nay, come away;
Bequeath your death to numbness...'

Andrei: Feel in my pocket

Anna: Your coat pocket?

Andrei: Yes

[she reaches in and pulls out a jar]

Anna: What is it?

Andrei: It's for you. It's honeycomb. A patient's mother gave it to me

Anna: I wonder where she got it from

Andrei: I didn't ask

Anna: You have some of it, to keep your energy up

Andrei: I get my meals at the hospital. I'm fine. Anna, I can't believe you've got the burzhiuka. It's like heaven in here. Is it alright if I sleep in this chair?

Anna: Of course.

[she steps over his feet, kneels and leans her head on his knee]

I'll make you tea in a minute

Andrei: Just let's sit. So nice

[he drifts to sleep, ANNA takes a moment, stands, wraps ANDREI, wipes some soot from his brow and blows out the candle]

Scene 24

[The bread line. ANNA is in a long line behind a WOMEN IN A THICK FOX FUR COAT and thick fox fur hat. She turns and grabs ANNA by the arms]

Fox Fur Woman: Help me; I don't feel well

Anna: Sit down, rest for a minute. The queue's not moving.

[The woman reaches into her coat to check that her ration card is still there]

Rest for a minute. I'll keep your place

Fox Fur Woman: I want to live

Scene 25

[The hospital commissary]

Pavel: I've been looking for you. Here. something for you.

Andrei: Thank you

Pavel: Guinea pig. Incredibly enough, Tamara was still keeping some of the lab animals alive. Giving them hay and so on. So there you are. The South Americans regard guinea pig as a great delicacy, I believe.

Andrei: I can't thank you enough

Pavel: Rubbish! If we don't keep you young doctors going, who'll look after us when we're old men? Besides, you know, I have no dependants. These

days that's a blessing. Now, put that away before anyone sees it. They'll all be wanting some.

Scene 26

[The dacha]

Anna: What's that, Andryusha?

Andrei: Meat

Anna: Meat? What meat? Where did you get it?

Andrei: Someone gave it to me.

Anna: But what is it? Dog? Cat?

Andrei: No, better than that. Wait a minute —

Anna: Let me see it! Andrei!

Andrei: No, not yet — Why don't I cook it first?

Anna: (suddenly suspicious) What kind of meat is it?

Andrei: No, Anna, I swear, it's not that. It's nothing bad. It's a guinea pig

Anna: A guinea pig! You're sure, Andrei? Who gave it to you? you hear such things

Andrei: Of course it's a guinea pig. Look at it. fur and all

Anna: Oh yes —

Andrei: But we'll have to skin it.

Anna: You can do that. You're used to dissecting things. I'll work out how to cook it. We haven't lit the burzhuika yet because there's only one bookshelf left

Kolya: Marina's been asleep for a long time, but I didn't wake her up

Anna: Good boy. Guess what, Kolya, we're going to have meat! Andrei brought it. You can help me get the stove ready.

Kolya: Meat

Anna: Yes, and then I'm going to make soup from the bones, like we do. When Daddy and Marina smell soup, they'll soon wake up.

Marina (groggily) Soup? Let me make it. You and Andrei must rest. you both look exhausted. You won't believe it but your father was awake for quite some time earlier. While you were in the bread queue, Anna. He even talked, didn't he, Kolya? Your father was talking to us, wasn't he?

Kolya: (uncertainly) yes.

[a lighting change or some passing of time signifier. ANNA is massaging ANDREI'S legs. There's a knock on the door]

Marina: Someone smells meat

Anna: I'll go

[it's ZINA with her baby. The baby is dead]

Zina: I think he's ill. Do you think it's a cold, or maybe an ear infection?

Anna: Zina...

Zina: He's cold. I wondered if we could come in. You said it was warm by your stove.

Anna: Zina, where's your Fedya? Has he seen the baby?

Zina: He hasn't been home since last week. You know he's on the Defence Committee at work. My Fedya never stops — He's practically a Stakhanovite

Anna: Zina, you know, don't you, that the baby —

Zina: Don't say anything, Anna. It brings bad luck. He's so beautiful, isn't he? And we haven't even got a photograph of him. My mother's never seen him, you know. So I came to ask you, Anna Mikhailovna. You know that drawing you did, the one you showed me, of your little Kolya when he was a baby? I wondered if you would draw my baby, so i can send the picture to my mother.

Anna: Wait here a moment, Zina.

[she goes back in to the apartment to retrieve a pencil and paper]

We'll do the drawing in your apartment. It's quieter there.

[in Zina's apartment, she draws ZINA cradled over baby. This may take a while if you want to sit in the poignant silence, or you can change the lights again]

There you are. I can do a copy later on, if you like, so you've got one to keep and one to send to your mother.

Zina: It's just like him. That's exactly the way he looks at me. And his hands, look. That's just the way he holds the shawl. My mum's going to be so thrilled when she sees this. My Fedya'll frame it. He can do anything like that. I know he isn't — looking his best right now

Anna: No, because he's —

Zina: I know. Don't think I don't know. It's just I don't want to talk about it. And when my Fedya comes home he'll do everything that should be done.

Anna: Of course he will.

Marina (from the apartment) Anna!

[she leaves ZINA looking over her drawing, her baby cradled in her arms, and returns to the apartment]

Kolya: This is funny meat. I've never tasted it before.

Anna: It's a special kind of meat they've brought in over the ice road

Kolya: Can we have it again?

Anna: Tomorrow, you'll have meat soup with your bread. I don't want my last bit, Kolya. You have it.

Scene 27

[ANNA and ANDREI alone]

Anna: We stink. I'm so dirty.

Andrei: I love you more and more

Anna: Don't go to sleep yet. I'm afraid.

Andrei: What are you afraid of?

Anna: My father's going to die soon. Marina says he wakes up, but I don't think he does. Only in her mind. I feel as if we're somewhere else, not here on Earth at all.

Andrei: That's because it's night. But tomorrow I'll see if I can get a spoonful of cod liver oil for Kolya. Masha at the dispensary said they might have some. A few drops a day will make all the difference. And you'll go for the bread ration, and we'll come home and eat. We'll get through another day. We'll still be on earth. As long as you're alive, I'll stay alive.

Anna: You promise?

