

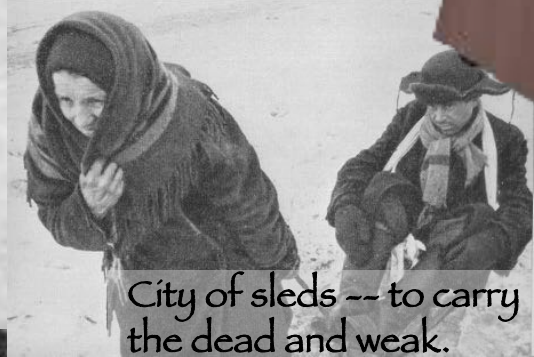
# "900 Days"

Written by  
Jan Wilson



One day's ration  
of food – bread  
made with sawdust.

Leningraders rely on  
their deep love of  
Russian art, poetry  
and music to endure  
Hitler's 900 day  
blockade of their city.



City of sleds -- to carry  
the dead and weak.



Shostakovich

"Our music, art  
and literature will  
save us."





*900 Days* is a feature length screenplay based on actual events set during the siege of Leningrad, Russia in 1941.

This script was a semifinalist in the *Nicholl Fellowship* (top 3%), semifinalist in the *Austin Heart of Film Screenwriting Contest*, and a Top Ten Finalist in the *American Zoetrope* screenwriting contest, judged by Francis Ford Coppola that year. Drama, 111 pages.

#### **Logline:**

Polio-stricken Dmitri in besieged Leningrad in 1941 strives to get a private audience with composer Shostakovich for the woman he loves so she can hear his *Seventh Symphony* before Shostakovich is evacuated from the dying city. But severe hunger & freezing weather make even the simplest tasks impossible.

#### **Summary:**

Dmitri is a polio-stricken young man struggling to find his own way to contribute to the war effort to appease his guilt of not fighting at the front with his comrades. He feels his job in a shoe factory brings him and his family no pride.

The citizens of Leningrad have no food, no heat, no fuel, no clean water - but they do have their art, their literature, their music. This keeps them going. One day Dmitri meets Marina, who works at the Radio House. The Radio House workers have hung up P.A. speakers

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throughout the city and are determined to keep the “radio” on 24 hours a day to keep morale up. They read, play music, recite poetry, anything to let the citizens know that they are still on the air, they are surviving. Silence means defeat. Silence means death.

Composer Shostakovich is composing his Seventh Symphony in Leningrad and in honor of the citizens of Leningrad. Radio House worker Marina is dying to hear the seventh, and smitten Dmitri makes it his goal to make sure she gets to hear it before Shostakovich is evacuated from the dying city. But in the besieged city severe hunger and freezing temperatures make even the simplest tasks impossible.

**Premise:** Music and art can soothe your soul even in the harshest times.

**Themes:** Survival, art & music appreciation, selfless love, resistance of oppression, never giving up hope. Leningraders rely on their deep love of Russian art, poetry and music to endure Hitler's 900 day blockade of their city.

**Production notes:** There are no battle scenes in this film. This is not a war film. The Germans never enter the city, are never seen. This will help keep the budget down. The Siege of Leningrad is not to be confused with the Battle of Stalingrad.

The Shakespeare film *Anonymous* gorgeously recreated Elizabethan-era London using CGI only and was completed for \$30 million. (Yes, 30, not 300.) It was shot in Germany on soundstages using Roland Emmerich's CGI team. It looked amazing. That was in 2011 and CGI technology has gotten even better since then. No need to film in Russia.

## 900 Days Main Characters:

**Dmitri** – Male, mid to late 20s.

Even if he had wanted to, Dmitri couldn't have followed his brother into the Army. A boyhood bout of polio has left him with "polio feet." He is "unsuitable for military service". His brother Aleksei was the pride of the family after signing up and going off to fight the Germans.

Never studious or overly ambitious in school, the only path open to Dmitri was to follow in his father's footsteps to work in the shoe factory. His father claimed he was proud of him, but his father's words of proclaimed pride never matched the sparkle in his eye when Aleksei marched in wearing his uniform. And now that Aleksei has been killed in the war, Dmitri can't help but feel that the wrong son was spared.

With the city now blockaded and full of mostly women, old people and children, every passerby's glance at Dmitri screams in his head "Why aren't you out there fighting for Mother Russia?" More devastating than the hunger that gnaws at his empty stomach is the guilt that eats away at his soul.

But after Dmitri meets Marina and is enchanted by her, he realizes there is something he can do for her, for the country. He finds his own way to contribute to the war effort. And in the process, he regains his faith. But unlike everyone he knows, it is not his faith in Stalin rescuing them that has been renewed. His renewed faith is in his fellow Leningraders.

**Marina** – Female, late 20s.

Marina is a member of the Russian Intelligentsia – the well-educated class of intellectuals who immerse themselves in art, music, poetry, literature and Russian culture. Though not high-born, Marina has a natural regal beauty and elegance to her nature. Before the war Marina and her husband, also a member of the Intelligentsia, regularly met with friends and other members of the Intelligentsia in small informal groups. There they ate, discussed their beliefs and theories, drank, and argued good-naturedly well into the night.

Marina and her husband often brought their young daughter Katya to the gatherings. Katya is not overly interested in her parent's leanings, but she is welcomed by the older artists, poets, writers, and musicians. Marina respects her daughter's disinterest, after all she's just a young child, but nevertheless tries to subtly instill a love of culture in her while she's still impressionable.

After her husband goes off to the front and is killed, Marina does her best to raise Katya and keep their lives as 'normal' as possible. Even after the city is besieged, and food is scarce and the winter sets in, Marina tries to keep the weekly meetings going with her colleagues. It doesn't take Marina long to realize



that her skills are best used at the Radio House. With many employees off at war, dead, or physically incapable of keeping things afloat, Marina's help is welcomed and she truly feels she is making a difference.

Marina still believes that Stalin will save Leningrad and never loses her faith in him. She is filled with hope, and until Comrade Stalin rescues them she feels that it is her duty to keep the dying city alive with the only thing Hitler hasn't taken away from them: Their poetry. Their words. Their art. Their music. She is a true romantic at heart and never gives up.

**Katya** -- Female, 10 years old.

Katya is the ten-year old daughter of Marina. Harsh wartime conditions have caused her to learn more than a little girl should at her age. Marina and Dmitri are both alarmed by Katya's all too casual acceptance of death and suffering all around her. But this kid is smart and adaptable and tough. In fact, she is probably more tough than her sensitive mother. Marina worries that a child's demeanor could become so hardened. But this quality that steals her childhood is also what will allow her to survive until adulthood.

Katya's openness and friendliness at the Radio House is what makes factory-worker Dmitri feel welcome and comfortable in this place of high intellect and culture. She is the bridge that allows Dmitri to connect with Marina.

**Sasha** -- Male, mid to late 20s.

Sasha is Dmitri's boyhood friend, and total opposite of him. Sasha is goofy, carefree and he is endlessly hopeful about any given situation. This provokes more than a few good-natured fights with the more serious Dmitri, from boyhood right on up until today.

Now a soldier, Sasha has learned how to walk that fine line of making sure Dmitri has what he needs for survival but without making him feel like a helpless invalid. It's a balancing act that only a true, lifelong friend could accomplish with such ease and good humor.

Like Marina, Sasha is still devoted to Stalin, believing he will save the city. But Sasha's trust and loyalty to Stalin is not blind, not complete. Dmitri spies a tiny icon strapped to the visor of the truck Sasha drives across the Road of Life. "Your Stalin wouldn't approve of that." Dmitri says. Sasha dares to briefly take one hand off the unsteady wheel, kisses his fingers and transfers the kiss to the icon, touching it gently. "Even Stalin himself cannot take away my God."

Olga – Female, mid 30s.

Olga is Dmitri's sister-in-law. She comes from a very respectable and highly-placed family, and perhaps married a bit beneath her when she married Dmitri's brother Aleksei. This is a fact that she keeps close at hand to hurl fiercely at someone when she becomes frustrated.

She is tightly wound and even in the best of circumstances easily frustrated when she does not get her way. But in the besieged city where rank and social standing mean nothing in the bread lines, Olga finds her world spinning out of control and starts to unravel with it. When outright rage does not get the desired results, she falls back on her false charm and passive-aggressive emotional manipulations.

But as off-putting as her methods may be, her reasons are heartfelt. She is simply a mother trying to save her two little boys as best she can and is ill-equipped to mix amongst the lower class citizens upon whom her survival now depends.

Shostakovich – Male, 35 years old.

One day composer Shostakovich gives an impassioned speech to the citizens of the Leningrad. He tells them that he is writing his Seventh Symphony about the siege of Leningrad and is dedicating it to the citizens. He is the epitome of the idealism of the Russian Intelligentsia: "Leningrad is my native city. Here is my home and my heart. Soviet musicians, my many and dear colleagues, my friends, remember that our art is threatened with great danger. We will defend our music. We will work with honest and self-sacrifice that no one may destroy it!" (real quote.)

Marina watches from afar as he speak, with Katya at her side. "Just think, Katya, you can say you met him. The musical genius of our time. You can tell your grandchildren." But Katya is more concerned with finding scraps of food to eat than meeting famous musicians.

# Historical Context of 900 Days

## Preparing for the Invasion



As the German front lines moved closer to the city the children of Leningrad were sent out into the streets with buckets of whitewash. They were told to paint over the street signs. It was decided that when the Germans invaded the city they would get no help finding their way around.

## Anti-tank Barriers

Large metal anti-tank "hedgehogs" were placed outside around the perimeter of the city to stop the German tanks. With most of the men at the front it was left to the women of Leningrad to dig trenches around the city that also acted as anti-tank barriers.

The women and elderly armed themselves and learned how to use weapons. They had anti-tank barriers, trenches, whitewashed signs and armed citizens. The city was ready for the invasion.



*But the invasion never came.* Hitler had something much more cruel in mind.

## Leningrad's Vulnerable Position

Leningrad is on a narrow strip of land and surrounded on two sides by bodies of water. When the German front lines moved in from the north and south it was very easy to blockade the city. This is what Hitler did in the fall of 1941. Rather than invade the city he simply blockaded it and waited for the millions of inhabitants to starve or freeze to death. He knew they had a 30 day supply of food, and decided to wait the month out. He had a much longer wait than he ever imagined.





## Winter Arrives

In the first brutal winter of the blockade life in Leningrad was grim. It was an unusually cold winter, even by Russian standards. Fuel quickly ran out. The food supply ran out. No clean water. And the Germans continued to bomb the city.

No food. No heat. No clean water. For *900 days*.

## Food Rations

In January 1942 the city's food rations reached an all time low of only 125 grams (about 1/4 of a pound) of bread per person per day. With very little flour left in reserve, sawdust was added to the coarse black bread.

Nutritionists estimate a manual worker needs approximately 3000 calories a day. On their bread ration citizens were receiving only 500 calories a day.

It was rumored that books were held together with paste made from potato flour. Libraries were pillaged, the books stripped of their paste. Wallpaper was also said to have potato paste in the glue. People stripped it off their walls and ate it to help them stay alive. Leather shoes and briefcases were boiled and eaten.

At one time the city had a plentiful pigeon population but they were quickly eaten. Rats and mice were the next to be eaten. In heartbreaking desperation, the citizens of Leningrad next had to eat their household pets. And after there were no more pets in the city, the Leningraders survival instincts overpowered them. One would notice that fresh corpses would be missing chunks of flesh. And soon there were rumors of young children disappearing, victims of cannibalism.





## City of Sleds

In the first winter of the siege many thousands of people froze to death. The bodies of loved ones were wrapped up and taken to the cemeteries. The ground was frozen solid, much too hard to dig any graves so the bodies were simply piled up.



Children's sleds became a common conveyance to carry the dead to their final resting places. It was an all too familiar site to see a child's sled carrying gruesome cargo.



## Too Weak to Help

But often times the bodies were left where they fell. The citizens of Leningrad were too weak from hunger to move them. It was not uncommon to see people simply step over the bodies.



Dirty water had to be pulled from holes in the ice on the river.

## The Radio House Offers Hope

Russians deeply love their art, music and literature and the workers at the Radio House used this in order to keep up the morale of the besieged city. Though radio silence was in effect the citizens of Leningrad would not live without their beloved music and poetry. The Radio House workers strung P.A. speakers throughout the city and played music, read poetry or literature over the speakers 24 hours a day. Hitler could take their food, their heat, their clean water, but he could never take their art! It was their saving grace, their last glimmer of hope.

Despite extreme weakness from hunger the Radio House workers kept the "broadcasts" going 24 hours a day.

At times the workers were so weak all they could manage to do was to set a metronome in front of the microphone and let the click, click, click resonate throughout the city. It became the heartbeat of the city. They would never allow the Radio House to lapse into silence. Silence meant defeat. Silence meant death.



## The Road of Life

If the temperatures drop enough, ice will form on Lake Ladoga and if it gets thick enough, Leningraders can cross the lake to the other side, which is not yet occupied by Germans. It's a dangerous route. Once the ice road over the frozen lake reached the far shore meager supplies were able to enter the city, and citizens could be evacuated. However, with so many starving

and only so much that could be brought into the city it eased the suffering only minimally. But it definitely helped. Morale was greatly increased when the road reached the far side of the lake.

### "Our music, art and literature will save us."

Leningraders took great comfort in their Russian poetry, art, music and literature. Despite unbelievably horrific conditions, they always took time and effort to connect with their deep love of the arts.

Musicians would play in the freezing streets...



Everyone kept their favorite book of poetry at hand...



Painters found a harsh beauty in the bombed streets...



Even Hitler's cruel blockade could not crush the Leningraders' poetic souls.

### The Blockade is Broken

In the end the Germans NEVER entered the city. Half of the city's 3 million citizens died, but the blockade was eventually broken. The city was saved. The siege lasted 900 days, but the Leningraders never gave up. One survivor said "If you make nails of these people there will be no harder nails in the world."

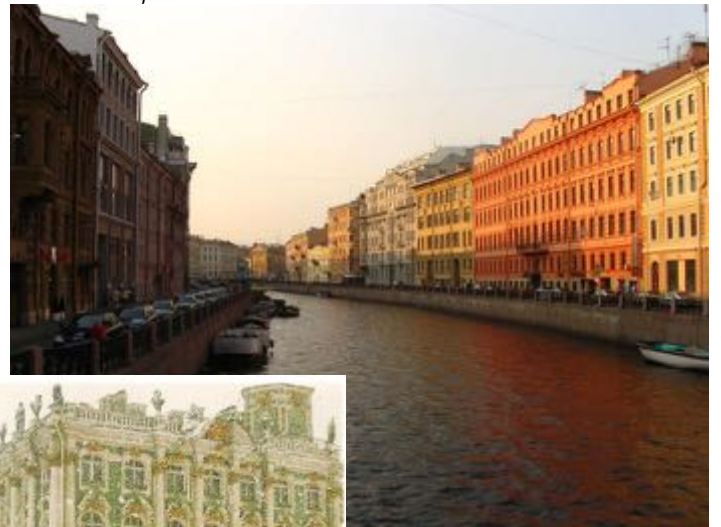
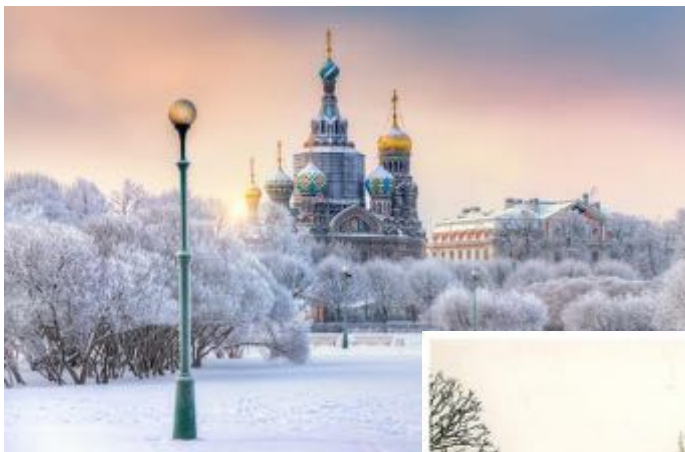
"Let no one forget, let nothing be forgotten." — Olga Berggolts



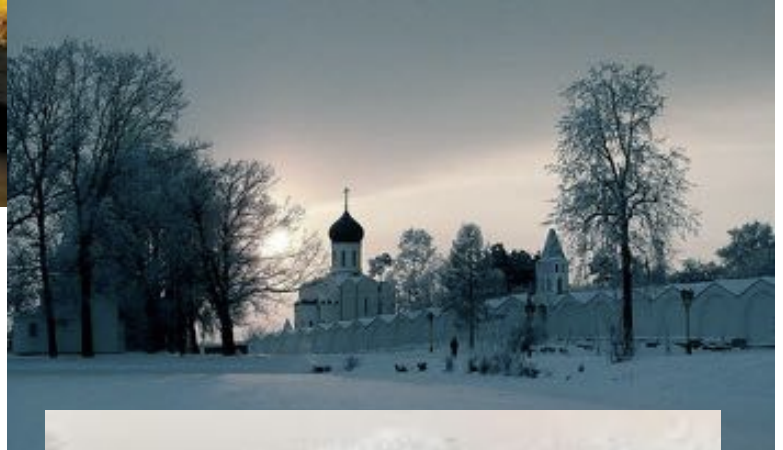
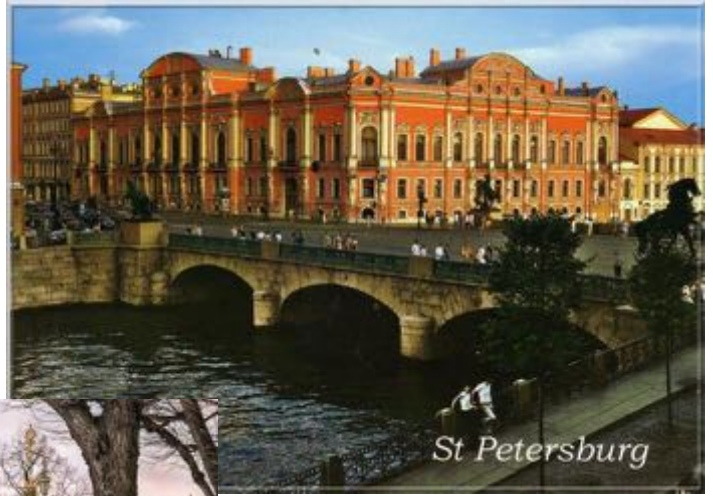
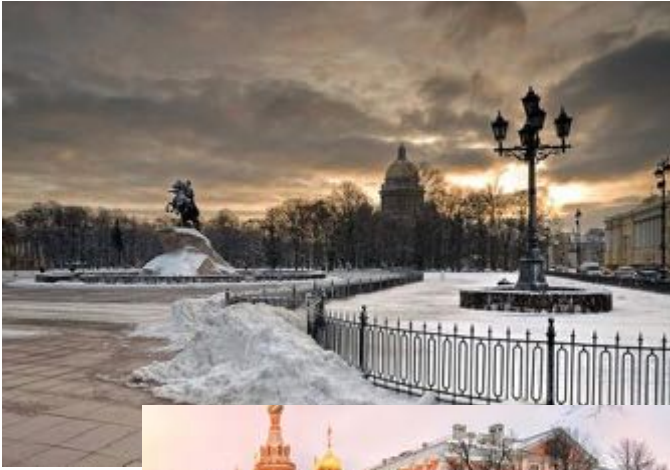
## Beautiful Leningrad

Originally named St. Petersburg, the name was changed in 1914 to Petrograd. It was changed again in 1924 to Leningrad to honor Lenin after the Russian Revolution. It seems Lenin officially fell out of favor in 1991 when the city reverted back to its original name of St. Petersburg.