Andrei: Yes, I promise

Anna: But my father will die?

Andrei: Yes. Yes. I think he will

Scene 28

[The next morning. They have found an onion that must have falling out of the store cupboard and gotten hidden in the bristles of the broom]

Anna: You were right, you knew all the time. We're going to all right, I know it. This is a sign, that's what it is. A sign

Andrei: Yes. It's a sign

[ANNA chops it finely and adds it to Kolya's broth]

Anna: The vitamins will do him so much good. there you are. It's good isn't it? now you'll grow up to be a big boy

[after eating KOLYA dozes]

Marina: I was listening to the radio. There was a nutritional expert on last night. She said there's nourishment in wallpaper paste.

Anna: But we haven't got any

Marina: We have. Kolya's fort. We used wallpaper paste to make the papier maché. If I strip off the painted layer, we could cook the rest of it. There's bound to be some calories in it.

Anna: But what will Kolya say? He got so upset when I said we might have to use it for fuel for the burzhuika

Marina: Yes, but if it's for food, that's different. The paper will float to the top, and the goodness of the paste will remain in the water. We can make it into a kind of soup for him.

Anna: Don't tell him

Marina: No. We'll say we've put the fort away for safety, until the blockade is lifted.

Anna: Yes, let's say that.

Scene 29

[Nighttime. ANNA, KOLYA, and MARINA are huddled together on the mattress, KOLYA between the others]

Marina: Let's talk. it'll pass the time

Anna: What?

Marina: You're awake, aren't you?

Anna: Yes, I'm awake. What time is it?

Marina: Half past eleven

Anna: Only half past eleven.

Marina: You've been asleep

Anna: Have I?

Marina: Yes, you were asleep when I got up

Anna: Marina, you've lit the burzuika!

Marina: I had to make tea for your father

Anna: What did you use?

Marina: The encyclopaedia

Anna: Oh

Marina: I thought it was the one he'd miss least

Anna: I suppose so

Marina: And there are twelve volumes

Anna: So many hours, before it gets light

Marina: Your father's been awake too. He only went to sleep about half an hour ago. We've been talking for a long time

Anna: It's strange, how he only talks when no one but you can hear him

Marina: You think he doesn't talk to me? You think I'm lying?

Anna: No, not that —

Marina: You think I invent it?

Anna: Maybe

Marina: Why should I do that?

Anna: Because you want him to talk to you

Marina: (sharply) There are a lot of things you don't know, Anna

Anna: I know, people have been telling me that all my life, I never had time to finish my education

Marina: (her voice changing) Shall we talk properly, then? Shall we stop all this? I could tell you a story

Anna: All right

Marina: You know the people in my story. You'll have your own version. But let me tell you mine, and then you can tell me yours.

[ANNA sits up, cradling KOLYA close to her, to listen]

You realise that your father and I have known each other for a long time?

Anna: Of course

Marina: I was thirty-two when I first met him. He was a couple of years older, with a wife and a four-year-old daughter. Your father was very interested in Tairov's work — you'll have heard of Tairov. He was in Moscow, directing at the Kamerny theatre, which he'd founded just before the war. Misha had been reading Tairov's book, notes of a director. It wasn't long after he'd staged *Phèdre*. I remember that the first time we met, we argued about that production. We'd both been to Moscow to see it. Your father was still hoping to write for the stage then.

Anna: But he never did

Marina: No. So, we argued. He told me straight away that he was married, and about you. He used to tell me how clever you were, because you could already read when you were only four. But from what I could see he wasn't at home very much. Those were such different times, and although it's only twenty years ago it's passed away so completely you can't guess what it was like unless you remember it.

Anna: There's nothing so very different about men who get married and have babies and then find that they don't want to be at home very much

Marina: It was a new world, that's what we believed. Everything had changed so fast, and it was still changing. The theatre was right in the heart of it. It was 1922. For the first time ever we had a mass audience, we had soldiers and factory workers coming in with free tickets they'd been given. Theatre was going to be for everyone. They came to everything, they listened to everything, they talked about everything. They ate and drank as if they were in their own homes and they didn't dress up. They just poured in, in their boots and overcoats. They wanted theatre, because they'd never had it before. Everybody wanted it. Everybody wanted us. Ensembles sprang up, actors flung ideas at the audience, there were experiments going on everywhere. Some of them worked and some of them didn't. The whole of theatre turned into a giant stage where you were always in danger of being pushed back into the wings if artistic politics left you behind. The spotlight might suddenly shine on you, or it would go off and you'd be alone. And yet, there was so much freedom. We didn't live in a fog, stumbling with one arm in front of our faces to ward off what was coming next. We knew the future was rushing towards us and we raced to embrace it. I sleep a lot now, but in those years I hardly went to bed. I'd go to sleep at two in the morning, and at seven I'd snap out of bed wide awake and run to rehearsals. And everyone else would be up too. Imagine actors getting up before ten. And yet they didn't look worn out and grey. Everyone looked beautiful, even those who were ugly. You've no idea, Anna, because you've grown up with what came after. The time of hope didn't last long. Everything solidified so quickly, after only a few years. They closed down one of

Bulgakov's plays, and banned *The Crimson Island*. It wasn't allowed a single performance. By that time people were measuring what they said, and thinking about where to align themselves. There was such fear. It's one thing for a poet to speak out. He can always write poems. But an actor or director has got to have a theatre. He has got to be part of something, or else he's nothing. People saw that they'd be out on the wilderness if they made the wrong choices.

Anna: I thought you were going to talk about what happened between you and my father.

Marina: Yes. But this isn't background. It's all part of it.

[KOLYA, as if having a nightmare, squirms a little]

Anna: There, sleep now, sleep

Marina: In the second year, I became pregnant. By that time I knew your mother. We'd been introduced, we liked one another. I use to come to the house. We were becoming real friends, kitchen friends

Anna: And what?

Marina: I had an abortion, as everyone did. It was perfectly normal. I didn't tell your father until afterwards

[there is silence for a while]

Anna: What did he say?

Marina: He was angry.

Anna: So, he wanted another house, another baby not to go home to. was that it?

Marina: No. He said it was our baby, part of our life. He said I should have told him before I had the abortion

Anna: But he wouldn't have done anything.

Marina: Of course not. He loved your mother. I knew that by then. But he was still angry at me.

Anna: It's true, he can stay angry for a long time.

Marina: He asked me if the foetus was male or female

Anna: What did you say?

Marina: I said I didn't know

Anna: Did you?

Marina: It was male. I was four months pregnant

Anna: You left it late

Marina: Through stupidity. Thinking I might tell him, and then pulling back from it, and then thinking again I might tell him

Anna: But you didn't

Marina: No. It's finished. It's a long time ago. But that was the end of things between us. After that we were friends

Anna: That wasn't what you wanted.

Marina: No. But I could tell that it was an effort for him to touch me. So I preferred not to be touched

Anna: When my mother died, did you ever think —

Marina: No. I never thought of it. I knew it would not happen. So there you are. That's my story.

[silence]

Anna: How many volumes did you burn, Marina?

Marina: Two. It's good paper, and the boards are almost as thick as wood.

Anna: We'll burn two more in the morning.

Marina: Of course, that wasn't the truth

Anna: What?

Marina: Do you want the real story?

Anna: Yes

Marina:

We recognised each other right from the first moment. We hadn't any choice, that's what I thought. He's dying now, and perhaps I'll die too. Nobody will ever know what happened. There was no child, and now there's not even any story left. everything will be rubbed out. That's what they do to enemies of the people, isn't it, Anna? They are erased from the records. So I'll tell you, even if you don't want to hear. Even if you think I'm your enemy. I was already well known. I was used to things being as I wanted them to be. The roles I wanted, the tables I wanted at restaurants, summers in the Crimea. I was used to respect. Nothing had ever caught me and held me and made me do things I didn't want to do, and go places I didn't want to go. But your father did all that. He captured me like a fish and then he tried to throw me back in the water, but it was too late. I'd spent too much time up in the air and I was damaged. I wasn't as beautiful any more, either to him or to myself. I couldn't repair myself. I couldn't even swim away. I sank to the bottom of the water and I hid there, in the mud. I believed that the mud was where I belonged. I wanted the child, but I knew that your father wouldn't be prepared to become its father. He would stay with Vera, and with you. My child would depend on me for everything. Once or twice I imagined telling him, in the heart of the night, after hours of sex, when you seem to be out of your body. I know, he's your father. I shouldn't be telling you this. I imagined us talking soul to soul. Of course, it never happened. I didn't have the courage. The doctor I went to was not a pleasant individual. He knew who I was. He kept telling me how much he loved the theatre, and which roles I should take in the future. Plenty of excellent, fatherly advice, but his eyes weren't fatherly. We were in his consulting rooms. He owned me, for a while. He was full of understanding for what he called my 'predicament'. What he wanted was for us to conspire for a while, and maybe for me to weep tears on his shoulder. But I wouldn't. I had to open my legs for him but I would not open my mouth. He actually said to me that he would be interested to come to my next performance, to find out if my experience had affected my art. Your father, of course, knew nothing about any of this. When I told him that I'd had the abortion, later on, he wrote a series of poems. They were very good poems. Vera read them. There was never any quarrel, nothing was said. She simply withdrew. She could be in the same room, and it would seem as if she wasn't there. You know how she always read all the drafts of your father's work? At that time she used to write her thoughts on small sheets of yellow paper — often very good, clear, technical comments — and then she'd clip the yellow sheets to his manuscripts. She never wrote on the manuscripts themselves. Your father showed me what she'd attached to the manuscript of the poems he wrote after we separated. It was just a short note. "in my opinion these poems, excellent as they are, strike a false note." That was all she ever said. I spent a long time down in the mud, thinking about it all. I thought a lot about your mother, too. I wanted her friendship even more now that I'd

done this to her, but I couldn't get it. She didn't try to stop me seeing him, nothing like that. She didn't need to. I had to understand that I'd been mistaken from the beginning. We hadn't recognised each other. I'd recognised him, but he'd thought I was someone else. And I saw what a relief it was to him, when he believed I wasn't in love with him any more. He really loved me, then. He was so grateful to me for having got over him that he built me up into something remarkable. I remember the tone of the doctor's voice exactly. "It was a boy", he said. He wanted me to know that. Not, not so fatherly at all. And all those letters your father sent me. The most wonderful letters, years and years of them. I've kept them all. Is Kolya still asleep?

Anna: Fast asleep

Marina: That's it. Now it's time for you to tell me your story

Anna: There isn't one to tell

Marina: Of course there is.

Anna: No. Because it's still happening. It hasn't turned into a story yet.

Marina: How like your mother you are

Anna: I hope I am

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Scene 30

[MARINA is sitting at MIKHAIL'S bedside]

Mikhail: Vera...cold...

Anna: What did he say?

Marina: He's cold

Anna: But I can't light the burzhuika again. There's only enough to heat the room up a bit before we sleep

Marina: I know

Anna: He doesn't recognise me any more

Marina: He doesn't recognise me, either

Anna: But he spoke to you. He took your hand, I saw him

Marina: He thought I was someone else. You know that your father's going, don't you?

Anna: Yes

Marina: He isn't suffering. That's what matters. He can't go on like this

Anna: No. He can't and he won't

[ANDREI is showing KOLYA chess moves, a piece of paper for the board and tiny paper pieces]

Kolya: The horses are hungry. Give them something to eat

Andrei: Of course. Here's their hay, and here are their oats. (making Kolya stretch his fingers) You hold out the oats, Kolya, with your hand flat. Like this, then they can't nip at your fingers by mistake. perfect.

Kolya: They're gobbling it all up! They're trying to eat my fingers!

Andrei: Hold out your hand and give them this apple, and then they'll be ready to fight again. (to Marina) It's time to turn him again

Marina: No. I don't think he wants us to touch him any more

Andrei: His skin's like paper. It's got to be looked after.

Marina: I think he's going, Andrei. Have a look.

[MIKHAIL lets out a gravelly snore, deep in his throat]

Andrei: You're right. There's no need to turn him

Kolya: Why's he making that funny noise?

Andrei: He's very ill

Kolya: I know *that*

Andrei: He's dying

Kolya: You didn't have to tell me. I knew without you even telling me. (to the chess pieces) Would you like another apple? You're still hungry, aren't you? Come on, boy, co-ome on. Don't be frightened.