Much like Stockholm or Venice, the city is made up of dozens of canals and islands. It is often called "The Venice of the North." Whether called St. Petersburg, Petrograd or Leningrad, it is one of the world's most beautiful cities. The lovely Imperial-era buildings are mostly pastel colors, and after a snowfall they look like delicious delicacies dusted with powdered sugar in a bakery window.

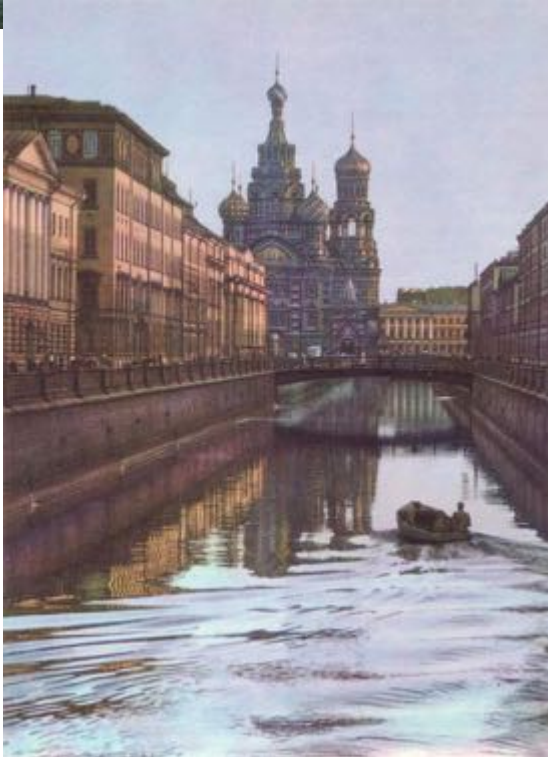






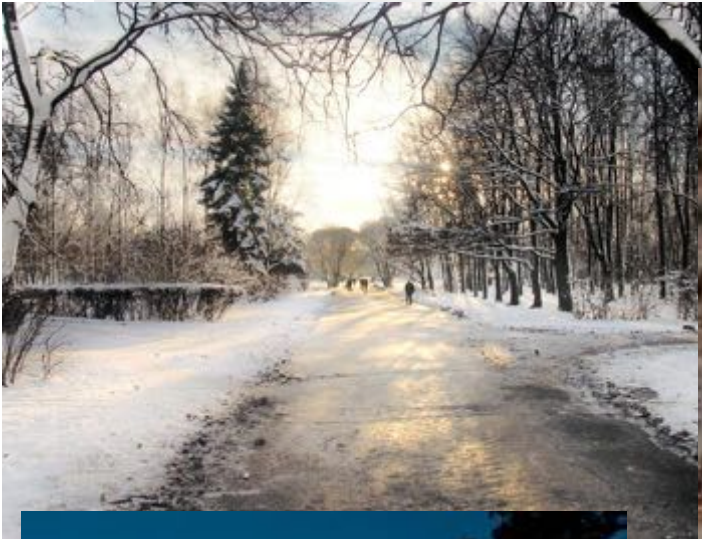
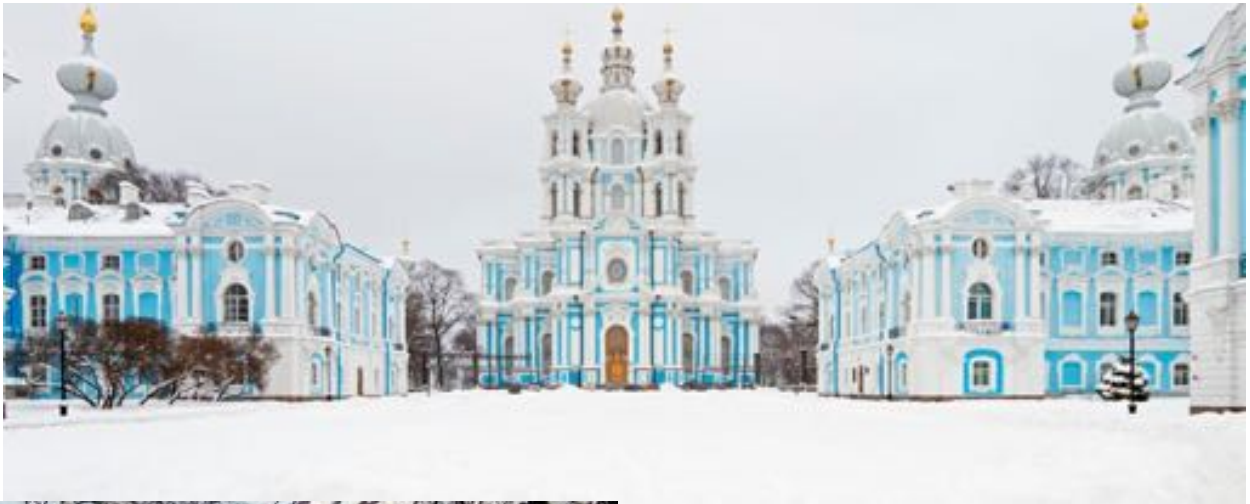
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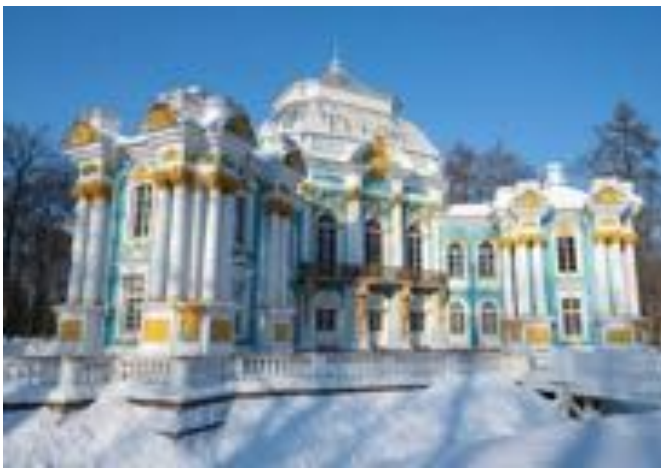
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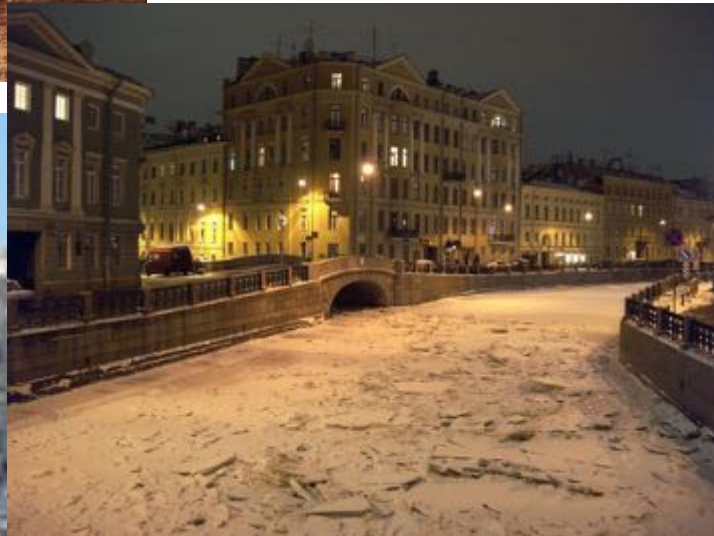


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# Jan Wilson's Bio



I was born and raised in *Breaking Bad* territory -- Albuquerque, New Mexico. I was destined to be a writer since the third grade after writing my first book, *Bert the Monkey*. It was a great success with my teacher, he was impressed that it had "a beginning, middle, and end." I wasn't sure what that meant but I could tell it was a good thing. I was already instinctively writing in a three-act structure.

In middle school our class read a movie script out loud. I'd never seen a script before. A revelation! "I'm not a novelist, I'm a *screenwriter!*" The clouds parted. Angels sang. Golden light shone down upon the script on my desk. Days later I decided my friends and I should invent our own storyline for our favorite TV show, make up dialogue and write it all down. I loved it, but my friends lost interest after half an hour. It was my valiant attempt to create my very own writers room! They went for pizza and never returned to the writing. But I never stopped.

In high school I loved all things English, so after graduation I went to art school in London. I explored haunted chalk caves, got known as a 'regular' at my neighborhood pub, kissed my favorite rock star in the gorgeous countryside, visited spiritualist churches every week, and walked in the footsteps of Oscar Wilde and Virginia Woolfe. Oh, and I studied a little bit, too. England rocked!

I eventually got homesick, returned to America and earned my B.A. in psychology with a concentration in parapsychology (ESP, ghosts, paranormal phenomena). I did some legitimate ghostbusting! With TV shows and movies getting more character-driven this psychology degree is a great tool for writing layered, psychologically realistic characters.

Wanderlust struck again. I went to Moscow and taught English to Russians. My time there inspired me to write the feature *900 Days* about the siege of Leningrad.

After reading *900 Days*, Cinemotion Group (a Moscow-based production company) hired me to write a feature script about famous ballerina Mathilde Kschessinska, who was Tsar Nicholas' first love before there was *Nicholas and Alexandra*.

- Semifinalist in the Nicholl Fellowship (the top 3% of 4225 entrants) with *900 Days*.
- Feature script *The Mercy List* made the top 10% in the Nicholl Fellowship (the top 10% of 7442 entrants).
- Semifinalist in the Austin Heart of Film screenwriting contest with *900 Days*.
- Top Ten Finalist in Francis Ford Coppola's American Zoetrope screenwriting contest (out of over 2000 entrants) with *900 Days*; Coppola himself was the final judge that year.
- *Milo* (now titled *The Postman's Reign*) was a quarterfinalist in the AAA screenwriting contest (sponsored by *Creative Screenwriting* magazine).





# "900 Days"

Written by Jan Wilson

"900 Days" is a feature length screenplay based on actual events set in blockaded Leningrad in 1941. Dmitri is a polio-stricken young man struggling to find his own way to contribute to the war effort. The citizens have no food, no heat, no clean water - but they do have their art, their literature, their music. This keeps them going. Dmitri strives to get a private audience with composer Shostakovich for Marina, the woman he loves, so she can hear his Seventh Symphony – written about the siege and dedicated to the Leningraders, but in the besieged city severe hunger and freezing temperatures make even the simplest tasks impossible.

This script was a semifinalist in the Nicholls Fellowship (top 3%), semifinalist in the Austin Heart of Film Screenwriting Contest, and a Top Ten Finalist in the American Zoetrope screenwriting contest, judged by Francis Ford Coppola. Drama, 111 pages.

The blockade begins....

In 1941 Hitler blockaded the city of Leningrad and its 3 million citizens. Invading the city would require a lot of Hitler's supplies and troops, so he came up with a much crueler plan: he would simply surround the city and wait for the Leningraders to freeze and starve to death. Hitler knew that Leningrad had only enough food supplies to survive for 30 days, and then surely the city would fall.

The city would hold out for *900 days*.



## TREATMENT:

SUPER: LENINGRAD -- JUNE 1960

A young woman, Katya, sits writing at a desk. She is perhaps 29 or 30. The room is comfortably furnished and cozy. Outside her window is a lovely view of Leningrad. "I was about ten when Leningrad was blockaded by the Germans." The room is filled with photos of people later to be recognized as her mother and Katya as a child. "Leningrad was surrounded on the east and west by water, and to the north and south by the Germans. Leningrad was completely blocked on all sides." Several record albums of Shostakovich are piled near her record player. Proudly displayed around the room are other wartime photos, a gas mask, and other mementos of her life in wartime Russia. A view of Leningrad fills the screen.



Italian Bridge

SUPER: LENINGRAD--SEPTEMBER 1941

A boisterous group of schoolchildren cross over the beautiful filigreed Italian Bridge that spans a canal with the onion-domed Church of the Savior on Spilled Blood in the background. The river Neva flows calmly under the bridge. Their teacher trots behind them hurrying along any stragglers.



The kids run across the vast open square of the Winter Palace, a pale blue birthday cake of a building. A large flock of pigeons sprays into the sky. Katya's narration continues, "For a few months, day to day life remained much the same. The schoolteacher struggles to keep the noisy schoolchildren together as they enter the Winter Palace.



Winter Palace Square

Inside the Winter Palace the schoolchildren are now much quieter, awed by the splendor of the treasures and furniture inside the palace. They are wide-eyed and giggly as they are trotted through the rooms. The children gape at priceless paintings, ancient vases and golden trinkets of all kinds. The wide, busy street is bustling with cars, trolley cars and buses. There is no snow or ice anywhere. Pedestrians scurry here and there, customers flow in and out through the doors of shops carrying all sorts of food. The old pre-Stalin buildings are all pastel-colored, beautiful works of art.

In a cozy and luxurious apartment a small group of people are gathered. An old bearded poet sits stroking a small dog on his lap. Some people sit with him, others prepare food nearby and pour tea. Katya explains, "Members of the intelligentsia still met on a regular basis. They read poetry or literature and had philosophical discussions long into the night." The old bearded poet opens a leather-bound book and as he pages through it he continues to coddle the dog. The dog's collar has a tiny bell on it that lightly jingles as the man lavishes her with attention.

A rather grim and cavernous shoe factory runs at full-throttle. Katya continues, "Though most of the men were at the front, the women and elderly kept the factories and shops going as best they could." A young man stands at a huge, noisy machine. He tosses partially assembled shoes into a box next to him one after another.

The schoolchildren dive into luscious pastries in the Winter Palace museum cafe. Their faces smudged with whipped cream, they laugh and eat, happy to be on a field trip. Even the teacher enjoys a decadent pastry.

Inside the shoe factory the menacing sound of a low flying German junker gets louder and louder. The young man stops his work when he is finally able to hear the plane over the clatter of the machine he is working on. Others too stop their work to tune their ears to the noise. They are frozen, waiting for that inevitable whistle of a bomb being dropped. Katya declares, "But more and more it became clear. World War II was on our doorstep." A bomb explosion is heard nearby and the factory workers instinctively duck or bury their heads in their hands.

The entrance to an impressive looking building, the Radio House, is being barricaded by soldiers and a few civilians help too. "We knew that soon the Germans would invade our city." Inside the Radio House, the main room is bustling with activity. Employees, about ten in number, are scrambling around preparing for a broadcast. The hubbub is centered around a bespectacled, mild-looking man, 35, who looks like he could be an accountant or a civil servant. He is Shostakovich, the composer. "I remember one day Shostakovich came to the Radio House to give a speech to the people of Leningrad. My mother, Marina, who worked at the Radio House, was so excited. She adored him."



Shostakovich

Marina, late twenties, is among the people bustling around Shostakovich. She is pretty, with luminous skin and big eyes. She is one of the women from the intelligentsia meeting at the old bearded poet's home.

Katya, now only ten years old, stands nearby watching the activity with great interest. She is one of the children from the field trip. Clearly this man was someone very important and well-respected. A well-dressed man stands possessively near Shostakovich. His posture and demeanor makes it clear that he is Shostakovich's keeper, protector and aide. Marina takes Katya by the hand and pulls her over to the side so she can watch the rest of the proceedings out of the way.



P.A. speakers throughout the city

Shostakovich goes to a desk, sits down and adjusts the microphone in front of him. He clears his throat. The room immediately gets quiet and still. "Just an hour ago I completed the score of the second part of my new large symphonic work. I have been working on it since July, and when I finish the third and fourth parts, I will call it my Seventh Symphony." The Radio House employees watch with admiration as he continues. [note: speech is taken verbatim from 1941 on-air appeal to public]

Office workers in cramped buildings listen to Shostakovich speak through the large P.A. speakers that are placed throughout the building. Work has stopped to listen to this great composer. Shostakovich's speech continues through the P.A. system. "Notwithstanding war conditions, notwithstanding the dangers threatening Leningrad, I have been able to work quickly and to finish the first two parts."

Back at the Radio House his speech becomes more impassioned. "Why do I tell you about this? I tell you this so that those Leningraders who are now listening to me shall know that the life of our city is going on normally. All

of us now carry our military burdens.” Katya looks to the faces of those watching Shostakovich speak. They are the faces of the devoted, the determined.

At an outdoor market shoppers and sellers alike group together to listen to the speech as it pours from the speakers set up on corners of the nearby buildings. “Leningrad is my native city. Here is my home and my heart....”

The shoe factory workers stop to listen to his voice echo through the factory. “Soviet musicians, my many and dear colleagues, my friends, remember that our art is threatened with great danger.”