[KOLYA picks up the piece of paper, holds it close to his lips, and disappears under the blanket. we hear him whispering to his little horse]

Scene 31

[In the snow. ANNA is returning from the bread queue]

Fedya: I took our little one to the cemetery today. Zina wanted to come, but she wasn't equal to it.

Anna: I'm so sorry

Fedya: There's an apartment building down by the Baltic station that's been shelled. Overlooking the canal. A mate of mine told me about it when I was on my way back from the cemetery. It was on fire, but they managed to put the worst of it out before the whole building went up. There's a reception floor made of wooden blocks. Most of it's still alright.

Anna: Was there much left?

Fedya: Could be as much as a sledge load, if you get a move on. The building's safe but watch out of yourself. There's been a couple of fights over there already. One guy had a knife.

Anna: Thanks.

Fedya: Zina's very taken with that likeness you did of our Vanka. She keeps it by her all the time. I've got to get back to the works now, but I'll be leaving her with the wood. And she's got her ration card safe. She wanted to keep the baby at home with her, so I had to tell her it wasn't the proper thing. She's not herself. But I don't know when I'll be able to get home again. The way we're fixed at the works, there's no time for that. You get a few hours kip if you're lucky, then back on shift.

Anna: Don't worry. I'll keep an eye on her. You know Zina's always welcome to come in to us, if she wants

Fedya: No. No, best she doesn't. She'll be alright on her own.

Anna: If you say so. My father's dying, so maybe you're right.

Fedya: Zina told me... Those fascist bastards don't know what's coming to them, excuse my language. They don't know what they've got themselves into.

Anna: *We'll find them space in Russian earth*

Fedya: You're right there

Anna: It wasn't me who said it. It was Pushkin

Fedya: Well, he knew what he was talking about. There's space all right. We'll bury them... You don't go down as far as the station, it's on this side of the canal — the Obvodny. You can't miss it.

Anna: Thank you

Fedya: Zina told me what you did for our little one about the sugar

Anna: It wasn't much

Fedya: Nothing could've helped him. They made sure of that. They might as well have put their hands around his throat and squeezed. Our Vanka didn't stand a chance.

Scene 32

[The apartment]

Anna: It'll take me at least an hour to get there. Maybe more. I'll have to stop and rest. And then I've got to dig the blocks out...

Marina: Is it worth it? You'll wear yourself out, and there might not be any wood left by the time you get there.

Anna: We've got to get fuel. I'll take some of my ration with me.

Marina: Here, have this half slice before you go.

Anna: I can't take your bread, Marina.

Marina: Go on, take it, Anna. Think of all the calories you're burning, getting our bread and now our wood. You're keeping us alive. And what if you were to collapse out there, what would become of us all?

Scene 33

[The burned out apartment building. Chaos as a few people are digging up wooden fixtures, stealing rings and clothing from the dead. A WOMAN WITH A SAW that looks like it's come from a children's carpentry set is hacking at a column of wood more than two metres long]

Saw Woman: Fuck off out of here! this is mine!

[A MAN WITH A CANDLE comes out of the darkness]

Candle Man: You don't want to hang about here. You want to get off home.

[They both catch the sound of a ticking clock]

 Keeps on going, doesn't it, even though there's no-one to wind it up.
 Stupid, just like us

[ANNA scrabbles around on the floor looking for wood, there is none. She gets closer to the wall and there's a piece stuck fast, she gets her chisel and attempts to lever it out. The chisel slips and cuts her hand. She tries again on the wood and it pulls free. There are more people by another wall. She finds a meter of space and finds more blocks. A WOMAN WITH A KNIFE next to her is attempting to lever a few out with it]

Knife Woman: Comrade. You've got tools, haven't you? Give me a lend of them, just for a minute. I swear I'll give them back. I swear to god I'll give it back. Let me just get up a few blocks. Igor! Over here quick! She's taking my wood!

[KNIFE WOMAN lunges at ANNA but her legs are asleep and she loses her balance. ANNA escapes with her half full sack of wood tied to the sledge. At a crossroads, A MAN WITH A LAMP and a fur cap crosses her path]

Lamp Man: Hello. What have we got here? What's that in the sack?

Anna: My brother. I'm taking him to the cemetery

Lamp Man: Poor kid. Little'n, was he?

Anna: He was five

Lamp man: He looks like a little'n. And that's all you got in there, is it?

Anna: Of course it is

Lamp Man: 'cause the reason I ask, is I wouldn't like to think you're telling me the tale. Nice looking kid, was he?

Anna: Yes

Lamp Man: Let's see, then

Anna: No! You can't do that to him. I told you. He's dead. Leave him alone. No! I won't let you touch him

Lamp Man: I won't do your brother any harm. Just having a little look, that's all.

[he puts a hand on her arm. she recoils]

Don't worry, darling. I'm not interested in you. A little crow like you's not worth a bite for a man like me. No, it's your brother who's got me all curious

[expertly, he unties the knots and opens the sack]

There you are. I knew you were telling me the tale. Funny sort of dead brother this is.

[he upends the sack into the snow]

That all you got? pathetic, I call it. Thought you might have something worth having tucked down the bottom of the sack, but no, you're a real little crow all right. All the same, wood's worth something. Pick it up and put it back in the sack.

[she does so clumsily]

Not trying to shove a bit of that wood up your jumper, are you?

Anna: No, no —

Lamp Man: (calmly, almost pleasantly) 'cause if you did, I'd have your clothes off you as well

[he ties the sack, ties it the sledge, and drags the sledge away. Anna stands and walks towards home]

Evgenia: Anna? Anna, it's you, isn't it? It's me. Evgenia. Thought it was you. I've been following you, didn't you see me? You've been weaving about all over the place.

Anna: Have I?

Evgenia: Yeah. let's have a look at you. Here, take my arm. Come on. It's not far.

Anna: But you're heading the wrong way, Evgenia. I'm going home

Evgenia: You'll never make it like that. We've got to get you warmed up or someone'll find you flopped in a snowdrift tomorrow.

Anna: I'm not cold, Evgenia, I'm warm.

Evgenia: Yeah, you feel warm, but you're freezing. That's what people feel like just before they snuff it. Come on.