Radio House

Back in the Radio House the employees are transfixed by him. “We will defend our music. We will work with honesty and self-sacrifice that no one may destroy it!” His short speech is over. The employees burst into emotional applause. Ilya, a twenty-something employee, takes over at the microphone as the others usher Shostakovich away from the desk and bombard him with praise. Marina, full of excitement, steps toward Shostakovich, “That was so inspiring. I can’t tell you how much we all -” Shostakovich turns to Marina to respond but is rudely whisked away by the Aide before another word can be spoken. “I’m sorry, but he doesn’t have time for this.” Marina hides her hurt and disappointment. She only nods and smiles understandingly as her hero is ushered away from her. Adult Katya narrates, “Though he talked only of music, it meant something beyond that. His words struck everyone who heard them as a call to defend our city, our home.

Most of the men were away at the front, and we had very few weapons. But we Leningraders are a stubborn breed and we were prepared to dig in and defend our beloved city.”

Women of all ages are working out in the fields digging ditches. Young women, grandmothers, teenagers, they are all working together. The deep tank traps they are digging are impressive. The women seem tireless in their efforts.

Children run through the streets carrying buckets and paint brushes. A thin old man holds up a young child so the child can paint whitewash over a directional street sign. Katya says, “When the Germans invade, our city will be unfamiliar to them. But they’ll get no help from us getting their bearings.” When they are done the old man waves the other children away, encouraging them to go do the same. They each run to a different street sign and begin slathering whitewash over the words.

Inside the Winter Palace vast rooms of treasures sit awaiting evacuation to a safer place. Priceless paintings, statues and objects of art are carefully being wrapped, stacked and carted away.

A field of concrete anti-tank obstacles are being set up in the outskirts of the city by a brigade of women and men. “Leningrad was ready for the invasion.”

The street is full of barricades made from sandbags and scrap wood behind which civilian men and women sit with guns, ready. Waiting. “But the invasion never came.”

A few tanks are strategically placed among the streets. It is strangely quiet. “We were prepared for everything except the one thing Hitler had planned on. A blockade.”

A row of huge wooden warehouses are on fire. The blaze is out of control, and the flames shoot up into the nighttime sky casting a red glow over the entire horizon. German planes buzz overhead. Groups of people stand outside in the streets watching the flames of the warehouses in the distance. Among the group is Dmitri, mid to late twenties, a thin man with haunted eyes. This is the young man from the shoe factory. He watches the fire with a somber expression. He does not move a muscle. Beside him is a Sasha, also mid to late twenties. Sasha wears a military uniform. He fumes, paces frantically, and is nearly in tears as he watches the flames. “That bastard! He knew we only had month’s supply of food in there! He knew it!” Dmitri remains calmer, quieter.

Dmitri asks, “How could Hitler know? It was just a lucky shot.” “He’s going to leave us all to starve to death.” Sasha moans and stomps his feet in agony, “And to build the warehouses so close to each other! Of wood! Stupid! We were so stupid.” Dmitri can’t take his eyes off the blazing warehouses. He laments, “We’re doomed.”

The warehouse fires continue to blaze despite the efforts of the fire brigade. The firemen try to cover their noses to avoid the rancid fumes that choke and gag them.

More and more fire trucks arrive with sirens blaring. Adult Katya tells us, “Hunger and cold came swiftly after that. Beautiful, majestic Leningrad soon became a city of death.”



Leningraders paint over streets signs to confuse the Nazis they assumed would invade the city.

## TWO MONTHS LATER

Dmitri walks along the street toward a sheltered bus stop. He looks very tired, and despite his many layers of clothing and his heavy winter coat it is apparent that he is very thin. Too thin. The ground is covered in snow which helps illuminate the dark night. As he approaches the bench to sit down, we notice he is limping, and he drags his foot a bit.

The little roof over the bench makes it hard to see under the shelter. Dmitri sits down with a sigh. He leans back against what he must assume is a partition or a pole, and closes his eyes. But as soon as he leans his weight back against the partition, he is forced off-balance as the thing he is leaning against starts to fall. It hits the ground with a terrible thud. Dmitri sees that it is a body. Poor woman froze to death. Without batting an eye Dmitri calmly drags her body over out of the way and leans her against a wall. He looks at her for a moment. He inspects her boots. A bit ragged. He takes them off her feet and carries them under his arm. He gently straightens her hat, and arranges her into a more dignified position. He casually brushes some snow off his leg, goes back to the bus stop bench and sits down. He holds the "new" boots up to his ragged boots, sole to sole, measuring for size. He sighs a disappointed sigh. Too small.



The frozen dead litter the streets.

Sasha stands at a window in his apartment looking out over the rooftops of the city. It snows heavily. Sasha is bundled up as much as possible. As he speaks his breath can be seen. "Please God, let it get *colder*."



Community bulletin board – many would trade precious items for food.

Dmitri carefully steps off a bus and begins to walk along the snowy sidewalk. A public bulletin board catches his eye and he goes to read the messages on the board with a few other bundled up people. A frantic woman is there pleading with another man. Getting no response from the man, she turns to Dmitri with a look of desperation. "A piano. My husband brought it from Kiev when we were married. Please. I'll trade it for bread, two loaves." Dmitri tries to turn away from her. "I have no bread. I'm sorry, I have none." As he walks away from her she starts to follow him. "It's a beautiful piano. Please! One loaf!" Dmitri quickens his pace as best he can to get away from her, but his limp does not cooperate with him.

Moments later Dmitri reaches a large apartment building, and in typical Russian fashion, the bottom floor is used for businesses. He passes the downstairs bakery, opens a large wooden door and he disappears into the apartment building. The large bakery display window is empty, and there is a hastily written sign displayed: "No Bread Today"

That night Sasha sits in his tiny, cramped kitchen with Dmitri, with only a few candles for light. Sasha still wears a military uniform. The two keep their heavy coats and hats on the entire time. Dmitri tosses the woman's boots on the table. "These might fit your sister." Despite being indoors, you can see Dmitri's breath. Sasha raises his eyebrows in approval, giving the boots a once-over. He shoves them in his duffel bag. "You're always hoarding shoes." Sasha produces a small canning jar from a sideboard. With a great flourish he holds the clear liquid up for Dmitri to see. "Look what I have! My Uncle Sergei made it. He couldn't spare very much, but I was glad for even a little. This should warm us up a bit." Sasha pours the homemade vodka into two glasses on the kitchen table. He fills the short glasses nearly to the top. Dmitri is delighted by this. "What's the occasion? You spoke to Hitler? You convinced him to surrender?" Dmitri's thinly veiled sarcasm makes Sasha laugh wildly. "Close! I am going back to my unit in two days!" Sasha seems genuinely happy about this.

They gulp their drinks. "My shoulder is better now, they're letting me return." Sasha moves his shoulder around, rotating his arm around and around, as if to test it. From a brown paper bag, Sasha pulls a slice of coarse black bread, no bigger than a few inches thick. He tears it in two and pushes half to Dmitri. Dmitri refuses, "Sasha, no. I had my ration. I ate it on the way over here. You need to eat -" Sasha dismisses Dmitri's refusal with a wave of his hand. "Please. Besides, I get more than you do. You need some. Take it." Dmitri does take it, and nods his thanks. The two tear hungrily into their bread and gulp their vodka. The bread is gone in no time. Eventually Dmitri shares some news, "Last month...I got promoted to the caster machine." A slight wince crosses Sasha's face. "The caster machine? He covers it up with a grin, "Congratulations! Dmitri, that's great!" Sasha clinks his nearly empty glass to Dmitri's. Dmitri frowns and shrugs off the gesture. "Is it? I wonder how many more medals Aleksei would have had by now. Sasha brushes off the question. "Please. You weren't meant to be a soldier. Taking orders? Serving Stalin? You'd be doing everything you could to get out. Now, Aleksei, he was marching

before he was crawling. Saluting your mother as she changed his diapers.” Sasha imitates a baby being a soldier, saluting and sucking his thumb. This gets a smile and a chuckle out of Dmitri.

Sasha changes topics quickly, “Show me your feet.” “No.” “Yes! I insist.” “Sasha, I'm not taking my shoes off, it's freezing enough as it is.” Sasha pulls a pair of thick army socks from a duffel bag and tosses them to Dmitri. “Take these.” Dmitri starts to balk, but Sasha silences him with one look. “Thanks,” says Dmitri.

Dmitri hobbles to the small brick stove and tries to get the fire going again. It is a futile attempt, yet he stokes the embers thoughtfully, deep in thought. Sasha can barely contain his grin. “Dmitri, they sent for me early. My leave wasn't up until next week.” Dmitri is surprised. He looks up from the embers. Sasha continues, “We are going over the lake.” “It's frozen already?” “Yes. Froze early this year, I know. A sign from God.” “A sign from God?! The cold is killing us! Do you know how many corpses I saw on the way over here tonight? Seven. I counted. People are stepping over them on the sidewalks.” Sasha jumps out of his chair. “But Dmitri, the cold is a blessing. There is ice on Lake Ladoga already. Maybe enough to carry a truck full of supplies! The road will save us! I'm going across. In a few days we'll start the supply line from Kobona.” Dmitri looks as though he doesn't know whether to be happy or not. He asks, “For sure?” “For sure. They've been sending supplies there for weeks, hoping we'd be able to get across. We could use your help, Dmitri.” “Me? No, I'm no help.” “Don't be stupid, we'll need as many men as we can get. You could be a driver. Or part of the supply team in Kobona. Or -” “Sasha, I can't help. I can barely walk, how can I help?” Sasha looks slightly embarrassed for his friend. “Of course you can walk...” “Not with these feet I can't. I get worse every day. Look at these boots, they're worthless.” Dmitri angrily thrusts the poker into the embers, sending ash flying into the air. Sasha doesn't know what to say. He tightens his coat around him. Sasha says, “I'll try and bring you some food from the other side. My sister will be staying here while I'm gone. You can stay if you want.”

As Dmitri slowly climbs the stairs in his apartment building he can hear the “radio” playing over the P.A. system. Someone is reading poetry. Each step is a struggle for Dmitri.

Dmitri's sister-in-law, Olga, mid-thirties, is in the apartment with her two small sons. With her dress and coat carefully tailored and her hair up in a tight bun, her appearance echoes her personality--she is wrapped up and tightly wound in every way. She is fuming, pacing the room, muttering to herself. Her voice is a mixture of panic and rage.

Her sons, Alik, 7 and Yuri, 9, are sitting bundled up in their tasteful winter clothes on a cot in the corner out of the way of their mother. They look pale and sick. Much too thin. She continues to mutter to herself. “We are above this, we are above this. This is not right, this can't be. My mother is a Mirinov. We are Mirinovs.” She looks to her children cowering in the corner. She screams at them frantically. “We are Mirinovs! We are Mirinovs!”

Almost to the top of the stairs now, Dmitri can hear Olga's screaming and ranting. He tries to hurry to the door. “For God's sake, what now?”

Dmitri now sits on a bed in the bedroom with Olga. She is sobbing. He tries to comfort her. She sobs, “Alik was born of privilege, he wasn't raised like this. What's becoming of us?” “Shh, shh. Tell me what happened.” She still sobs as she tries to speak. “I was gone all day, none of the bakeries had bread. It took me all day, and all I could find was a small block of library paste. I was going to make soup with it. I came home, and Alik was eating a mouse. A mouse, Dmitri! My baby was eating a mouse. What is becoming of us?” Dmitri lets her sob for a moment before daring to speak, “Olga, he was hungry. We're all hungry.” She whips herself out of his arms. She storms angrily across the room and begins her pacing again. She picks up clothes in her contained fury, obsessively folding them over and over, taking a belt and rolling it up. “My mother is a Mirinov. My father was a Lunitsky. I may have married down when I married your brother, but my children will not eat mice! Do you hear me? We do not eat mice!” Dmitri gets off the bed wearily, goes to the bedroom door. “You'd have your children starve just to keep up appearances?” She is enraged at his tone of voice. She flings the belt at him with all her might, it unfurls and whips Dmitri in the face with a loud SNAP. Dmitri is startled off-balance and falls back onto the dresser, clutching his burning, red face. She shrieks, “If Aleksei was here you wouldn't speak to me like this!”

With his legs already aching and his eyes filled with tears from the smack of the belt, Dmitri remains sprawled across the dresser, dumbfounded. “But he isn't, Olga. He's dead.” This simple statement strikes her as an insult. She hisses an offended gasp and storms out of the room.

A group of women are digging anti-tank trenches in a large open field on the outskirts of Leningrad. A withered old grandmother stops digging to rest. She leans against her shovel. Above the gray clouds the roar of a plane fades into the distance. As the withered old grandmother rests she looks up into the sky. A paper floats down to her from above. Then another. And another. She picks up one of the papers and reads it. She is amazed. She smiles. She looks up into the sky. She excitedly calls the other elderly women over to her, waving the paper in the air. “Get your white dresses!”



Women dig anti-tank trenches.



The main room in the Radio House is now full of cots and tiny makeshift stoves. The employees seem to be living there. Someone is playing a Shostakovich record and it is being broadcast over the P.A. system. Marina sits on her cot with Katya. They are both bundled up in heavy coats, and Katya is wearing a hat that is too big for her. About six other employees are in the large room. Some lay on their cots, some sit at the table reading or writing. Everyone is extremely thin, pale, and sickly. This is one of the few buildings in the city with electricity. Marina hums along to the music. "Just think Katya, you can say you met him. The musical genius of our time. You can tell your grandchildren." Katya cries, "Mama, I'm hungry." Marina takes a tiny piece of bread from her pocket and gives it to Katya. Katya stuffs the whole thing in her mouth. "Slowly, Katya! That's all that's left for today." Katya whines, almost automatically, without thinking what she is saying, "Mama, I want some more. I'm still hungry. Can't you make me some piroshki?" Marina looks pained. "Darling, you know I can't. Be strong. We'll get through." Katya begins to pout and cry. "More! Give me more! I want more!"

Katya begins to wail with hunger. Marina quickly grabs a book, settles Katya into her arms. "Pushkin will help us. Ssh, listen to Pushkin. Don't think about the hunger." Marina begins to read from the book in soothing tones. "In a realm that shall be nameless, in a country bright and blameless, lived the mighty Tsar Dadon..." Katya still cries a bit, but she is soothed by the poetry, as Marina reads it with great emotion. Ilya, a fellow employee, watches them from the table where he is trying to read. He watches the sad scene without a word. Marina continues to read the Pushkin poetry as Katya's cries slowly turn into a soft whimper, and then she is silent, lost in Pushkin's words.



Winter Palace Square

Sasha and Dmitri walk along the mostly abandoned Winter Palace square. Among other things Sasha carries a large gasoline can, obviously empty from the ease with which he carries it. Sasha slows his pace when he sees that Dmitri can't quite keep up. "No, no, no. It was when we went down south to the Crimea, remember?" Dmitri says, "I thought it was when we went to the public swimming pool that summer." "It was at the beach, not a swimming pool. When you and Aleksei went with us to the Crimea, the summer after your mother died."

Sasha spies a car at the side of the road half buried under a snow drift, and they make a beeline to it. Sasha continues, "I remember because we went into that orchard and you were so amazed to see tangerines growing on the trees." Dmitri remembers, "Oh yeah. I'd never seen a tangerine tree." Sasha brushes snow off the window to reveal a woman and child frozen stiff, sitting in the front seat of the car. He kneels down, takes the gas cap off the tank and inserts some tubing and begins to siphon the precious gasoline. As the gas trickles into the gas can Sasha glances around. "It's weird. So quiet. And still." Dmitri explains, "No pigeons." "You shoo them out of the way your whole life, and curse their existence, and now..." "Now they'd be worth everything you own." Sasha shakes his head sadly. "We ate them too fast." Then Sasha perks up. "Remember all those tangerines we ate that summer?" Dmitri chuckles at the memory. Sasha sucks on the tubing a bit more to get every last drop of gas possible. Dmitri nods, remembering, "Aleksei told us not to." Sasha laughs, "My urine was orange for two days!" "And your mother! She made so much jam from the berries!" Sasha savors the memory, "Jam on the toast, jam on the ice cream, jam on everything! She didn't know what to make from the tangerines though." "Those tangerines were so good. Summer was so much fun down there. Swimming and eating all summer long." Sasha says, "I loved that orchard. We'd go there every summer. First thing I always did was run to see if the fruit was ready. Once in a while we'd go a bit early in the season, and it was still cold, the fruit wasn't ripe yet. I always knew summer was finally there when the tangerines were ready." Dmitri leans back against the car and smiles. "I miss swimming."

Sasha finishes siphoning and stands up. He sees the frozen bodies sitting in the car. His smile is gone. Sasha tries to open the car door, but it is frozen shut. Dmitri helps him pull on the door. When the door finally pops open Dmitri loses his footing, slips on the ice and falls. Sasha moves to help him, but Dmitri indicates that he's fine and stays crouched on the ground at the frozen woman's foot level. Sasha rummages through the car looking for food. Dmitri stares at the dead woman's finely stitched shoes, inches away from his face. "She has American shoes."

A large group of men are gathered outside Kokkorevo, on the edge of Lake Ladoga. There is a mix of military men and civilian men and even a few women. Large military supply trucks stand empty, waiting. The sun is not quite up yet, though it is past 9 a.m. Everywhere you look is white. Snow on the ground, white clouds above, snow in the air. Not a speck of color anywhere in the horizon.

A bitterly cold wind whips at the people who are covered up as much as possible. Two groups of men are assembled, one with thirty men, the other with only six. They are armed with ice tools, meager weapons, and they



wear white camouflage clothing. The two groups head off on foot in different directions across the treacherous looking icy lake. Sasha is in the six-man group.

Sasha's group is out on the ice on Lake Ladoga, no more than 100 yards from the shore. The six men walk side by side and are tied to each other with ropes. No more than eight or ten feet of rope separate the men from each other. Fear is splashed across all of their faces, with Sasha being no exception. Sasha looks back to the shore to see the crowd of people watching their every move.

The man tied next to Sasha's left is a young man with a pale freckled face and a tuft of red hair peeking out from under his headgear. He can't be more than 22. Redhead is at the end of the line of men. The lead man is at the other end, and they both carry a bag of long metal rods with red flags attached to them. "They have faith in us, don't they?" Sasha asks. Redhead nods absentmindedly, nervously. The line of men continues on, very slowly. Each step is a cautious one. "You aren't afraid are you?" Sasha asks. "No, sir," Redhead answers. Sasha chuckles. "Sir? I'm not a sir. You're not afraid? Why not? I am." The lead man in the line signals over to the redhead. Redhead and the lead man both plunge a flag into the snow that covers the ice. Sasha tries to lighten the mood, "Like Hansel and Gretel, right? So we can find our way home?" "No sir, I believe it's so the first trucks will know the path we took." "I know, I was just kidding." "Oh. Sorry sir. I mean...sorry." Poor Redhead looks petrified of each step he takes in the snow-covered ice. Sasha calls over to him, "So what do you do, when you're not busy being a hero I mean." Redhead finally takes his mind off his steps long enough to answer properly. "I'm a bookseller. On Nevsky Prospekt." Sasha sounds impressed, "Ah! How nice, a bookseller. I'll bet you can't wait to get back to your store." The line takes another few cautious steps. German planes can be heard in the far distance. "Yes sir. I don't know what I was thinking volunteering for this." "Relax, you're doing fine. Just take it slow." Sasha flashes him a big goofy smile. This makes Redhead relax a bit. He grins and nods.

The crowd of soldiers and civilians who have waited back on the shore start to disperse a bit. A high ranking official gets into a truck with his driver and sits in the cab. The driver asks, "Sir? Shall we wait here?" The officer replies, "No. Let's go somewhere warm. They'll send word when they get across. Or if." The driver looks out across the lake. He seems worried. "It's twenty miles across. God knows how long it will take them." The officer pleads with God, "Please let the ice be solid. And please, please, keep the Germans away."

Hours later out on the ice the line of men look exhausted. The snow has continued to fall, and the men's coats do not seem sufficient. Behind the men a long double line of red flags snakes across the snowy lake. The lead man halts everyone. He yells over to the men, "It's getting thinner here. This ice is too young. We'll need to circle around to the north, the ice should be thicker there. Let's rest for a while here."

Back in Leningrad the old bearded poet sits in his apartment bundled up in as many clothes as will fit over each other. He takes a book from his shelves, strokes it lovingly, admiring its cover, skimming the pages and tracing the words with his fingers. Slowly he rips out the pages and throws them into his tiny stove.

He pulls his chair up close to the warmth and puts his dog on his lap. He takes a tiny crust of bread from his pocket. He squeezes the very last bit of toothpaste from a tube and spreads it on the crust. He breaks the crust in two. One for him, one for his dog. Both devour their share. He kisses the dog on the nose.

Marina stands in an endless line at the bakery. She gazes down the street. The street is still beautiful despite a few shellings that have damaged some of the facades. The powdered sugar dusting of snow compliments the pastel colored buildings. She stands admiring the street for a moment. Before Marina even realizes what is happening, the woman behind her catches her as Marina faints.

Several women around her help her, and encourage her to sit down on a bench near them. One of them helps her over to the bench. "I'm so embarrassed. Thank you. I felt a little weak, but didn't think..." A helpful woman says, "Just sit. You're weak. Damn the Germans. My cousin's husband is German, but I'm sorry, they can all go to hell." Marina sits in a daze, not even listening as the woman says, "We'll save your place in line." Finally the woman goes back to her place in line.

Marina sits for a moment trying to regain her composure. She is still visible shaken. Coming down the street pulling a typical Russian child's sled is a little eight year old girl. The rails of the sled whistle as they cut through the slick snow. Marina watches this charming scene for a moment as the child passes. She smiles at the child, but the child does not smile back. Marina then focuses her attention on the sled. It carries a corpse, carefully wrapped in a sheet. The body's outline can be seen clearly, it is a woman's form. The child pulls the sled past Marina and continues down the road. Marina bursts into tears. She sits on the bench and quietly sobs. No one even notices her.



The men on frozen Lake Ladoga use their backpacks as seats in the snow and hungrily eat their rations. They pass around a thermos of hot tea. Sasha takes a long swig of the tea and passes it to Redhead, who looks deep in thought. Redhead says, "Sir? Did you mean what you said? About the hero thing I mean." Sasha finishes off the last of his rations. "Oh, I was just kidding, I didn't mean anything by it."

Sasha licks every last crumb from his lips. Redhead grimaces in disgust as he swallows his last bite of the coarse bread. Sasha laughs, "What's the matter? You don't like sawdust?" "Sir?" "Sawdust." Redhead looks alarmed and disgusted. Sasha tries to placate him, "Don't worry, it's edible. Sort of. And you don't have to call me sir. You're not a soldier." Redhead nods. He takes another gulp of the tea and sends it back down the line. Sasha doesn't take any, and passes it to the man next to him. "We kind of are, aren't we? Heroes. If we make it I mean," Redhead says. The serious tone of Redhead's voice makes Sasha tone down his normally jovial nature. "Of course we are." Redhead frowns and says, "My mother says I'm a coward." Sasha looks like he is trying to think of something to say. But he says nothing. "I got my boss to say that it'd cause him extraordinary hardship if I was drafted. He's really old. So they let me stay." Sasha nods, "Sure. He needed you there." Redhead hangs his head down low. "No, not really. Mother said I was just afraid. I guess she's right." Sasha pulls his coat up around his face against the cold. "Everyone is afraid." Redhead considers this for a moment, then looks into Sasha's eyes with pride. "She can't call me a coward now."



Men out on frozen Lake Ladoga

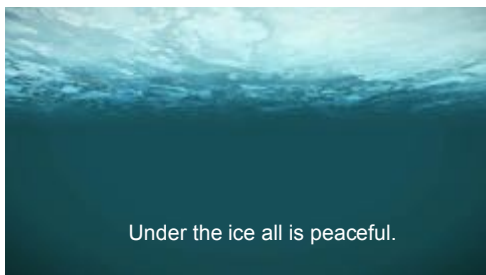
The afternoon sun is setting on the horizon behind the thick snow clouds. It is still dark and gloomy out on the lake and the snow continues to fall. The line of men continue on, step after cautious step. Sasha blurts out, "Steak and caviar! And warm garlic bread. Not black bread." The other men in the line look at each other in confusion. Sasha is moaning in delight as if he was eating. "Pastries for dessert! Thick with cream and chocolate sauce. And raspberries and cream. Mmm." "Sir?" Redhead asks, confused. Sasha turns to Redhead and gives his goofy grin. "Or maybe salmon with a large salad? Trout perhaps?" Redhead can't help but smile back. The Redhead chimes in, "My mother's roast! With sweet tender carrots and baby potatoes." Sasha is happy that Redhead has joined in. Sasha adds, "Strong black coffee with sugar." "And cognac. No, I know! Homemade kvass!" Sasha and Redhead laugh at their game. The lead man joins in, "A roasted chicken! Borsch with thick sour cream." Sasha laughs joyously now that the other men join in. "Fresh vegetables. Fruit! A beautiful ripe orange. Bananas. Grapes!" someone says. Someone shouts, "My wife's piroshkis with a bottle of vodka and a nice cigar!" The men all laugh. Redhead has a good one to share, "Heat!" Sasha nods vigorously and adds, "Yes! A warm bed and electric lights!" The six men all cheer. "Gasoline and trolley cars!" They cheer again." Sasha starts to hoot and holler but he is suddenly yanked off his feet!

Redhead plunges under the ice with a huge splash. The rope pulls Sasha toward the hole in the ice. When he surfaces again, Redhead is shrieking at the top of his lungs. "Help me! I'm under! I'm under!" Sasha yells and tries to get on his feet again as he is pulled toward the hole. He tries to scoot back, getting as far from the hole as possible while pulling the rope. The other men also frantically back up trying to stay off the thinning ice. Sasha screams, "Bookseller! Hang on, Bookseller!" Sasha screams and tries to keep from being pulled into the hole, tries to pull the rope to get Redhead out of the freezing water. The other men pull on the rope, but instead of pulling Sasha and Redhead to safety they cause the rope to strain against the ice at the edge of the hole.

Sasha stops screaming for a second, just long enough to hear the dreadful creaking under him. His eyes flash panic. In an instant the ice splinters and Sasha is plunged into the icy water.

The force of the drop into the hole pulls Sasha entirely underwater. Below the surface it is quiet and calm. Sasha sees the kicking legs of Redhead, but Sasha can do nothing.

Above the surface there is chaos and panic. The four remaining men struggle to pull Sasha and Redhead up without being pulled in themselves.



Under the ice all is peaceful.

Under the surface Sasha has floated away from the hole and as he comes up he finds himself under the ice, not able to break the surface of the water. The panic suddenly leaves him and he stops struggling. The quiet darkness of the water calms him.

He is suddenly in a different world. He floats quietly, looking at the panicked kicking of Redhead. It is a moment of clarity for Sasha. Sasha is calm, still. Almost at peace.

But that calm is suddenly shattered as Sasha is dragged from under the ice to the water's surface. The men's shouts and the splashing of the water is deafening. Redhead is pulled from the water by the lead man.

The fourth man has the rope pulled taut now, keeping Sasha above the surface. Sasha slowly pulls himself up onto

the ice and they drag him over onto the thicker ice. The two wet men lay gasping and cling to the solid ice for dear life. Finally, Sasha is able to speak, he asks Redhead, "What would your mother say about *that*?"

In the shoe factory Dmitri searches the area near his machine, looking into boxes. He is unable to do his work. Dmitri wanders into a small office. His supervisor, a bushy-haired elderly man, stands pulling wallpaper off the wall. He has to rest every few seconds from even the slightest exertion. Dmitri asks, "Redecorating?" The supervisor looks at Dmitri wearily. "The wallpaper paste. They say it's made of potato paste." Unable to continue, the supervisor sits at his desk, exhausted and drawn. Dmitri asks, "Where is the leather for my soles? My box is gone." "Stolen." The supervisor shrugs, "I let them have it. If you boil it you can get a jelly from it. I gave Anna my leather briefcase too." Dmitri sits down at the desk with him. The supervisor tells him, "Dmitri, I won't be in tomorrow." The supervisor looks wearily at his piece of wallpaper and says, "I think I shall die tonight." He smooths out the delicate paper as Dmitri watches.



On this unusually clear night in the Leningrad suburbs the withered old grandmother and a group of other women scour every nook and cranny out in the street looking for firewood. They are all wearing their white dresses, white headscarves. Bright white from head to toe. They practically glow in the darkness. Low flying planes approach overhead.

Marina sits at a desk in the Radio House one day writing on scrap pieces of paper. The room is lit only by the light coming in through the high small windows. She is engrossed in her work, so much so that she doesn't notice that someone has entered the room and now stands in front of her. She finally senses a presence and looks up. It is Dmitri. "Excuse me," he says. "Oh, you startled me. I didn't see you there." He smiles apologetically and continues, "I'm sorry. But I have some news you might be interested in. My friend is part of the column that crossed Lake Ladoga." Her eyes light up. "Oh, yes. Yes, please tell us!"

Marina's co-worker Ilya sits at a piano playing a piece of classical music. He has cut the fingers off his gloves in order to play. A metronome sits atop the piano keeping time. A microphone is set up as near to the piano as possible.

Dmitri and Marina sit at the desk with the microphone. She has papers in front of her. She looks at Dmitri with a demure smile. "Are you sure you don't want to read this? You'd be our champion delivering such good news." He is caught off guard at her comment. He is struck with sudden shyness. "Oh, no. No, please, you read it. I'm no good at such things. Please, you have a beautiful voice." Ilya ends his piece of music and stops the metronome. The sudden silence gets Marina's attention. She turns to her microphone and turns it on. "My dear fellow citizens of Leningrad, today brings good news. We have been informed that two days ago a military column crossed Lake Ladoga on foot and made it safely to the other side at Kobona." Dmitri watches Marina as she reads into the microphone. She speaks very eloquently, and as Dmitri said, with a beautiful voice. Dmitri never takes his eyes off Marina as she reads her notes, "They now calculate that the ice is thick enough to carry supply trucks, and soon they will be delivering supplies into Leningrad." Her voice is full of pride and hope. "A new 220 mile long supply route has been forged along the old Yaroslavl tract, through forests, swamps and villages. Peasants, villagers, and Red Army troops have been working on the road, clearing the path. News of this comes from my friend Dmitri who is in the studio with me now." With an impish smile she pushes the microphone toward him. He is panicked at the sight of the microphone in his face. He looks to her for help. She mouths the word "hello" to him. He awkwardly manages to speak, "Uh...hello there."



The ice road over frozen Lake Ladoga, "The Road of Life" – tried first on foot, then testing the ice strength on sleds, then with empty trucks, then finally heavily loaded trucks.

She hands him the paper she was reading from, but he doesn't take it. He shakes his head 'no' vigorously and looks frightened. She suppresses a laugh and takes back the microphone and resumes reading. "Dmitri tells us that supply trains are on route and will bring food and supplies to the Kobona port where our brave drivers will bring them across the lake. Help is on the way Leningrad. Military Automobile Highway Number 101 is open!"



A little while later Dmitri sits with Marina on the cots in the corner furthest from the broadcasting area. Katya lays quietly with her head in Marina's lap. Katya is almost asleep. Dmitri says, "You made that sound so professional. I didn't have it written like that. That was great." "Well, I've been doing this for a while. I've learned to edit as I read." Dmitri looks around the large room. "You're living here?" "Yes, many of us are. It became too difficult to travel back and forth. And we have electricity here, though not much. Just enough to keep the broadcasting going. But of course we have no water. It's not what I'd prefer, but we have to make do, don't we?" Dmitri smiles and nods, then adds, "I'm staying with my sister-in-law now. Not exactly my first choice. My brother was killed three months ago. She just couldn't cope alone." Katya joins in, but doesn't even open her eyes. "My father is dead too. Germans killed him." Her tone is very matter-of-fact for a ten year old, and Marina looks at her half-asleep daughter with tenderness. Dmitri seems alarmed that a nerve might have been struck. He clears his throat and shifts in his seat. "Do you mind if I rest here for a while?" he asks. "Not at all," Marina says, "Stay as long as you like."

Dmitri leans back onto the cot into a more comfortable position. With his feet now up on the cot, Katya opens her eyes and notices his boots. One is worn down much worse than the other. She is still sleepy, but she can't resist a question. "How come only one of your boots is worn down?" Marina tries to shush her, "Katya, please. Leave him alone." Dmitri laughs. "No, that's okay." He looks at his boots more carefully. "They are kind of falling apart aren't they?" Marina tosses him a ragged blanket, "Here, cover them with a blanket. Your feet must be freezing." Katya to move from her mother's lap. "Is that why you limp?" "Katya! Enough!" Marina is clearly embarrassed by her daughter's openness. Dmitri takes it in stride. He covers himself with the blanket and explains to Katya, "I had polio as a child. This foot's worse than the other. Guess I kind of drag it. I'm stuck with these 'polio feet.'" Katya giggles at the term. "Polio feet? What's that?" "That's what they call them. When it gets cold out they turn blue and they're difficult to move." Despite being very tired and weak, Katya seems fascinated with this conversation, especially the word 'blue'. "Really? They turn blue? Can I see?" Marina is horrified, "Katya, please! Don't be rude. Let Dmitri rest. He's come a long way and he's tired." The reprimand works this time and Katya quietly pouts. Dmitri and Marina can't help but grin at Katya's overly-dramatic pout. "Always the performer," Marina says. "She's in with the right crowd then, isn't she? You and your friends here. Artists, actors, writers. She'll fit right in," Dmitri says. Marina laughs, "Yes, I suppose so. She was raised in this type of atmosphere. Her father is a...was a writer. Her uncle is an actor, perhaps that's where she gets it." Katya makes a funny face at her mother to confirm her theatricality. Marina laughs and smooths down Katya's hair. Dmitri says, "I've always got a closet full of perfect left shoes, but the right ones are all worn to pieces." Katya is amused at this and giggles. Dmitri takes this opportunity to entertain her. "Now why is it do you suppose that you can only buy shoes in pairs?" She giggles even more and says, "That's silly." "Why? I'd buy one! I'd like one right shoe please, that one there." Katya now has a serious case of the giggles. "You can't do that! They'd never match." "Ah. Yes. That's true. You must match your shoes. Otherwise you'd look silly." He leans back and gets more comfortable, more at ease. He adds, "You can tell a lot about a person by their shoes, you know." Katya takes a good look down at her own shoes. She wrinkles her nose. "Mine are dirty." Marina chimes in, "Well then it's true, isn't it?" They all laugh. A precious, happy moment without a thought of hunger or the cold.



Marina nudges Katya, "Tell Dmitri who you met." "Shostakovich." "Really?" Katya nods, not seeming very impressed with it. But Marina's pride is obvious, "So did I. He was here a few months ago to discuss his new symphony. I didn't really get a chance to talk to him. But what a genius!" Dmitri and Katya seem less impressed than Marina. She goes on, lighting up as she speaks of him. "He's written the whole symphony here in Leningrad and it's about the struggle of our people. Can you imagine? He said he wrote day and night, with bombs going off and the constant roar of planes over his apartment. Oh, I'd love to hear it." Dmitri gazes longingly at her. "I'm sure you will." She sighs, "Most of the orchestra has either been evacuated or they're dead. But what I wouldn't give to hear that symphony." Marina sits entranced at the thought of the symphony. Dmitri and Katya look at her, then to each other. They giggle at Marina's daydreaming.

Dmitri sits up and reaches into a deep pocket of his coat. "Katya, can you guess what I have?" This makes her perk up a bit. "What?" Dmitri pulls a brown paper bag from his pocket. Katya's eyes are wide, and even Marina's attention is piqued. From the bag Dmitri pulls some bread, and a small tin and an apple. The apple is shriveled and rotten, disgusting. Marina and Katya can't believe what they're seeing. Marina gasps, "An apple!" Without even being offered the food, Katya pleads with her mother. "Oh, mama, can we have some? Please?" Marina looks to Dmitri for the answer. He smiles and tosses the apple to Katya. She catches it, and immediately starts to devour it. Marina leans over to Katya and takes a bite of the apple. Marina asks, "Where on earth did you get an apple?" "Sasha, my friend in the column. He brought it to me this



morning before going back to the lake." Dmitri's still smiling, watching them happily eat the apple. "And I think this is meat paste." He holds out the little tin box to Marina. She seems tempted. "Oh, Dmitri, we can't." "Then we'll share, how about that?"

Katya is beside herself now with excitement. Marina glances nervously around the room to see if anyone else is watching. No one seems to have enough energy to be concerned about anything around them. Dmitri opens the tin, and the three of them sit quietly eating their meager feast. They are in heaven.