[they turn a corner]

Here we are. Up these steps. We're on the third floor.

[They reach the apartment door]

This is us. sit down here. How long've you been wandering about like that for? Your feet are like blocks of ice. Let's have a look. No, you're not too bad, you're not frostbitten, but don't go near the stove yet. You shouldn't be out after dark. I told you before, it's dangerous. You don't know who's out there.

Anna: I do know.

Evgenia: What happened?

Anna: A man took my sledge and the wood I'd found.

Evgenia: yeah, I thought something must have happened. You didn't look like yourself. Did he beat you up?

Anna: No

Evgenia: You were lucky then. We may have eaten all the real rats, but we've still got the human ones around. He could easily have knocked you over the head. That's all it takes. One shove and you're in the snow and you don't get up.

Anna: When I saw you, I thought it was him again.

Evgenia: I thought you dint look too pleased to see me.

Anna: You're still working?

Evgenia: Yeah, still working. Though now that the factory's down to 20% production, I do most of my work here

Anna: You bring them back here?

Evgenia: Well, their balls would drop off if we did it in the street. Besides, they like their home comforts, samovar lit, stove burning and all that. They're a bit more free with their money then. Funny, isn't it, how the real dirty bastards are always the ones who are soft about home and their mothers? Not that they give a flying fuck about anyone else's. I look at some of them and I'm thinking *your soul's been squeezed out. There's nothing left in it any more*. But I don't ask them anything. I don't want to know. I tell them mum's here when I bring them back, so that keeps them in order for a bit.

Anna: Your mum's here —?

Evgenia: (Gesturing to the bed, piled up with coats, on which Anna is sitting) There. Under those coats, up against the wall. She always creeps up close to that wall in her sleep. She sleeps most of the time now.

Anna: Is she ill?

Evgenia: No. She just wants to sleep. Things have been hard for her, you see?

Anna: Your little boy?

Evgenia: Yes. He had enough to eat, it wasn't that. It was his cough. It went down on his chest. I paid the doctor to come here, but he didn't have anything to give him. Mum sat up holding him for three nights.

Anna: What was his name?

Evgenia: Gorya. He had a proper burial, I made sure of that. I didn't dump him at the cemetery gates. Mum couldn't come because of her legs, so it was just him and me. I said a bottle of vodka for them to dig the grave, and I stood over them to make sure they did it right. he was all wrapped up warm. I took him there on the sledge, but it was a long time to wait while they dig because the frost'd gone so deep into the ground. But I wasn't going to go until I'd seen him safely buried. I picked him up and held him. It was just him and me then.

Anna: When all this is over, you'll set a gravestone for him

Evgenia: Yeah. You know, Anna, the worst bit is, I keep thinking that when all this is over it'll go back to how it was. The dead aren't really dead for ever, only for the duration, if you get what I mean. Like when a kid's playing hide and seek and they hide for ages, dead still, until you shout "It's all right, you can come out now." And they do come out. I think like that even though I saw him buried. And then I start going crazy thinking maybe it wasn't him. Maybe I only thought it was me standing there holding him. But I don't feel it properly. I think "Gorya's dead", and that seems normal but not true at the same time, if you see what I mean. And then I think, "what if I start feeling it?" You know, when things are different. When all this is over.

Anna: We can't think about it

Evgenia: You've warmed up a bit, anyway

Anna: Yes. I must go soon. They'll be frightened about me at home.

Evgenia: It's nice, though, just sitting here talking. I never have time. You sit here for a bit, while I make the tea.

[EVGENIA returns with tea as ANNA allows the warmth of the room to set her drifting off]

Here. don't drop it. One of my clients gave me half a cup of sugar. Well, if someone gets so drunk he can't see, he's going to lose stuff, isn't he? I've still got mum to look after.

Anna: It's these times. There I was earlier on, crawling round on the floor of a burned out apartment building, digging up half burnt blocks of wood. This woman wanted to borrow my chisel, and I didn't let her. But it's not just that. I'd have stuck the chisel into her if she'd tried to grab it. You find yourself doing things you'd never have thought you could do.

Evgenia: That's it. You know you're changing, but you still think you can find the way back to what you used to be. Then one day you know you can't. You've gone through a drunk's pockets and stolen his stuff, and then tipped him out of the door into the snow. And not cared if he froze to death. Well. So how are things with you?

Anna: My father hasn't got long now. With the rest of us it's only hunger, same as everyone.

Evgenia: I can let you have some wood

Anna: But you need it yourself

Evgenia: I can get more. As long as I've got my clients, we're better off than you are. And everyone knows me. Besides, they don't want to come here and get frostbite on their wedding tackle, so I usually get to hear of it if there's a wooden house being torn down.

Anna: Wedding tackle! Is that what they call it? They don't sound the marrying kind.

Evgenia: It's the same as the way they all have a thing about their mums; they like talking nice when they get a chance. Shut up about it now, Anna, mum's awake.

Mum: Who's this then, Genia?

Evgenia: This is Anna, a friend of mine

Mum: I had such a sleep...

Evgenia: I know you did, mum. You've been asleep for hours.

Mum: I kept hoping I'd dream, but I didn't dream. Is it morning yet?

Evgenia: It's evening, mum. It's not late.

Mum: When are you going to get the oil for my lamp, Genia? my beautiful corner's not right without it.

Evgenia: When I can mum. You now there's no oil in the market now, and we've got to keep what's left for the big lamp. You've got your candle. (to Anna) She's a believer, you can't change that. That last campaign against backwardness we had, they called us in one by one at the factory, and asked if our children were baptised, and if there were any icons in the house. so what could I do? I had to lie. I didn't baptise Gorya, but Mum crept off somewhere and got him done, just like I knew she would.

Anna: I must go now

Evgenia: I'll walk with you as far as the cathedral, then you'll be all right.

[EVGENIA bundles wood into a sack]

Anna: Not as much as that

Evgenia: Kids can't keep themselves warm like we can. Take the rest of this sugar for your Kolya.

Anna: Evgenia, what about your mother? she'll want that.

Evgenia: Look at her. You know what she's saying?