Later Marina and Katya are asleep on the cots. Dmitri watches them sleep, especially Marina. They look peaceful. After a moment of watching Marina sleep, his attention goes to Ilya who is at one of the desks back near the broadcast booth. Dmitri gets up and goes to Ilya. "Can I ask you a question?" Ilya stops what he is doing and gives Dmitri his full attention. "I understand that Shostakovich was here recently."

A short time later Marina leads Dmitri out the door into the main stairwell. Katya hangs on her mother's sleeve. Marina tells Katya, "Go downstairs and see if Polina will give you your lessons. Here, take your books." She hands some textbooks to Katya, who only reluctantly takes them. She plods down the stairs, holding on tight to the railing with each unsteady step. Marina tells Dmitri, "The last of her teachers died last week, there's no one at the school anymore." Nearing the bottom of the stairs now Katya turns back to them to wave to Dmitri. When Katya is out of sight, Marina surprises Dmitri by grabbing his hand and kissing it. "You are a saint. I owe you our lives." "For a little meat paste? Please, it was nothing." "No, it meant everything. It is hope. Not just the food, but the news." Marina gets a bit teary as she goes on, "I passed out in the street the other day. Katya is getting weaker every day. I fear for her health." They walk down the stairs. "She doesn't know it but her grandmother is dead. My mother-in-law. She died two days ago." "Oh, I'm sorry -" She shakes her head. "No, it's a way of life now. I didn't even cry. I knew she wouldn't last long. She was living with us in the apartment. She simply wasted away. There's no one to take her away. She needs to be buried, why will no one take her away?" Dmitri takes hold of her hand to comfort her. "Marina, the cemeteries are getting full. Too many bodies." "But what will I do? I wrapped her up in a sheet and she's still in the bedroom." Dmitri thinks about it for a moment. "We'll have to take her ourselves."

Marina and Dmitri struggle with the corpse, trying to get through it the main door of an apartment building. Once through the door and on the sidewalk, they manage to get it onto a child's sled. Marina carefully tucks in the sheet and smooths it out. Dmitri waits, sled reins in hand as Marina makes futile, yet tender last minute adjustments to the sheet...now the shroud. She looks at the sled itself with sadness. "Katya's father gave her this sled last winter."



Leningraders transport the dead on children's sleds.

Marina and Dmitri walk slowly along the snowy streets with Dmitri pulling the sled behind him with some effort. His limp is severely affecting his ability to pull the sled with ease. The two of them are pale and gaunt. Some of the others on the street that they pass are barely able to continue walking, stopping frequently to sit or lean against anything that is available. "We'll go to the cemetery near Chyertanov Avenue. It's the closest."

They continue to walk slowly in silence. Behind them in the street sit several empty trolley cars, frozen and immobilized on their tracks. As Marina and Dmitri get closer to an office building, a voice on the P.A. system can eventually be heard. She smiles. Nearer and nearer still, Dmitri starts straining to hear it more. "The radio...that's you isn't it?" She nods. "I recorded it yesterday. Funny to hear myself as I walk down the street." "What are you reciting?" She flashes him a look of surprise. "Why Pushkin, of course! 'The Prophet.' You don't know it?" He shrugs off her question. "I never had much time for poetry." She is appalled. "Oh, Dmitri, that's such a shame. We Russians are poets at heart, how can you not like poetry? Pushkin! The master of all poets!" "I didn't say I didn't like poetry, I just never...I didn't like to study in school. My mother was always ill and I took care of her. There didn't seem to be much time for poetry or art." "There's always time for art, Dmitri." He stops in his tracks. Only after a few steps does she notice that he has stopped, and she does the same. He shouts out, "But how can you say that? We're at war, Marina! I see bodies litter the streets everyday. People are trading pianos and diamond rings for a loaf of coarse black bread! Grown men are fighting each other over scraps of food. People are freezing to death on the streets. Survival is the only thing that is important now! This is no time for poetry and music!" Despite his anger, she remains calm.

She smiles gently. "Dmitri, this is the time we need our art the most." She takes a few steps back toward him. She is not angered, but fiercely passionate as she speaks. "It is what keeps us going. That's why we are all working so hard to keep the radio going. No matter what Hitler



An all too common sight.

throws at us, he is not going to silence us.” She gazes out at the cityscape that spread out before them. “We may be without food and heat, but we will never lose our ability to create, to be inspired by our great city. Our art may be all we have left, and we will not give it up.” Far from being antagonistic about it, Dmitri's mood has softened and he watches her with admiration. “I am the audience, Dmitri.” His wrinkled brow shows her he doesn't understand. “I don't paint. I can't sing. I'm not a writer, I can't even spell. But I can contribute. Art needs an audience, Dmitri. I am the audience.”

The river Neva is frozen over. The Italian Bridge arches gracefully across the canal in the background. [Same shot from when the kids were on their field trip in the opening.] On the ice is a hole with a bundled up woman drawing water from it with a wooden bucket. Several feet from the hole a body lays sprawled out on the ice, bucket still in hand. The woman pays no attention to the frozen body. With every last ounce of effort she draws her murky water up and heads back to the shore, dragging her bucket behind her across the ice. In the background Marina and Dmitri cross the bridge, but this time Marina pulls the sled.

Marina and Dmitri walk along a path in a park, Marina still pulls the sled. “Look at your shoes. They're falling off your feet! We must stop and rest.” “No, it's all right. Let's keep going.” “Please, let's rest. I have to stop.”

They sit on a park bench, exhausted. Dmitri tries to fix his shoes, pulling and pushing the leather in ways it doesn't want to go. “How are your feet? Bad? We can stay here for a while.” He shrugs. “Wouldn't matter. It's the cold that makes them bad. Resting won't help much.” They both sit in silence for a moment, resting. The huge park is covered in snow. Carefully bundled up civilians slowly cross across the many paths. Some also pull sleds with hideous cargo.

In the center of the park is a huge statue of a heroic horseman. A team of workers struggle with their weakness and coldness to enclose the grand statue in protective sandbagging. Marina and Dmitri watch them as they work. Marina recites, “Upright and glooming, the image with an arm flung wide, sat on his brazen horse astride.” She turns to Dmitri to gauge his reaction. He smiles. “Let me guess...Pushkin.” “Of course!”



Protecting The Bronze Horseman

Dmitri and Marina continue to walk through the park. It is now Dmitri's turn to pull the sled again. Marina and Dmitri see an old man walking toward them slowly. His face is blue and his eyes are vacant. Death is written on his face.

Marina watches in alarm as he passes them. She looks at Dmitri who clearly also noticed the poor man. Dmitri shakes his head gently. Marina almost starts to cry, but they keep walking.

After a few seconds, they hear a very soft, muffled thud. They turn around and see the man has dropped into the bank of snow, dead. They stare at him for an uneasy moment. “We can't take both of them.”

As Marina and Dmitri approach the gates of the cemetery they are both horrified at what they see. Outside the gate are piles and piles of wrapped corpses. The piles are more than eight feet tall, and they seem to go on forever. Loud dynamite explosions boom from inside the gates.



Too many dead to bury in the iron-hard ground, they leave them piled up to be buried after the thaw.

A frail old woman has just arrived with her dead husband on her sled. He is not even wrapped. With all of her effort she pulls him off the sled, drags him over next to the pile, and her sheer exhaustion forces her to sit down next to him to rest. Marina and Dmitri stand looking at these monstrous mounds of corpses. An army sapper comes out of the gates covered in mud and debris. He leans against the gate and drinks from a thermos. Marina calls out to him, “Is there any more room?” The sapper gestures toward the piles of bodies. “Does it look like it?” He wipes his face off with his sleeve and takes another sip from his thermos before setting it down.

Dmitri goes to the fence and looks into the cemetery. Other soldiers and sappers are working on clearing out the debris from the trenches they have blasted in the ground. Dmitri watches as a soldier drags a body to the trench and dumps it in. Marina meanwhile has approached the sapper at the gate. “I don't want to just leave her here. Can't I find a nice place for her?” “Just leave her here, we'll find a nice place for her.”

As Marina continues to plead with the sapper near the gate, Dmitri continues to watch the soldiers dumping bodies in the trenches. Some of them are not wrapped. Dmitri looks at the small pile that the soldiers are



attempting to bury. Something catches his eye. He narrows his eyes in an attempt to focus, and perhaps convince himself that he is really seeing what he thinks he's seeing.

Several of the bodies have large chunks of flesh cut from them. A woman's thigh, a child's leg, the upper arms of a man; they are all missing a large amount of flesh. He opens his mouth, but nothing comes out. He is speechless and mortified.

Getting nowhere with the sapper, Marina has wandered over to Dmitri. She sees the look of horror on his face. "What is it?" She looks over to try and see what he is looking at. But before she can see the mutilated bodies, he pulls her away. "Nothing. Let's go."

Dmitri's sister-in-law Olga is at the front of the line in the small crowded bakery. The bakery attendant is shaking her head impatiently at Olga. Not easily brushed aside, Olga demands answers. "But why can't I use it? This is my husband's card." "One person, one ration. Your husband is dead, he gets no food." "But it's for his children! He was a captain in the army, surely his children deserve better than to starve to death!" The attendant is losing patience with Olga's superior attitude and answers her brusquely. "Government orders. You show your ration card, you show your ID, you get your bread. No ID, no bread. Next!" The attendant turns to the customer behind Olga and begins to wait on her. Olga has no choice but to step aside.

Olga trudges toward her apartment building rather slowly. But when she sees Dmitri coming down the street toward her about to go into their apartment building, she quickens her pace. "Dmitri!" He sees her and waits at the door. Finally she catches up to him and is out of breath from only a few brisk steps. She says, "I'm so glad to see you." She uses her most pitiful tone of voice. "I was just at the bakery and they wouldn't give me any bread." He asks, "What do you mean, they ran out?" "No, it was just ME they wouldn't give the bread to. I've never been so insulted in my life. Aleksei was a captain, how could they think -" "You tried to use Aleksei's ration card?" "Of course. He was MY husband, I deserve to use his card." Dmitri is fed up with her. "Olga, you can't use someone else's card anymore." "But he was my husband!" "It doesn't matter anymore. It's not allowed." "But we need more food!" she cries.

She starts to get hysterical, but Dmitri uses a soothing voice and manages to calm her down. "Olga, listen. Thousands and thousands have died. That means there is going to be more food for the rest of us. But only if we each use the rations allotted for us. We will all get more, don't you see?" She absorbs what he is trying to explain, but still seems upset. She nods passively. Dmitri says, "And the ice road is open now, that should start helping things too. Sasha said it's slow going, but it's bound to help."

Hearing Sasha's name, she brightens up suddenly as she remembers something. "Did you get the apples from Sasha?" Dmitri looks forlorn. "You promised he was bringing apples." She seems oblivious to his guilty expression. "Just think, apples! Oh, the children will be so happy. Did you get them? Where are they?" "I didn't get them." She looks like she's about to cry. "But you promised! You said you were bringing apples home!" "I'm sorry! He...he said maybe next time." "Yuri and Alik will be so upset. I'm so frightened. Yuri sits on his cot all day long like an old man. He's a boy of nine and he sits all day, barely moving, barely speaking. He's dying."

Yuri is indeed sitting listlessly on his cot as Dmitri and Olga come into the apartment. Deep dark circles hang under his eyes and his face is gaunt. Dmitri puts on a friendly face. "Hello Yuri. Alik." Yuri manages a meek smile and nods to Dmitri. Alik is also there playing with his toys on the floor. Alik isn't much more lively than Yuri but he lights up when he sees Dmitri. "Uncle Dima! Did you bring us apples? Mama said you were bringing apples." Before Dmitri can speak, Olga answers for him in a cruel, dry tone of voice. "No, Dima didn't bring us apples. He brought us nothing." She turns on her heels and goes into the bedroom.

Dmitri walks to the cot and sits next to Yuri. Alik seems mildly disappointed, but continues to play with his toys. Yuri stares at the floor. Dmitri asks Yuri, "Did you go down to get your ration today?" "Yeah." Alik pipes up, "Misha had to carry him!" Dmitri is confused. "Who?" "The neighbor downstairs. Mama made him carry Yuri to get his rations." "I see. Not feeling too good, huh?" Yuri shakes his head. Dmitri is only partially managing to cover his alarm at the state of Yuri's health. Alik says, "Mama yells at us all the time now. She cries a lot too." Dmitri tries to explain to the boys, "Your mother is going through a very difficult time. You have to forgive her moods. I guess we all do." Dmitri watches as Alik plays with a toy truck. Yuri lies down on his cot and closes his eyes. Dmitri tells the boys, "Tell you what. Tomorrow I will bring us all some food. I promise." Alik looks at his uncle and smiles. Yuri pays no attention.



Starving man with one day's ration of food – bread made with sawdust.

Inside a cold makeshift military barracks Sasha lays on a cot bundled up in his heavy coat. One of his comrades lays in the bunk next to him. Sasha is deep in thought, not his usual self. One his comrades says, "Hey Sasha, look what my sister sent me." He holds up an American movie star magazine that is tattered and worn. Sasha only manages a slight nod of acknowledgment. "It's in English, I can't read it, but there's some really beautiful women in here. My sister says that one of the articles says something about everyone in England really supporting us." The Comrade seems disappointed at Sasha's lack of response. He goes on, "Says that learning Russian and buying Russian things is all the rage over there now. Funny huh? Of course who cares right? Look at the beauty on page twelve!" The Comrade throws the magazine toward Sasha, but Sasha doesn't catch it. Sasha picks it up from the floor and puts it on the small table between their cots. "I'll look at it later."

Sasha's lack of good humor puzzles his comrade who tries to joke with him. "Okay, listen. Hitler is in his bunker one day. He is screaming hysterically at the top of his lungs, his arms are flailing about, he's kicking and stomping his feet on the ground. His screaming and shrieking causes another officer to rush into his office. The officer asks 'What's the matter?' Hitler says 'Oh nothing, I was just thinking.'" The joke causes the comrade to bust up into laughter. Sasha smiles only a little bit. Comrade asks, "What's the matter? That's my best Hitler joke!" Sasha says, "I almost gave myself up to Hitler."

His comrade looks puzzled. "What do you mean?" Sasha says, "Out on the lake when I went under. You know, I was terrified. About a split second before I went under I heard the ice crack. I knew I was going under. I've never been more afraid in my life." His comrade brushes off Sasha's concern. "Aw, you came out alright, didn't you? I think it scared our young bookseller more than you. He's afraid of his shadow, poor kid." Sasha says, "No, you don't understand. Before I went under I was terrified. But then when I was under, suddenly, somehow, everything wasn't so bad anymore. It was quiet. It was calm under the ice. And for a second I thought 'Would it be so bad to die?'" His comrade doesn't take him seriously and laughs at him. "Oh come on, Sasha." "No, really. My fear just sort of disappeared and I thought that if I just let myself sink, if I never came up again, I'd be alright. No more hunger, no more fear. No more watching my family starve. It was almost peaceful under the ice. I could see the panic of the men above, their arms all thrusting into the water, the kid thrashing around, panicking. And I just thought 'Do I really want to go back up?'" His comrade's expression is grim. He knows that Sasha is serious this time. "What made you decide to come back up?" "I didn't decide. They yanked me out. If I hadn't been attached to that rope, I'm not sure I would have come back up. How could I do that? How could I let Hitler win?" "You didn't. He hasn't won." "But if they hadn't pulled me out -" "Sasha, sometimes your comrades know what you want better than you do. They knew you wanted to live. We're all in this together."

Sasha considers this as he settles back down on his cot. He closes his eyes, attempting to sleep but his comrade interrupts him again. "Sasha? Don't tell that story to anyone else, okay?"

9 am sunrise in Leningrad



The late-rising sun casts a gloomy glow over the snowy streets of Leningrad. Dmitri makes his way along the street as best he can in the bitter cold, limping severely now.

He approaches a clearing in the street where a bulletin board stands. A few shady-looking men stand off to the side. Dmitri approaches them with caution. "What do you have?" A shady-looking black market man answers, "Meat cakes. A thousand roubles." "What kind of meat?" Dmitri asks. "Don't know. Just meat. You want 'em?" A sense of sudden dreadful apprehension seizes Dmitri. He covers his mouth with his hand to hide his disgust. "You interested or not?" Hunger wins out over disgust, and Dmitri succumbs to the offer of food. Nods. The Shady Black Market Man cautiously pulls a few small meat cakes wrapped in paper from his coat. Dmitri regards them with a mix of horror and desperation. Dmitri offers, "I have a gold ring. It's got a ruby set in it."

He holds the ring out for him to see. The shady black market man inspects the ring carefully and makes an offer. "Two meat cakes." Dmitri nods and takes them quickly, turns and leaves.

Dmitri stands at their small stove frying the "meat" in a pan. Alik stands at his side, watching the meat and licking his lips. Even weakened Yuri has managed to get up off his cot to see what Dmitri is cooking. Alik asks, "Is it ready yet? Can I have some?" "In a minute. Just hold out for a minute, boys. Then you can have all you want. We have to save some for your mama too."

A large billow of smoke wafts up from the frying pan. Alik happily and greedily inhales a huge whiff of it, but Dmitri turns away when the smoke reaches his nose.

A very drawn and pale Olga arrives home, exhausted. She starts speaking the second she is through the door. "I heard today that soon they will be cutting the rations down to -" She sees and smells the food Dmitri is frying. She is wide-eyed and nearly delirious. "What do you have?!" Alik shouts, "Mama, Dmitri brought us meat!"

Olga rushes to the stove, and nearly thrusts her hand into the hot frying pan to snatch a piece. Dmitri grabs her hand away at the last second. "Wait! It's hot!" "Where did you get that? Oh my God, meat!" Olga rushes around the room grabbing plates and setting the small table excitedly. She tells the boys, "Sit down Yuri. Alik, here put this bread on the table. Cut it for us." Little Alik takes a tiny block of bread to the table, and starts to cut it into four tiny pieces. The bread is so coarse that it takes all his effort to cut it.

Olga hovers over the stove anxiously. Dmitri finally tells her, "Okay, I think it's ready." Olga, Yuri and Alik rush to sit down at the table. Olga notices Dmitri divvies up the fried meat into *three* portions, not four. "You're not having any?" she asks. Dmitri shakes his head. "No, you three share it." She leans over and kisses him on the cheek. "Oh, Dmitri, you're so good to us."

The three of them dive ravenously into their meal, practically ignoring their portion of bread in favor for the meat. Dmitri picks at his bread while watching the others eat.

One night Dmitri returns to the Radio House to visit Marina. They sit at the table with only a single candle to illuminate them. Katya sits next to Dmitri doing work in a schoolbook. Ilya also sits beside Dmitri, his nose buried in a book. Marina and Dmitri speak quietly so as not to disturb him.

Far on the other side of the room a woman sits reading into the microphone. Next to her is Shostakovich's aide, pushing paperwork at the woman. Handsome, fit, and healthy looking, he looks out of place in this dying city. In a corner a young woman finishes wrapping a body in a sheet. Such gruesome matters now go unnoticed.

Dmitri asks Marina, "What will you do after the war?" "I don't know. Maybe go back to publishing. I think after the blockade is broken there will be so much to publish." She nods toward Ilya. "Ilya is writing about our experiences, and I think a lot of great literature will come out of this." Dmitri smiles at her unfailing optimism. She asks Dmitri, "What will you do?" "I don't know. Go back to the factory I suppose. My dreams were never very big." "Perhaps you just haven't found your niche yet. Be patient." "I tried to join the army when I was 18, but they wouldn't have me of course. My brother Aleksei had enlisted a few years before me. My father was so proud of him." "Never mind. You're destined for something better." Dmitri sighs, "I wish I could believe that. My father worked at the same shoe factory that I work in now. After I couldn't get accepted in the army my father got me a job there. He always said that same thing, that I was destined for better things." He fumbles with a book that is on the table in front of him, not looking at Marina. She watches him as he continues, "My father worked in that factory for his whole life. Right up until he died. He worked on the caster machine, was proud of that. But he told me that he prayed that I would get out of there long before I climbed the ranks. He always said 'get out before you get too locked in.'" She nods, "I'm sure he's right. You won't end up like that." Dmitri stares at the floor like a guilty little child. "Dmitri..." He still studies his boots. She says, "Don't do that." "Do what?" "Please. You wear your shame like a heavy winter coat. Does it keep you warm?" For a moment he looks like a chided young boy. He frowns. Then he smiles and says, "Coat of shame?" He chuckles, "Who do you think you are talking to, Dostoevsky?" She smiles at his good-natured joking. He adds, "Perhaps you can write after all. You see, it's in your blood too." "But not yours?" He shakes his head. "No. Not me. I just work in a shoe factory." "Look at the humble beginnings of Stalin. He was born into poverty, and he raised himself above it to rule this country." "Stalin...what has he done for us?" Marina is surprised. "What do you mean? He's the greatest leader we've ever had." "Where is he now? Where is your great leader right now? I'll tell you where, in Moscow. Is he here with us? No." "You can't expect him to stay here in Leningrad." Dmitri states firmly, "Stalin has left us here to die. He's as bad as Hitler." Marina gasps. Even Katya looks up from her schoolwork at Dmitri. But he does not retract or offer apologies.

Dmitri's comments catch the ear of Shostakovich's aide. The aide turns to see who is making such blasphemous comments. His stare is icy, and he shoots daggers with his eyes at Dmitri. Dmitri does not notice the aide, he continues his tirade. "After the blockade he turned his back on us. He has written us off and now his only concern is preventing the same thing from happening to Moscow. He abandoned us, Marina!" She considers what he says, not agreeing, but not disagreeing. Katya looks confused, no doubt her first time hearing someone speak ill of Stalin. "You think Stalin is going to let you write your books? They'll never see the light of day." The wind has been taken out of Marina's sails. "I have faith he will still save us. I have to." Dmitri shakes his head in discontent. Katya goes back to her schoolbook. Dmitri asks, "You understand, don't you Ilya?" Ilya doesn't respond. "Hey, Ilya, you listening?" Dmitri jabs Ilya's shoulder. This knocks Ilya off balance and he falls to the floor, dead. Marina and Dmitri gasp and are startled out of their seats. They stare at him, not quite believing it. Katya brightens up, hops off her chair and starts taking Ilya's shoes off. "Now Dmitri can have his boots!" Marina and Dmitri watch in horror at Katya's all too casual acceptance of death.

Dmitri stands at the stove in his apartment boiling a pot of water. Over the pot in the steam he hold a piece of wallpaper, obviously taken from his own wall. After steaming it for a few more seconds he hesitantly takes it into his mouth, bites down on it, and slowly pulls the paper back out. The gunky paste is left in his mouth, stuck to his teeth. After finally managing to swallow the disgusting mixture, he repeats the whole process.



Sasha is outside the town of Kokkorevo at 8 a.m., pre-dawn. Sasha jumps out of the cab of his truck when he sees Dmitri approaching. He gives his big sloppy grin to Dmitri as he goes to embrace him. Sasha gushes, "I knew I could count on you!" The two of them embrace in a bear hug. "Actually I was hoping to maybe just ride along." Sasha's enthusiasm is not diminished by hearing this. Sasha says, "So I count on your for moral support instead. We're in need of that too. I see your feet are better?" Dmitri sticks one of his legs out for Sasha to inspect. "New boots," says Dmitri. "Good. You'll need them. We don't turn the heaters on in the trucks. Pulls on the engine too much. We're lucky to have enough gas at all." Sasha slaps Dmitri on the back in his happiness as climb into Sasha's truck.



Sasha and Dmitri are now in a convoy of trucks worming their way across the lake. The ice road is now more established and well-worn. The late winter sun has not yet risen, but the whiteness of the lake and everything around it gives a nice glow to the surroundings. The trucks all have their lights on. German planes buzz in the sky, above the heavy clouds. Dmitri asks, "Isn't it dangerous to have our lights on?" Sasha gives a dismissive shrug. "Doesn't matter. At first we kept them off. But we soon realized that when the Germans want to find us, they drop flares on us to see. Relentless bastards."

Dmitri laughs at this, much to Sasha's surprise. Dmitri explains, "Relentless? Did you think they would bomb us for a week and tire of it and give up? Why should they?" "Dmitri! Stop being such a defeatist!"

Sasha keeps his hands on the wheel, the ice road is chunky and unnavigable in places. The truck frequently lurches, bounces and slides on the ice. Dmitri won't give Sasha a break, "Oh come on, even Stalin no longer protects us. He's down in Moscow in the Kremlin having a cognac with his officers." "Dmitri!" Sasha's voice is full of disdain, though his tone implies this is a familiar conversation for him and Dmitri. "Comrade Stalin is doing everything he can to break the blockade," says Sasha. Dmitri counters, "Yeah, no doubt pleased that Moscow is under no such strain." "He will save us! He will save Mother Russia from the German bastards." Dmitri shakes his head and smiles resignedly. "You and Marina would love each other." The argument quicken forgotten, Sasha is now excited at the mention of a woman's name. "Marina? And just who is Marina?" "She works at the Radio House, the one I gave the news of the ice road to." Sasha is now grinning ear to ear despite Dmitri's nonchalance. Sasha bursts into laughter. "Dmitri has a woman!"

Out on the frozen Lake Ladoga dozens of trucks slowly move across the lake toward the shore. The somber winter day sun still well hidden behind heavy snow clouds. Along the now well-traveled Road of Life are frequent checkpoints and rest stops. Though moving very slowly, the convoy of trucks continue on.

The German planes still buzz overhead, but the low heavy snow clouds are blessings in disguise, keeping the ice road well under cover. Some of the large trucks have had their doors removed.



Dmitri looks ahead and sees the truck in front of them is missing its doors. "What happened to that truck? How did it get damaged?" "Oh, it's not damaged. They took the doors off on purpose." "Coldest winter for decades, no heat, not enough warm clothing. They needed the fresh air?" "Some of the drivers take the doors off because...." but Sasha is reluctant to finish his sentence. Dmitri tries to fill in the blanks. "They needed more hardship?" Sasha tries to sound casual as he explains, "Sometimes the ice gets soft and the truck goes under. We've learned that once you go under the ice, it's easier to escape if there's no door." Dmitri considers this grim reality for a moment. "Can't they just leave the doors open?" "Tried it. Force of the water just slams them shut." Dmitri looks concerned. He stares at their heavy closed doors and

asks, "And we have our doors on...why?" Sasha is dismissive, "We'll be fine. I just can't handle being any colder." Dmitri puts his hand on the door handle, ready. Sasha laughs. "Relax. We'll be fine."

Sasha calls Dmitri's bluff of nonchalance about Marina and tries to get his goat. "So this Marina. She and I would get along you say?" Dmitri chuckles, "Well, you both could sit for hours and agree on how wonderful Stalin is. But I think that is the extent of your similarities." "Well you know, sometimes opposites attract. Is she pretty? Would she keep me warm at night?" Apparently used to Sasha's good-natured attempts to rile him up, Dmitri keeps his cool. "She's a member of the intelligentsia. She worships Pushkin and Shostakovich. She reads literature over the P.A. system everyday. I hardly think she'd be interested in an unruly, crazy man like you. Have

you ever even seen a book?" Sasha laughs uproariously at this. Sasha speaks to the air, "My friend Dmitri has been struck by Cupid's arrow! The sweetest type of wound to endure." Dmitri is embarrassed now and ignores Sasha. Dmitri spies a tiny wooden icon strapped to the visor of the truck. He points to it. "Your Stalin wouldn't approve of that." Sasha dares to briefly take one hand off the unsteady wheel, kisses his fingers and transfers the kiss to the icon, touching it gently. "Even Stalin himself cannot take away my God."



Sasha's tiny icon strapped to his visor.

Marina, Katya and their middle-aged friend Polina plod slowly across the wide entrance to a train station in Leningrad. Military men patrol the area. Though Polina is still a heavysset woman she doesn't look healthy. Polina says, "If Ivan Ivanovich doesn't have any more tucked away somewhere, I don't know what we'll do." Marina reminds her, "He's more of a poet than a musician. Mostly books I'm afraid." "My voice will give out if I have to read one more book on the air."

Katya looks casually at the vivid Stalinist propaganda posters that plaster the train station's facade. She is absorbed in them as the two adults talk. Marina says, "Plus he's been nearly deaf for the last ten years." Marina keeps one eye on Katya as she wanders ahead. She continues, "Probably hasn't bought any records in years."

Katya sees a pool of white papers littering the sidewalk. Ever curious, she bends over to pick one up. Marina shrieks at her. "Katya, no! Stop! Don't touch it!"

Marina runs as best she can to Katya, who is surprised at her mother's outburst. Polina also stands puzzled. Marina shouts, "Come here, don't pick that up!" Marina glances to the military men still wandering around the train station. A few watch her with interest. Katya asks, "Why? What is it?" Now Katya is even more curious to pick up the paper. But Marina only says, "Keep going, let's go. Keep walking." Marina rushes them away from the papers, away from the soldiers. Polina doesn't understand either, "Marina?" Marina insists, "Just go."

Traffic on the ice road has come to a stop. A bus has gone under the ice and a large truck is trying to haul it out. Sasha slows down, rolls down his window to ask a sentry what's happening. The sentry says, "Oh God, it's awful. The first bus of evacuees went under." Dmitri and Sasha exchange sad glances. Sasha agonizes, "No. No, no, no!" Dmitri asks the sentry how many were on the bus. "The bus was full. Women and children. We thought the ice was safe, that's why we started letting them -" Dmitri interrupts, "How many did you save?" "They just couldn't get down there, it was too cold..." Sasha hangs his head, "Oh my God."

As the bus is pulled up slowly Dmitri and Sasha see several dead women and children through the bus windows, their faces blue and their eyes vacant and wide. The sentry goes on, "That was the very first bus, so it was packed. We just couldn't...we didn't know..." "My God," says Dmitri. Sasha snatches his icon down from his visor, closes his eyes and offers a silent prayer while clutching it.

Marina, Polina and Katya stand in an apartment building hallway. Marina tells Katya, "Go ahead, darling, go play with Koko." Marina and Polina wait and watch until Katya goes inside the apartment. Only when she is inside does Marina turn to Polina and say, "The Germans have been dropping propaganda on us. Last week they sent down fliers telling the women to wear their white dresses at night so that when the planes come they will be able to see them, to avoid hitting them." Polina finally registers what Marina is saying. "Those poor gullible women," says Polina. Marina tells her, "Now you can get shot if you pick up any papers in the street." Marina and Polina finally go into the cozy apartment of the poet to meet Katya standing, confused. She holds a dog's collar with a tiny jingling bell. "Where's Koko?" Katya asks.

Several minutes later the gaunt old bearded poet, Ivan Ivanovich, is huddled near his oven on a stool, sobbing. Marina sits next to him, with a comforting arm around him. He is inconsolable as he sobs. "I did it. How could I do it?" Ivan asks. He holds the collar tenderly in his hands. He turns it round and round so the bell jingles lightly. "I had to Marina, I had to. I'm starving." This makes him wail even harder, and Marina cannot help but cry too. "Oh my God," he wails. He clutches his bony hands to his mouth, shrieking in disgust and horror. "How could I do it? My poor Koko."

Kobona, the small town on the eastern shore of Lake Ladoga has been turned into a thriving port. Kobona is outside of the blockade. Dmitri jumps out of Sasha's truck and is shocked to see the thriving people of the port scurrying and hurrying to load supplies into the trucks. Most of the crates are marked "grain" and "flour".

There are no deathly thin, starving people here. Life goes on relatively normally here, and Dmitri's eyes can barely take it all in. Sasha leads him to a small shack set up near the loading docks where several military men stand and smoke. As Dmitri and Sasha pass, Dmitri hears a snippet of their conversation. "...no point if Stalin stops the food supplies. All this for nothing..." Dmitri stops in his tracks. Sasha shakes his head and gives him a look that says "Nah, he doesn't know what he's talking about," and keeps going. Dmitri looks the military man directly in the eyes. The military man is quite taken aback at seeing Dmitri's gaunt condition. "What did you say?"

Dmitri asks the military man. "Nothing. Just rumors." "Tell me." Sasha doubles back and tries to pry Dmitri away. Dmitri yanks himself out of Sasha's grip. Dmitri insists, "Tell me!" The military man relents, "This ice road is putting a strain on the army, the supplies. They say Stalin might divert the supplies." "Oh, I see, we're too much trouble, is that it?" Sasha intervenes, "Dima, don't shoot the messenger, come on." But Dmitri goes on, "The only reason Hitler isn't marching into Leningrad is that he doesn't want to bother to take prisoners! He'd rather wait for us to all die, then he can march into the city and it's all his. All we have to do is hold out!" The military man is a bit embarrassed, can only say, "I'm not saying I agree, I'm just telling you that...maybe he thinks we're flogging a dead horse here." "You mean why feed us if we're going to die anyway? All we have to do is hold out! If we don't, Leningrad will fall!"

Sasha is really embarrassed now, trying to pull Dmitri away from the group of innocent military men. Sasha finally succeeds in pulling Dmitri away. Sasha asks, "Do you think attacking them will help? They're just drivers!" "Why didn't you tell me?! See! I told you! Stalin! He thinks we won't make it, why not just cut us off now and save the food? Save the trouble!" "Dima, I don't—" "How can you defend him? He has no idea. Does he know what we are doing? What we go through?" Dmitri starts to poke and push Sasha, who merely backs up and doesn't fight back. Dmitri is angry, wants a fight, "Go ahead, defend him! Be blind!" Sasha's anger builds up, grows as Dmitri pushes him, taunts him. Dmitri screams at him, "He's going to cut us off, thinks we won't make it anyway! Why even bother helping us, Sasha?!" Sasha reaches his limit and lunges at Dmitri, but at the last second he does not hit him, does not touch him. This infuriates Dmitri. "Do it!" screams Dmitri. Sasha lunges at Dmitri, this time easily knocking him to the ground harshly. Sasha yells, "There!" Sasha backs away after only one hit. "See?! You're not an invalid! Are you happy now?!"

After the few seconds it takes for the testosterone to boil off, the two are silent. They huff and puff to catch their breath while silently looking at each other. They cool off quickly. "Okay," says Dmitri. Dmitri nearly smiles. "Now help me up you asshole." Sasha helps Dmitri to his feet. They walk toward the shack. Dmitri is now stiff and tries to shake it off. "You pushed hard enough," says Dmitri. "You big baby. You landed in two feet of soft snow."

Inside the shack several Kobona dock workers huddle around a small stove drinking tea. Sasha greets them with brief hellos. The other men make room for them around the stove.

The men see Dmitri, so painfully thin and gaunt, obviously a Leningrader. They are almost startled to see him, and several of them even give up their seats, insisting he sit nearest to the fire.

One man hands over his tea to Dmitri. Dmitri's pride nearly makes him decline the gesture, but the man insists, and Dmitri takes the hot tea with gratitude. This show of genuine support and sympathy nearly chokes Dmitri up and he can only nod his thanks to the men.

Before the men leave they look to Dmitri with deep respect. One Kobona man says to Dmitri, "We will get as many ninety-sevens through as we can." Though Dmitri clearly doesn't understand the man, he smiles and nods. The men bundle up and go out into the cold again.

Sasha takes this opportunity to take their mugs and try and make himself some tea from the meager supplies left over. "Ninety-sevens?" Dmitri asks. Sasha is busy making his tea as he answers, rummaging for a spoon, some sugar perhaps. "Ninety-sevens, the trains. Kobona is too small to handle the supply demands. The supplies are coming in from places like Vologda on the railroads." Sasha is distracted for a second by a discovery, "Ah, look! Sugar! All of the trains coming in to the ports with supplies for Leningrad are in the '97' series." Sasha happily spoons some precious sugar into his tea before continuing, "All across Russia whenever a '97 train' comes through a station, everyone stops what they're doing to make sure they get through first." Dmitri is visibly touched hearing this. He looks down into his tea. "Stalin is not going to save us. Our comrades will save us."