Anna: Evgenia, don't, she'll hear you

Evgenia. She won't. She's deaf. She's giving them her instructions about Gorya. Mind he keeps his jacket buttoned up, and he doesn't like parsnips, so please, merciful virgin, give him carrots instead. Then at bedtime he has to have his cod liver oil and he sometimes tries to spit it out, so, my dear one, make sure you watch him till he swallows it. It's as much as I can stand to listen to her sometimes. They're a lot more real to her than I am. It's them she wants to be with. I put good food in front of her and she just stares at it as if she doesn't know what it is. Then she goes back to bed, and sleeps, like you saw. Because she doesn't want to live any more. She wants to be with them. but I don't, and I don't know if that's right or wrong. I do want to live. I don't care how bad it is, I still want to live.

Anna: I know.

Evgenia: I knew as soon as I met you that you were like that too. You can tell straight away. Some people don't have it in them, and they just fade away. I could have looked at you and Katya, out there, and known straight away who that wall was going to fall on. It's not something we want, it's the way we are. We just have to keep on. Often I think it would be easier to be like mum now. Only I can't be. So everything I do now, I'm going to have to live with for the rest of my life

Anna: I don't see how you can be sure

Evgenia: Mum says these are the latter days

Anna: What does she mean?

Evgenia: She's got a little book of prophecies. It says that two great serpents shall do battle until they devour the world with fire and thunder

Anna: I can't think who those two serpents could be

Evgenia: Me neither, I keep telling her it's a load of cobblers. Still, it wouldn't be a bad bargain if we got rid of two serpents for the price of one, would it?

Anna: But they've already devoured the world

Evgenia: Yeah, there is that. but still... "*in the latter days, in the time of blood*". That's what her book says.

[they go to the door]

She'll be there for hours

Anna: It's hard for you

Evgenia: I wish she'd just talk to me

Anna: A doctor I know says it's hunger that's making everyone so strange. It's nothing personal

Evgenia: She's not hungry. I make sure of that. But what's the point of me doing all this if she won't eat?

Anna: Evgenia —

Evgenia: It's all right. I'm just being stupid

Anna: It's all right, it'll be over soon, it'll get better, have a good cry...

Evgenia: We'd better get going. I'll see you on your way.

Anna: I'll be fine

Evgenia: I know. As long as you don't —

Anna: — waste —

Evgenia: — bloody —

Anna: Was it bloody she said, or fucking?

Evgenia: bloody

Both: *sausage.*

Scene 34

[Pavlov's office]

Colleague: We're coming up to forty thousand

Pavlov: Are you sure? Have those figures been checked and confirmed? I need an accurate picture

Colleague: Here are the latest figures. Deaths reported from dystrophy and other starvation related disease...

Pavlov: Kindly don't waste my time giving me that information again. I am familiar with the pathology. I want precise figures for the amount of flour in storage at the west Ladoga warehouses. It is essential that all possible efforts are made to increase the volume of supplies brought over the ice road. Thirty thousand deaths you say? forty? forty five?

[he hastily scribbles some figures and graph on to a piece of paper, pauses in desperation and takes a match to a corner of the paper, watching the paper burn]

The ice road must remain open.

Scene 35

[The Dacha]

Anna: Marina? Marina?

Marina: I'm here

[She is in MIKHAIL'S room. He had passed some time ago]

Anna: But Marina, your hands — you'll get frostbite. You mustn't stay in here

Marina: It's all right. I've only just taken off my gloves. I wanted to touch him.

Anna: We can't stay in here. You could freeze to death.

Marina: It's all right. You go in the other room. It's just that I wanted to be with him for a while.

[ANNA has approached, glancing at the thick volumes of Shakespeare on the shelf]

But it was his Pushkin he wanted

Anna: Did he tell you that?

Marina: no. But I knew. Do you remember what happens after the duel?

Onegin rushes to the youth,
Peers at him, calls his name — useless
He's gone.

And how Zaretsky puts Lensky into the sleigh, cold and dead? remember that? And so it's all happening again, exactly as Pushkin said. It happened to Pushkin, and it's happening to your father. The snow, the sledges, and the dead man. Did you ever hear your father read that passage?

Anna: I don't remember it. But he was always reading Pushkin

Marina: Of course. I remember him reading it aloud one evening. No, he wasn't reading, he was reciting it. He had the book in front of him, but he knew it by heart. His eyes were closed. he didn't need the book, but he liked the feeling of it in his hands

Anna: Yes, I remember. He used to say his memory was going, and that's why he always had the book.

Marina: He didn't recite like an actor, so that you became aware of him and his personality. He had too much respect for the life of the poem.

Anna: Marina, you must come out of here

Marina: Could you draw him for me now, Anna?

Anna: What? As he is?

Marina: Yes.

Anna: I can't

Marina: He'll be forgotten. All of it will be forgotten and they'll say it never happened.

Anna: You've got to stay alive yourself, if you don't want things to be forgotten

Marina: Get your paper, Anna, please. Just a quick sketch. We've got to have a record

Anna: My paper's finished

Marina: You could draw in one of his books. The Shakespeare. That's got wide margins. NA the end papers are good. Look, I've even got a pencil. Draw him, please. Otherwise it will all disappear.

Anna: You promise you'll come out of here and sit by the stove when I've done it?

Marina: I promise

[ANNA draws, stiffly, with an anger, but also with attention]

That's him. You're right, do it like that.

[ANNA finishes]

Anna: You promised you'd come away now.

Marina: Yes, I will. You don't understand how important this is, Anna. I can see that you don't like it. But that's because you don't understand, not because I'm wrong. Your father was a great man.

Maybe he was born to bring a blessing
Or even great things to this world
His silenced lyre might have sent music echoing
Through times to come like thunder. For this poet
Maybe, on the ladder of the ages
A high rung waited. maybe this martyr's spirit
Carried away with it a holy secret...

Surely you remember, Anna, how your father used recite that passage?

Anna: yes, yes, I think so. Yes, I remember.

[MARINA struggles to reach the stove, she is so cold]

Here. Sit down. Stay there, warm yourself

Marina: What a beautiful colour. It's valuable, you know. Hand-Made. You can't get rugs like it now. Really beautiful.

Anna: It's worn out.

Marina: But I'm glad you use it. You should use beautiful things, not put them away.