After their short break Dmitri and Sasha head back toward Sasha's truck which is now fully loaded. Despite his new boots, Dmitri still limps quite a bit, and his severe weakness does not help matters. Sasha stops him before they reach the truck. "Dmitri, listen. You do realize that you are now outside the blockade? Why don't you stay? You could help load the trucks. There's more food here. We could get you a place to stay and you could—" "Stay? Here?" "Yes! There's no need to go back. You've broken through the ring!" Dmitri looks back to the docks and it seems like that thought hadn't occurred to him. Sasha adds, "They're always needing help here. You could stay." "Why don't you stay?" "Me? Because I can't. I have to drive." "A soldier's duty." Sasha asks, "But why should you go back? We could use you here." Dmitri thinks a moment, obviously considering the chance of freedom. Sasha tries harder to convince him, "They evacuated so many people already, but not enough. People are dying for the chance to evacuate." Sasha seems to read Dmitri's mind when he adds, "Those who are evacuated are not cowards." But Dmitri shakes his head, "No. I'm going back. I'm needed there." Sasha sighs, knows there's no point in arguing with Dmitri.



Dmitri sits in the small inner office of the music conservatory in Leningrad waiting patiently on a threadbare sofa. A pale young scurvy-ridden secretary finally comes through a side door. She tells him, "I'm sorry to keep you waiting. We've only got a skeleton crew here now I'm afraid. Oh. No pun intended."

Inside the office of Shostakovich's aide across from Dmitri at an enormous desk. The aide sits behind the desk, surprisingly healthy-looking, his outfit is well-tailored and he is well-groomed. He asks, "What can I do for you?" "Shostakovich," Dmitri says matter-of-factly. The aide eyes Dmitri suspiciously. Recognition registers with the Aide, but not Dmitri. "What about him?" "I wanted to know if I could speak with him." The aide raises an eyebrow. "Speak with him? Oh I'm afraid that's impossible." "But it's important. I'd really like the chance to talk to him in person." Dmitri now has a quiet desperation about him. But he's not easily dissuaded. The aide says, "But that's quite imposs-" "I know it's an unusual request. I'm not even a music student, but please hear me out. I heard he's written his Seventh Symphony, and I must hear it, I mean there's someone I know who -" "But, you can't -" "- must hear it. She works at the Radio House, and -" The aide is now losing patience with Dmitri. "Young man! You cannot speak to Shostakovich because he has been evacuated to Moscow! He is no longer in the city." Though Dmitri is speaking over him, he hears enough to realize that he his begging is of no use. "Evacuated?" "Yes. In October. He and his family finally agreed to leave the city." Dmitri slowly gets up from his chair, clearly disappointed. The aide tries to maintain Dmitri's attention, speaking louder, though Dmitri is no longer interested in him. "It was best of course. This is no place for a man of his immense talent. I'm headed back to Moscow myself soon. He needs me. So you see, the denial of your request is not personal, but purely logistical."

Dmitri spots a stack of records by the door, maybe twenty records at most. He lights up. "Records!" The aide approaches Dmitri as Dmitri crouches down and dives into the records excitedly. "The Radio House...we need these!" The aide stands right next to Dmitri who is still crouched down rifling through the records. "Can we please have them? Borrow them of course I mean. They are desperate to keep the Radio on the air. They've set up P.A. speakers throughout the whole city to -" "Yes, I'm quite aware of the Radio House. We work closely with them." Dmitri is glad to hear this. "Then you know! They'd love to have these records. May I take a few?" "No, I'm afraid you may not."

Dmitri now takes a good look at the aide's boots next to him. They are gloriously shiny and perfect in every way. Untouched by the hardships of a Leningrad winter. Dmitri stares at them. "But...we need them." "Do you consider yourself a good Soviet citizen?" asks the aide. Puzzled, Dmitri considers the seemingly irrelevant question. He swallows hard. "Of course." "Is that so? A firm supporter of Stalin?" Dmitri winces. "I...want to keep the Radio House going..." The aide continues, "Those against Stalin are against Mother Russia." Dmitri can't take his eyes off the aide's perfect boots. "But I...I want to keep Leningrad alive...Stalin will know that we aren't giving up..." The aide still towers over him menacingly as he says, "You think you know better than Stalin about our position in the war? Without your input Stalin will be lost? Do you not trust him?" "He isn't hearing us," Dmitri states. "And you think borrowing a few records will make Stalin hear you?" Dmitri struggles to his feet, taking a firm stand in front of the aide. "It's not for Stalin. It's for his people." The aide turns on his heels and returns to his desk. "I'm sorry, no. You cannot have them." "Not even one? Just one." "We still have students here. And in Moscow. People will burn anything these days. Such destruction. We simply can't spare them for your little pet project." The aide nods at the records in Dmitri's hands. "Those are the last ones we have."

Dmitri glares at the aide, the aide returns a smug glance, then begins to turn his attention to the work on his desk. Dmitri quietly sets the records down on the desk and leaves empty-handed. After a moment's quiet consideration the aide picks up the records and exits through another door behind his desk.

The Aide stumbles through the small dark storage room. He make his way to a window that is blocked with boxes. He moves the boxes, letting the light pour in. The room is instantly illuminated. There are stacks and stacks of record albums. Hundreds of them. He tosses the albums in his hand onto another pile, leaves and shuts the door behind him.

Olga waits in a long line outside of a bakery. It is another overcast day and more German planes are overhead, shellings boom in the distance. The other women in the long line look anxiously at the sky. The heavy, low clouds obscure the exact position of the planes, but they sound ominously near. The worried woman behind Olga responds to whispering she hears. "They're out of bread? Is it true? Not enough?" Olga hears this and is filled with panic. She cranes her neck to look at the front of the line. "How much more?" Olga asks. German planes scream directly overhead and the women practically have to yell to be heard. The worried woman says, "I don't know. Maybe only enough for twenty more of us. That's what I just heard!"

Suddenly a bomb hits nearby and the fifty or more women shriek and run for cover. The building next to the bakery is hit and bits of brick and mortar rain down on the street. The noise is deafening with the screeching of the



Bombed building

bombs and the shrieking of women. Several more nearby buildings are blown to bits before the roar of the planes starts to fade away. More than a dozen dead bodies are strewn in the street in front of the bakery.

Before the airborne debris can reach the ground the women are scrambling out from their hiding places. They crawl like animals over the rubble and the bodies of the dead women, desperate to get back in line as soon as they can. Olga, wild-eyed and manic, crawls over the dead worried woman, and bolts back to the bread line.

Dmitri comes out of the music conservatory and listlessly looks up and down the street. He looks up into the sky after hearing the faint sound of anti-aircraft fire. The scurvy secretary comes up behind him from the inner office. "Excuse me. You wanted to meet Shostakovich?" Dmitri clarifies, "I wanted to talk to him." "I know him. I studied with him for three years." She seems a bit too eager to help, suspicious. Dmitri pays her little mind. "He's been evacuated," he says. "To Moscow, yes I know. But he's coming back to collect some of his things," she says. This gets Dmitri's

attention. "When?" "Tomorrow. He's only allowed to stay one day." "Can you get me to see him? Can you arrange a meeting?" he asks. She cocks her head to the side and narrows her eyes at him. "Depends," she says. He gets the idea. "What do you want? I can get you jewelry, gold." She scoffs, "I can't eat gold. If you get me some bread perhaps, a loaf? Some potatoes?" "Look how about I give you a gold locket? You can trade it yourself for whatever you like. Please. Come with me now, I can get it for you." She considers his offer, looking him over for a moment. "Where do you live?" she asks.

Marina sits at the Radio House desk with the microphone in front of her. She has piled books up on the desk as high as her chin. She rests her head on the pile of books as she speaks wearily. She has no strength left to hold her own head up as she reads. "...so the new, smaller rations will go into effect tomorrow. We will hold out, fellow Leningraders, we will be strong." She has to stop reading to catch her breath and rest for a few seconds. "Polina Platanova will now read you a short story by Gogol. Please stay tuned." It takes all of her strength to lift her head from the pile of books and switch off her microphone.

Polina takes over at the next desk, reading slowly and carefully from her tattered book. Marina leaves the broadcast booth. She is unsteady on her feet and she very carefully makes her way to her cot in the corner where Katya sits listlessly. "Mama, you look so tired. You need a nap." "Perhaps I do, Katya. Maybe I'll just lie down for a while. Why don't you go down to Polina's for your lessons." Katya looks confused. She looks to the booth where her mother had just been. Katya says, "But she's on the air. She just took your place." Marina looks to the booth and sees that Polina is indeed in the booth, a few feet from where Marina had just sat. "Oh. Yes. Of course." Katya looks to her disorientated mother. Marina only smiles as she lays down. "Get some sleep, Mama."

Dmitri and the Scurvy Secretary stand outside Dmitri's door. "Don't say anything about the ring to my sister-in-law," he says. They go inside.

Olga sits on her bed. She hears the front door open and shut in the main room. "Uncle Dima is here. He's a good uncle, isn't he?" Dmitri and the Scurvy Secretary's muffled conversation can be heard in the living room. Olga continues, "Wasn't that meat delicious?" The brief conversation in the living room is over, and Olga hears the front door shut. "We should be thankful we have him to take care of us." Dmitri's footsteps approach the bedroom, then he appears at the bedroom door. "Hello Dmitri. Guess what? I got us some potatoes today. Two of them. They cost me my mother's gold earrings. They're full of eyes, but we can cut them out." Dmitri leans against the door jamb. Olga says, "Please go get Yuri's blanket. It's on the cot. He's cold." She smiles sweetly at Dmitri. He doesn't move. Olga speaks to Yuri, "You'll be warmer soon. My mother bought that blanket when she was in Ireland. It's the finest wool in the world." Dmitri slowly approaches Olga. He gently puts his hand on her shoulder. Dmitri speaks gently, "Olga, let me take him away." She turns back to Yuri's body. His eyes are still open, but he is clearly dead. Olga smooths his hair back. "No. He's fine where he is. Can you get the blanket please?" Dmitri leaves the room. "Won't potatoes be nice, Yuri? I haven't had a potato in months." Dmitri brings the blanket and kneels down beside her. He implores, "Please, let me take him." "Too bad I couldn't get any cabbage, I could have made us all some schee. Yuri loves my schee." She caresses Yuri's cheek. Dmitri says nothing, lets her touch her son and adjust his collar. She tucks the blanket in around Yuri's body, tucking it under his chin as if he were still alive. She brushes his hair back from his face again. She asks, "He has his father's hair, doesn't he Dmitri?" Dmitri puts his head down into his hands.

There are several trucks in front of Sasha's truck out on the ice road on Lake Ladoga. The clouds today are less than usual, and bits of pale blue sky peek through. As the trucks in front of Sasha pass a soldier on duty at a check point they wave to him one by one. The ever present German planes drone overhead.

With bits of weak winter sunshine coming down through the break in the clouds, Sasha's mood is light, even more than usual. He whistles as he drives, alone in his cab. He reaches the check point, rolls down his window and calls down to him. "Hello! How many today?" "Forty seven!" "What's the record so far?" Sasha asks. Before the soldier can answer, a bomb hits the ice in front of one of the doorless trucks ahead of Sasha. The roar is deafening as water and shards of ice pour down.

The ice under the other truck cracks and the truck is knocked over onto its side. Sasha leaps out of his truck and runs over to the overturned truck. The soldier warns, "Not too close! The ice! The ice!" Sasha freezes in his tracks, not daring to go any closer. Thanks to the door being missing, the driver easily pops out, scrambles in a panic to get out before the truck sinks. A few other soldiers have gone to help him and they pull him to safety.



Checkpoint on the ice road.

But the crates in the truck have broken open, and the grain is pouring out, sinking into the water. The group is horrified to see the precious cargo pouring into the lake. Sasha yells, "No! Oh, please no! The grain!" They can do nothing but watch as the grain pours out into the water, and the truck slowly slides off the breaking ice into the lake. They stand there dumbstruck. Then the soldier screams at them, "Back up! Back the trucks up! The ice'll break!" The men rush to their trucks. The soldier hops into Sasha's truck with him. Sasha is panicking, and it takes him longer than it should to start the truck again. "Back up! Back up!" barks the soldier.

The other trucks are backing up quickly away from the hole and the fragile ice. The trucks are coming straight toward Sasha's truck. Get the damn truck started! There are bombs being dropped all along the convoy wreaking havoc everywhere now. "Hurry! Back us up!" Sasha finally gets the truck started and throws it into reverse and floors it. The truck slides and fishtails on the ice and crashes into the empty check point booth turning it into a pile of wood scraps.

Finally when they are a safe distance from the hole, they stop. Sasha sighs, still looking at the sinking truck. "That grain could have saved a hundred people." Sasha spies the Driver of the overturned truck, safe and sound thanks to his doorless escape route. Sasha looks at his own heavy doors. He turns to the Soldier, "Can you help me take these doors off?"

There is a long line of trucks now stopped on the ice. There are huge holes in the ice at the head of the line. There are two groups of men tied together with ropes, the ones on the ends with a bag of red flags. Sasha is again in one of these teams, but he is a flag man this time. One group heads north around the edge of the damaged ice, the other group heads south. The damage is extensive, a long walk to circumnavigate it either way. The many trucks behind the damage sit helplessly and idly, waiting.

Dmitri is at the same cemetery as before, but at night this time. There is no one there now. He pulls a sled with Yuri's wrapped corpse on it to the gate. He rests for a second before trying to kick the gate open. The pain in his feet after kicking the iron gate makes him cry out. The iron gate doesn't open. Dmitri is already out of breath. He looks at the piles of corpses still waiting to be buried. He kicks the gate again, and this time he screams in pain, and frustration.

Dmitri drags the sled over the uneven ground along the fence at the side of the cemetery. He is far from the gate now, and the fence is less stable out this far. Finally he finds a weakened part of the fence where someone has kicked it in leaving a gap big enough to crawl under. "God damned cannibals." He gets himself through the hole in the fence and with much difficulty pulls Yuri's body through.

He drags the body through the snow. Dmitri is so weak that he has to stop every few feet to rest, despite Yuri's small body. Drag a few feet, stop. Huffing and puffing. Drag some more. Stop. Dmitri sweats despite the freezing temperature. Drag a few yards, stop. Wipe the sweat off his forehead.

Much later Dmitri is in the middle of the cemetery now, far from the gate and the open trenches full of the corpses with missing bits of flesh. This part of the cemetery is full of older gravesites already, but he finds a small area free of tombstones.





Dmitri finds a place for Yuri's body.

He gets down on his hands and knees and clears the snow from the ground. He claws at the frozen ground with his gloved hands, not able to make the smallest dent in the iron-hard ground. He is near tears in frustration and grief as he continues to claw at the ground, a totally futile act. He gives up, leaning back on a tombstone in exhaustion. He looks over toward the front gate, then pulls Yuri behind a tombstone, hiding him as best he can.

Before leaving him, Dmitri unwraps Yuri's legs, and carefully takes Yuri's boots off. They are well-made and in good condition. He stuffs the small boots into his coat pockets and carefully rewraps Yuri into his shroud. "Forgive me, Yuri."

Dmitri slowly trudges down a dark city street. He is exhausted. Up ahead of Dmitri on the side of a building is a huge portrait of Stalin, done in the most over-the-top patriotic fashion. When Dmitri looks up and sees the enormous presence of Stalin watching over him, he stops in his tracks. He stares at it for a moment. Then suddenly he is full of adrenaline-charged anger and energy. "Bastard!" Stalin's huge smug face stares down at Dmitri. Dmitri screams at the top of his lungs. "You damn bastard!" He grabs some nearby rubble from a recent bombing and throws it at the huge mural. "Bastard, bastard, bastard!" Some of the chunks of concrete and brick hit the mural, marring it slightly.

In spite of his hurting feet and legs, his weakness, his hunger, Dmitri summons up enormous strength as he hurls the rubble into Stalin's face. He is unstoppable, screaming and ruining the mural. Dmitri continues his chant of "bastard" over and over again, not even noticing the small band of soldiers that have accosted him. They grab him roughly. The head soldier asks, "Hey! What do you think you're doing?!" "Baaastaaaard!"



Dmitri wakes up in a jail cell alone. He has been beaten up and has a black eye, and his lip has been split. A large guard sits at a desk near Dmitri's cell. A cheap print of a Stalin portrait hangs in a broken frame. The Guard sees Dmitri's black eye and a cruel smile crosses his lips. "Did you sleep well, my darling?" Guard asks. Dmitri rubs his head and tries to wake himself up. He looks at his surroundings. "I was hoping this was a dream." "A dream come true, no? You expect us to feed you? To keep you well?" Dmitri isn't quite following the Guard. The Guard smiles. A new play thing for him to keep him occupied. He informs Dmitri, "Treason is punishable by death! Instead of feeding you we should kill you." "Treason? You call that treason? All I was doing was -" "Yes, that is what we call treason. You are lucky you weren't shot on the spot. You're as bad as the Germans who drop propaganda on us." Dmitri pleads, "Look, I have to be somewhere. I've got to meet someone at nine this morning." "You don't speak German by any chance do you?" the Guard asks. "Of course not." "Are you sure? Perhaps you are a spy. Spreading anti-Stalin rumors about town." Dmitri is getting tired of the Guard toying with him. "Look, how soon can I get out of here? I'm supposed to meet someone -" "Yes, yes, at nine, I heard. You're meeting your German lover perhaps? Or maybe you have a rendezvous with your Nazi colleagues?" "If you must know, I have a meeting with Shostakovich." This news sends the Guard into spasms of hoarse laughter. He slaps his knee. "Oh! Shostakovich! You are going to collaborate with him on his symphony? I was mistaken. You're not a spy, you're a musical genius!" Dmitri sighs. He stands up and stretches. The guard continues to laugh at his own jokes, "Well, your eminence, forgive me, I apologize. Here, let me share my breakfast with you!" The Guard hands him a mug through the bars. "What is it?" "Hot water." Dmitri guzzles the hot water as if it were rich coffee with cream. The Guard adds, "With salt. We're not savages."

Dmitri notices a clock on the wall that reads 10:30. He moans. "I assume that clock is right?" "Of course. That would be Stalin-time." Dmitri sits down on the hard bench. A bomb hits a nearby building and the room shakes. The guard looks alarmed, "That sounded near."

Another bomb, nearer this time hits the ground, again shaking the room. The Guard and Dmitri look at each other, wide-eyed. The Guard gets his keys and goes to the cell, and unlocks the door. "Go to your German lover." Dmitri darts out of the cell. The Guard is not far behind him.