Anna: Tea, Marina. That'll make you feel better

Marina: Look in my boots

Anna: In your boots? Your boots are on your feet, Marina. Your feet are in them.

Marina: not these. My other ones.

Kolya: She means her felt boots. They're in the kitchen

Marina: Yes, In the kitchen. Look inside them, Anna.

[ANNA goes to the kitchen and retrieves a dusty boot box. they're heavier than they should be]

Marina: Bring it here. We'll have tea with jam. But this is the last of it, Anna, it's all we've got. I hid them away. But now it's time to eat it, because it won't get any worse than this.

Kolya: What is it, Anna?

Anna: Jam

Kolya: Jam! Jam, jam, jam! Jam, Marina, Jam!

Anna: Look, raspberry jam!

Andrei: And cloudberry...cloudberry — it's my favourite

Anna: Look at it. see how clear it is

Andrei: Packed with vitamins. Anti-scorbutic — and so much nicer to take than boiled pine needles

Anna: Careful, be careful with those jars. Wait, I'll get saucers and spoons.

[she does so]

We'll give kola his first. Here, open your mouth. Don't swallow it all at once. taste it

Kolya: More.

Anna: In a minute

Kolya: More

[She spoons in more]

Anna: Now wait. It's not good to have too much at once

Andrei: You're a real Stakhanovite, Anna, making all this tea out of nothing

Anna: Yes, I should send a sample to our great leader. *Life has become better. Life is more cheerful.* And here's proof of it. Here, Kolya, your tea. And which jam do you want this time, raspberry or cloudberry?

Kolya: Raspberry. But, Anna, I don't really remember what raspberries taste like. They don't look like I thought.

Anna: Here you are. Open your mouth for a spoonful and then I'll put some on your saucer.

Andrei: Not too much. He's not used to it. Take it slowly

Anna: There now, good boy, you've had two spoonfuls. Slow down a bit. smell it first. Isn't it wonderful?

Kolya: I'm going to eat all around the edges, then I'll eat the middle, then I'll lick the saucer until you can't see anything.

Andrei: Which will you have?

Anna: Cloudberry

Andrei: Me too. Cloudberry remind me of home. And blackberries, too. When blackberries are ripe in hot sun, they already smell like jam

Anna: But you don't have hot sun in Siberia

Andrei: Of course we have. No one has a summer like ours. The sun comes down to the earth, to where we are — It's not like your high up Petersburg sun. And it really burns. We roll around in it, just as we roll in the snow at wintertime. You don't know anything about it, Anna, until you've been there, but I'll show you. just wait. We'll take bread and goats cheese, and a berry pail. Even in winter you can find berries under the snow, if you know where to look. the snow lies deep on them. There's an ice crust, and when you break through it, there's a fine soft snow, like powder. you have to dog down but lightly, with your fingers, so that you don't crush the berries. When the snow's cleared away, the bushes spring up, and the berries are there, coated in ice. The ice preserves them. You can walk all day out there, and feel better than you did when you set out.

Anna: Yes, goats cheese...Do you think we can have another spoonful, Marina, or should we save it?

[MARINA is turning the saucer in her hands, not eating]

Marina, aren't you going to eat yours? you must eat.

Marina: Not now. I'll drink my tea. But you eat. take another spoonful. Kolya, have a little bit of mine, and see if you remember what cloudbberries taste like. You know what this reminds me of?

Kolya: What?

Marina: Easter

Anna: Easter! Why?

Marina: You're too young, all of you, to remember. We'd fast for six weeks, even in the theatre we'd fast, when I was twenty or twenty one. And then suddenly you'd know that things were changing. It was exactly the feeling you'd get when the wind changes direction, and begins to flow from the south west. And then Holy Week came. Holy Thursday was the day I loved most, when we'd boil onion skins and dip our eggs in the water to colour them. there was such an atmosphere. It grew day by day, mounting up until you knew things couldn't possibly go on like this. Down by the river you could already hear water running strongly, under the ice. And the surface of the ice had that grainy look it doesn't have at any other time, except just before it melts. We'd go to confession, all of us, even those who weren't really believers. Even if you didn't really believe, you'd feel sure something had happened. It was like winter lifting from your soul. You would notice everything: little children running about with red cheeks, fresh as bread, and the way ice stayed thick and dirty in the lee of walls, where the sun didn't come. I had a pair of black suede boots with little heels, and I remember picking my way to the theatre and watching the little square tips of the boots and thinking how perfect they were, and how much I liked the noise of my heels tapping on the pavement. Suddenly we were all eager to help one another, even those of us who were rivals for parts. Of course it didn't last. And when Sunday came everyone would greet you, and you'd greet everyone: *Christ is risen!* And they'd answer: *He is risen indeed!* In our house, when I was growing up, they always served cloudberry jam with the pashka on easter day.

Anna: Marina, eat it, please.

Marina: I'll eat it later. I'm so tired. I've got to sleep now

Anna: Just a little. Here, smell it

Marina: Don't, Anna. I want to lie down. I'm really not hungry

[they help her to lie down and cover her with the blanket]

Anna: Now, Kolya, let's get you settled on the sofa...

Kolya: *And then the bad horse comes up and tries to swallow all the people, but they don't let him, they run a way and their friends help them...*

Andrei: It's a bad sign

Anna: What? But he's looking so much better, more energy —

Andrei: Not Kolya. Marina. Not that she didn't eat, but that she's not hungry. It's a recognised stage in the physiology of starvation. We mustn't let her sleep too long. We must rouse her in not more than an hour's time, and feed her. And we must keep checking her temperature.

Anna: She's exhausted that's all. I don't know how long she was sitting in that room.

Andrei: No. We shouldn't have let her go on talking like that. She's too weak.

Anna: She wanted to

Andrei: Yes. People get like that. The past is clearer to them than the present. They have to speak about it. And then they stop talking, and you know they aren't remembering any more. They've gone back there.

Kolya: *...and the horse stamps his feet so hard that all the people are frightened and they hide in their houses, right back here where the horse can't get at them...*

Andrei: Anna. Would you do that?

Anna: Do what?

Andrei: If I were dead, and there was nothing you could do for me any more, would you still go and sit with me?

Anna: We're not like them, Andrei

Andrei: I know we're not

Anna: We've had different lives. And they were born in such different times. They try to belong to the present, but they can't.

Andrei: They loved one another

Anna: She loved him. I'm not so sure about my father. Perhaps he loved the fact that she loved him

Andrei: But she kept on

Anna: Yes. And she won't stop. She'll go on until she dies too

Andrei: Why do you say that?

Anna: It's true

Andrei: You sound so cold, Anna

Anna: I'm not cold. It's only that I don't believe on sacrificing yourself, when the sacrifice doesn't benefit anyone.

Andrei: It's what she wants

Anna: I can see that

Andrei: So you wouldn't sit beside me?

Anna: Andrei, You're asking me something that doesn't make any sense. I'm not Marina. I've got Kolya to think of

Andrei: I know you have. It's not that i don't understand that, it's just —

Anna: I know. You wish I hadn't got him. You want us to start together from nothing, together, with nothing to think about but each other. I don't blame you. Elisaveta Antonovna, at the nursery, always used to get angry about the way I was with Kolya. *"really Anna Mikhailovna, anyone would think that child was your own son. Don't you realise what a bad impression you're making?"* She didn't think any upstanding soviet citizen would look twice at me. My class origins for a start, and then a child in tow... Well, maybe she was right.

Andrei: How can you say that? You know that isn't what I mean. I'm talking about you. not other people

Anna: Yes

[KOLYA murmurs]

Kolya, what are you talking about?

Kolya: I'm talking to my little horse. I'm telling him to be brave, because the big horse has hurt his head. He kicked him.

Anna: That wasn't nice

Kolya: No. You shouldn't kick people. Anna, is Marina dead?

Anna: No, of course not. What made you think that?

Kolya: Only she looks dead

Anna: She's sleeping. She's very tired

Kolya: Like Daddy

Anna: He's dead, Kolya

Kolya: I know. But he was tired too

Anna: You remember, you said goodbye to him

Kolya: Of course I remember. I'm not a baby. Anna, do a lot of people always die?

Anna: No, not like this. I told you. It's because of the war. usually people don't die until they get old

Kolya: Oh, I forgot you told me that.

Andrei: I'll play a game of chess with you, Kolya, And then I've got to go.

Kolya: To the hospital?

Andrei: Yes, to the hospital

Kolya: Andrei?

Andrei: What?

Kolya: Are we — you know — like Daddy and Marina?

Andrei: You mean, are we going to die?

[KOLYA presses his lips together and nods]

No. We're not going to die. Not you and me and Anna. We're going to live

Kolya: It's only that I wasn't sure, so I wanted to know

Andrei: (setting up the chess board) Now you show me, Kolya, where your king goes and where your queen goes.

Anna: You look so nice. You and Kolya... Yes, I would.

Andrei: What would you do?

Anna: Sit with you

Scene 36

[It is May. The sun is shining and sky is a clear blue. Leningrad is still under siege but there is food. people are strolling in the daylight, some on sticks though they are young. ANNA and ANDREI are strolling too]

Anna: Look, Isn't that Zina and Fedya?

Andrei: I don't think I know him

Anna: He's changed...Zina?

Zina: Is that you, Anna?

Anna: Yes, it's me.

Zina: Forgive me. It's only that everyone looks so different

Anna: How are you?

Zina: We're alive. I thought I should lose Fedya as well, but look, here he is. Yes. he's been very ill. He's been in hospital. Anybody else would've died, but not him. You weren't going to let it happen, were you Fedya?

Anna: I like your scarf

Zina: I know, it's pretty isn't it? I love roses. When all this is over, edya's going to buy me some real roses, aren't you, Fedya? And with you, how are things?

Anna: My father died and Marina Petrovna died.

Zina: But your little one?

Anna: He's over there. It's nice for him to have someone to play with

Zina: So he lived

Anna: Yes

Kolya: It's my turn to attack

Grisha: No it isn't

Kolya: It is. You're a liar

Grisha: Give me back my truck then, I'm not going to play with you any more

Mother: Now that's enough — can't you ever play for five minutes without arguing, Grisha? You've been moaning about having no-one to play with long enough. (to Anna) Kids! They never give you five minutes' peace, do they?

Anna: Kolya, if you don't want to play, then don't play. But if you're playing, play nicely

Zina: Are you going to evacuate your Kolya, now that there's a chance?

Anna: No. He stays with us. Andrei's got a little plot of land behind the hospital, and we've planted potatoes and cabbages.

Zina: We must be getting on.

[They turn to go]

Anna: Fyodor Dimitrievich...

[FEDYA turns back to her, his eyes dull with sickness]

We'll find them space in russian earth

Fedya: You're right there. We'll bury them

Anna: Listen, I remember it all now, the whole poem.

Because we made our earth swallow
The juggernaught which crushed nation after nation
And with our blood redeemed the freedom

Honour and peace of Europe...

Zina: Come away now. You'll wear yourself out, standing here. There's nothing more tiring than standing. You know what, Anna, My Fedya was defending the works right up to the day they took him off to hospital. They had to stop him, he wouldn't stop himself. He ought to get a medal.

Anna: Yes, he ought.

[ZINA and FEDYA leave]

Andrei: Kidney disease

Anna: You can't know that

Andrei: No. You're right. I can't be sure

Anna: Kolya! Look, dandelions! Keep a look out for more, Kolya. You're closer to the ground than I am.

Andrei: Full of vitamin C. And I think there may be useful traces of folic acid as well

Anna: If we find any more, I'll prepare a salad. We've got enough oil to coat the leaves

Andrei: Yes, a salad's better than a soup. It preserves the nutrients

Anna: Andrei, will you please stop talking like that?

[He smiles and admires her dress, his favourite]

It's the first time I've worn it this year. Does it look alright? I know I look terrible

Andrei: No. You don't look terrible.

Anna: It's no good saying that, Andrei. I've got a mirror

Andrei: I look just the same

Anna: Do you think we're ever going to be ourselves again? Look at my hair. Every time I comb it, more falls out

Andrei: It'll grow . All you need is protein — and minerals —

Anna: I know that.

[they kiss]

Andrei: You taste different

Anna: I know. My breath doesn't stink any more

Kolya: (finding more dandelions) there are loads here, Anna! Millions!

Andrei: Yes, you taste right. You taste like yourself again

END