Shostakovich is rummaging through his papers at his desk in the music conservatory. Though slightly pale, he looks decidedly more healthy than those who stayed in Leningrad. The Aide is with him, packing up a suitcase with folders of music. The Scurvy Secretary is there too, following Shostakovich around the room in a daze. Her shadowing of him is getting on his nerves. "Please child, sit down!" She immediately sits down on an old settee. He immediately softens his mood after barking at her. "I'm sorry, but I just cannot take you. I would if I could." "I

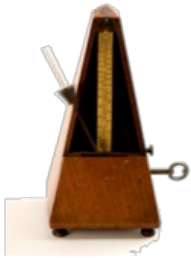
understand," she says. She coughs violently. "I'm only allowed one aide," he tells her. She looks enviously to the Aide stuffing the suitcase. He gives her a smug smile. "I know," she says. Her tone of voice suggests she knows it is a death sentence.

Shostakovich kneels next to her. He produces a chocolate bar from his coat pocket and holds it up in front of her. She smiles and snatches it. He tousles her hair as if she were a child. Then he goes back to rummaging through what's left of his belongings. "Let's finish up and get going. We're meeting Kirkorov in half an hour." The Scurvy Secretary says, "I could play for you! Would you like that?" "No, no. We have to get going." She seems so eager to help, but so easily brushed aside. "Can I help you to the station?" "No, we'll be fine. Come on, Boris, we should go." The Aide says, "I'll be so happy to be back in Moscow."

At this moment the front door buzzer rings. The ringer is impatient, ringing several times abruptly. The Aide goes to the door and opens it. There stands Dmitri, desperately out of breath. He practically falls in through the door. He sees the Aide, and ignores him. His eyes find Shostakovich. Dmitri says, "My name is Dmitri Ivanovich Stepanov." Shostakovich pays little mind of Dmitri and continues scurrying around the room getting his luggage together. "So? What do you want?" Dmitri tries to catch his breath. He sees the secretary on the settee. Dmitri says to Shostakovich, "I had an appointment with you...this morning." "Oh yes. I was expecting you hours ago. I'm sorry, but we're leaving now." "No! Please! I'm sorry I'm so late. I was in...uh... I just couldn't get here earlier. Please, I must speak to you." The Aide asks, "Should I get rid of him?" Dmitri gives the Aide a hard stare. Shostakovich ignores the Aide's question, addresses Dmitri, "You should've come earlier. We're on our way out."

Shostakovich nods to the door for the Aide to open, and carries his luggage out into the hallway. The Scurvy Secretary tags along as best she can. Dmitri pleads, "But I've come so far, please, just hear me out." Shostakovich is past Dmitri, halfway down the stairs already, leaving him behind. As he passes Dmitri the Aide gives him an "I told you so" look.

Heartbeat of the city



Marina is alone in the broadcast booth, and there is no one else in the entire room. The circles under her eyes are dark, her cheeks are sunken. Though bundled up as much as possible, she still shivers. She again props her head up on a pile of books in front of the microphone.

With her last ounce of energy, she reaches up and draws back the needle on the metronome, and sends it rocking. The needle rocks back and forth in a perfect, slow rhythm, inches away from the microphone. She lays slumped over the desk, head on books and watches the needle flick back and forth.

Outside a row of empty shops several weary women stand sweeping rubble off of the sidewalk. Some of them look up to the P.A. speaker. The slow CLICK, CLICK, CLICK of the metronome is amplified throughout the street.

In a local hospital wounded and dying men, women and children fill row after row of cold, dirty beds. The nurses sit exhausted, unable to offer much help or comfort. They sit in silence listening to the comforting, consistent CLICK, CLICK, CLICK.

Inside a bakery the exhausted bakers sit resting for a moment after putting their last batch of bread into the large brick ovens. They lean wearily on the long handles of their oven paddles. CLICK...CLICK...CLICK. The gentle rhythm lulls them into a moment of peace.

The P.A. speakers in the lobby of Shostakovich's building vibrate with the constant clicking of the metronome.

Shostakovich, the Aide, and the Scurvy Secretary all stop for a moment and listen to it. Several women in the lobby sit with their sickly children. A few soldiers stand near the door about to leave, but they stop. A few local factory workers look up from their mugs of hot water. The lack of sound catches their attention. No music, no poetry, no speaking, just the steady beat.

"What is that?" asks the Aide. Shostakovich of course recognizes the instrument instantly. He seems surprised. "It's a metronome." "Great. Let's go, sir. I have a car waiting. At least in Moscow we have *music* on the radio."



Music conservatory staircase

Dmitri has hobbled half way down the staircase leading into the lobby. "That is our heartbeat!" The Aide stops, turns to Dmitri. Dmitri awkwardly limps down a few more steps. Dmitri is incensed at the Aide's flippant attitude. "That is Leningrad's heartbeat! It's what keeps us going." All of the others in the lobby stop and listen. The Aide laughs snidely, "Annoying clicking...that keeps you going?" "That P.A. system is the only thing Leningrad has. The Radio House is still going, despite the fact that they are all dying, they are determined to keep it going." The Aide squirms as Dmitri lectures him in front of the whole lobby full of people. The Aide snarls, "How dare you lecture me! I am needed in Moscow, but I love Leningrad. I was born here. I am the first order Aide to Shostakovich and it is my job to look after him. He belongs in Moscow where it is safer, that means I belong in Moscow too." Dmitri's voice is full of rage and it's being directed to the Aide. "I'm sure life is fine down there in Moscow, but up here we can't just waltz out of there like you can! There are three and half million of us here. We have no heat, no electricity. No food. Thousands are dying everyday. We're freezing to death. Starving to death. But we're not giving up. Hundreds are risking their lives every day crossing the frozen lake for supplies. It's not enough, but they keep going. Listening to that radio is what is keeping us going."

Shostakovich's full attention is on Dmitri now, listening with every fiber in his being. Dmitri takes a few more steps down the stairs, reaches the bottom and limps over to the Aide. "They've kept that radio going with generators and whatever electricity they could steal. They stay at the Radio House night and day. They never let Leningrad lapse into silence. They keep our spirits up anyway they can. They read to us, play music for us. Read the news to us. Anything but silence. The Germans will not silence us. Listen!"

They entire lobby strains even more to hear the unwavering beating of the metronome. "Our heartbeat..." Every pulse seems to go right to the heart of each person. The Scurvy Secretary is nearly in tears, tears of pride. Dmitri continues, "It doesn't matter what they play, as long as they keep it going. That ticking is all we have left. Anything but silence. Silence means defeat. Silence means death."

Shostakovich is speechless. He begins to clap his hands and soon the entire lobby is applauding Dmitri. Everyone but the Aide of course. The Aide looks around the lobby in confusion at the lifted spirits of the other Leningraders. Shostakovich approaches Dmitri, "Bravo, young man. Bravo! Tell me your name again."

Dmitri enters his apartment with an armful of canned goods. None of them have any labels on them. He's smiling from ear to ear. "Olga! Come in here!" She comes into the main room, frantic. She's grabbing things from around the room, gathering them up. "Olga, look! Look what I got! What are you doing?" Olga notices the cans, "What is that? Food? Is it food?" "Sauerkraut I think. And some canned beets." She rips a few cans from his arms. "Good Lord, Dmitri! Where did you get this? Oh, my God!" He grins ear to ear. "You're not going to believe this." "Just tell me Dmitri. Here, help me open them." She rushes to get a can opener. She is so excited that she can't still her hands long enough to open it. "Shostakovich." She asks, "Shostakovich? What about him?" He still grins, but she is so set on opening the cans she doesn't notice. "Shostakovich gave them to me." She looks at him with suspicion. Olga says, "Don't be silly. So you took some jewelry. It's okay, Dmitri, I've been selling them myself." "No, really. I met Shostakovich today, and he gave me all of these." She ignores what she assumes is a joking answer. "Trouble is there's no one willing to buy jewelry anymore. No one wants gold, they want food."

She gets a can open, and it is indeed sauerkraut. They both dive in with their fingers and eat it cold. They shove huge handfuls into their mouths. She finally notices his bruised face. "What happened to your face?" He doesn't remember for a few seconds, then he puts his fingers up to his face. "Oh, nothing, I just..." "Fighting? Oh, honestly Dmitri." Dmitri lets that pass as his excuse. He turns and shouts down the hall. "Alik! Come get some food! I've got -" "He's not here. Oh God, this is good." "Where is he?" "I sent him down with Misha." Dmitri starts to move toward the door. "I'll go get him then." Olga stops him, "No, not downstairs. He took him over to your ice road. Misha got approval to evacuate his kids."

Dmitri seems confused and shocked. "But...Alik?" Olga has started opening another can as quickly as she can. "Misha got forged papers to say that Alik was his son. He's on his way out, Dmitri! My baby is out!" "What? When did this happen?" "If you'd come home once in a while you would know these things. Really, Dmitri. You don't notice when your own nephew is gone? It was days ago." "I...assumed he was downstairs..." "Misha got Alik on the very first evacuation bus across the lake!" Dmitri looks like he's been socked in the stomach. Olga continues to eat as fast as she can, grabbing a fork and spearing canned beets this time. "I'm going to meet him later. Your Sasha was right, this ice road is the Road of Life." Dmitri can only nod, though the horrified look on his face shows through. Luckily Olga is too busy shoveling food into her mouth to notice. Dmitri finally grabs a fork and joins Olga and her beets, numb with sadness.



Katya is the first to notice Dmitri when he comes into the Radio House. She lights up with a smile. She looks bloated and puffy. This is the opposite of what Dmitri is used to seeing, and he is shocked at her appearance. He hides his shock, and smiles at her. There are only a few other people in the Radio House aside from Marina who sits at a desk. "Hi Dmitri. Hey, what's wrong with your face? Did you fight some Germans?" He gingerly touches what's left of his bruises. "Yeah. Got into a fist-fight with Hitler. He looks worse. Where is everyone?" Her smile disappears. "Everyone is dead. Polina died today. She was giving me my lessons." Whether she is sad about Polina's death or because her lessons have ended is unclear. Dmitri tries to help, "Maybe I can help you. I was good at math. Would you like that?" "Dmitri, do you have any bread?" He looks over to Marina, who hasn't noticed him come in yet. "No, I sure don't." Katya seems let down in her overly dramatic way. He milks the situation for all it's worth. "Hmm, but I do have some sauerkraut and beets. Would that do?" Her eyes nearly pop out of her head. He pulls the unlabeled cans from his coat pockets. He holds them up with a flourish. "Ta da!" Marina hears Dmitri, and starts to come over to them. She moves so slowly and looks ever weaker than before. Dmitri tells Katya, "Go get us a can opener, would you kid?" She pouts dramatically and scolds him. "I'm not a kid. I'm ten!" He laughs at her as she goes to find a can opener.

Marina reaches him and sits next to him. She sees the cans. "Dmitri!" She kisses him on the cheek and says, "Again? You are a gift from heaven." Dmitri makes sure Katya is out of earshot. "What's wrong with Katya? She looks so..." "She's been trying to drink the hunger away. She does nothing but drink water. It's bloating her up." Dmitri furrows his brow, concerned but not sure what to think of it. "I can't stop her. How can I? She's starving. I don't know, maybe the water helps." For the first time, Dmitri dares to reach out and give Marina an intimate caress across her cheek. She smiles and leans into his touch even more. She touches his bruised face. "You're hurt." "It's nothing." Suddenly uncomfortable at their intimacy, he shifts the attention. "Oh here..." He takes Yuri's small boots from his coat pockets. "For Katya." Marina gratefully takes the shoes, stroking them with appreciation. He adds, "And this will help. It's sauerkraut and beets...I think." Katya comes back with the can opener, and plops down at Dmitri's feet, waiting for food. He quickly opens a can of sauerkraut, and hands it to Marina. She and Katya dive in ravenously.

Katya looks to the only other person in the room now, a listless young man who sits at the microphone reading. "Can we share with Vladimir?" Marina nods. Katya scoops a plop of sauerkraut onto a piece of paper and walks over toward the booth. Marina watches her proudly as she goes to Vladimir and hands him the sauerkraut. In the background Dmitri and Marina can hear him shout with surprise mid-broadcast. Dmitri and Marina chuckles at Vladimir. She says, "I can't believe you got this." Dmitri grins ear to ear. "You think that's amazing, wait 'til you hear who I got it from."

Dmitri and Marina trudge down the street through the snow and ice. He tries to move his legs as fast as he can, but Marina is so weak that even his slow pace is faster than she can walk anymore. They both look exhausted, but excited. Marina jumps when she hears gunfire. "Just anti-aircraft fire. Don't worry."

After a few more steps she grabs onto his hand. She looks up into the sky, worried. She nearly slips on some ice, and it takes a lot of effort to get her steady on her feet. Slowly they start out again.

Now feeling well-fed, Olga is curled up on her bed with an ear to ear grin. "It's almost over. I bet I'll be with my boy by the end of the month. It's almost over." She grins the grin of a child...or an insane woman.



3 pm sunset

The afternoon sun is starting to set. Dmitri and Marina get up from a bench where they have been resting and continue to plod along. "How much farther?" she asks. "We're almost there Marina. We can do it. A mile maybe." "A mile!" After a few more steps, she stops to lean against the stone bridge that spans the canal they are crossing. She is breathing hard from only the few steps she's taken. "Dima, I just can't go on any more." He stops too. He bends over to massage his feet through his boots. He slides down to the ground and sits on the cold stone bridge. He huffs and puffs. He looks over into a courtyard of an apartment building. "Wait here."

Marina holds tight as Dmitri pulls her on a small child's sled down the middle of the carless street. Now that he's pulling the additional weight of Marina every step he takes is now doubly painful, doubly slow, but he doesn't stop. Pain and exhaustion is deeply etched on his face, but he doesn't stop. From a building corridor somewhere we can hear the radio. Vladimir reads poetry slowly and finally is too exhausted to continue. The beat of the metronome fills the air once again.

Dmitri pulls the sled down the center of the icy street, as dusk settles over the city. Through sheer exhaustion, weakness or pain, Dmitri's feet constantly slip and slide on the ice and snow. Marina still holds on as best she can to the sides of the sled. They stop for a moment. The steady beat of the metronome fills their ears, almost encouraging them to continue their pace.

The Aide unlocks the main door of the music conservatory to find Dmitri standing on the stoop, barely able to breathe. He struggles for his breath for a minute before he can manage a word. "Please...come help."

The Aide carries Marina up the stairs of the grand hall of the conservatory. Dmitri follows, lags behind and eventually sits down halfway up the stairs to catch his breath. Dmitri takes in the plush and ornate decor of the conservatory. He shakes his head.

As the Aide comes into the room carrying Marina, Shostakovich shuffles across the room toward them. There is little in the ballroom now. Just a sofa and a grand piano in the center. Shostakovich greets her, "Marina? You must be Marina. Where is young Dmitri?" "He's coming," the Aide tells him.

The Aide sets Marina down onto a velvet sofa that has been pulled into the center of the large opulent ballroom. She gushes, "I'm so honored to be here. I met you before, when you spoke at the Radio House." "Did you?" She now bears no resemblance to the Marina of only a few months ago. He sits next to her on the sofa. He speaks quietly, with not much vibrancy behind it. "Dmitri tells me you're quite a fan of mine." "Oh yes. I think your music is magical. You're just -" "Please. Don't embarrass me. An artist's ego can be fragile." She smiles at him. He says, "Dmitri can be a pretty persuasive young man. I was set to return to Moscow tonight, hours ago." Marina looks concerned. "I'm sorry. He didn't tell me." "No, don't worry about it. I agreed to stay as long as it took you to arrive." She seems surprised by his flexibility. "Oh?" "Your Dmitri must think very highly of you. He said you were a woman of passion and poetry. A lover of music." She blushes at hearing Dmitri's feelings for her. He continues, "I wouldn't stay and perform my Seventh for just anyone. But he convinced me." She's delighted.

The Aide goes to the piano and pulls out the bench, straightens the sheet music. "Your Seventh?" Marina asks, in awe. "Of course. What did you think you were here for?" "Why, just to meet you again, to have the chance to talk to you." "I'm not much of a talker. I'm a musician." Shostakovich goes to the piano and sits down. She beams, barely able to contain herself. She whispers breathlessly to herself. "The Seventh!"

Dmitri finally catches up and drags himself to the sofa, collapses next to Marina. She pays no attention to his fragile state and hugs him enthusiastically. "Oh, Dmitri!" He returns the embrace, smiles as she clings to him.



Shostakovich plays his 7th Symphony

Shostakovich bows his head, closes his eyes and takes a deep breath. Suddenly this meek little man is transformed. He dives into the keyboard, pounding it ferociously, full of anger and elation, a sort of musical catharsis. His Seventh Symphony begins.

The fierce chords are pounded out like bomb explosions, his rapid attacks on the keys are like the gunfire we've heard so often. He is completely absorbed by his keyboard and all else seems to disappear for him. The sound of his symphony nearly rocks the room with its intensity. Then, as the scene fades into the SERIES OF SHOTS, we hear the orchestral symphony start to swell and play along with the montage, though he is still only at the piano.

#### SERIES OF SHOTS: THE SIEGE OF LENINGRAD AND THE SEVENTH SYMPHONY

The scenes themselves are all M.O.S. with the sound of the blaring full orchestral music of the Seventh Symphony playing over them. The highlights of the symphony fade from one moment to the next.

A) Heavily booted soldiers march out of town as the PIANO BEATS their FOOTSTEPS. Their too-young faces are proud and strong, but not without a touch of fear. Each FOOTSTEP is a heavy BEAT of the piano.

B) A swell of BRASS HORNS BLARE and fight with the SHRIEKING VIOLINS. A line of guns are aimed in unison beyond a barbed-wire front line. Russian troops battle the German troops, each side losing too many men. Each SORROWFUL TUNE OF THE HORNS AND STRINGS is another soldier's struggle against death.

C) VIOLINS SHRIEK and PULSE as German planes SCREAM across the sky, one after another, the sky full of them. Evacuation trains sit motionless full of desperate Leningraders.

D) Deafening BASS DRUMS EXPLODING. Bombs are dropped, rubble covers the street. Women and children scatter and run for cover, some of them falling dead into the streets. The drums follow each fallen victim with a BANG, BANG, BANG!

E) A single FLUTE WAIL mimics the unnerving whistle of the rails of the children's sleds in the snow. Everywhere we look there are sleds being pulled, carrying the weak, the dead. Children pulling their dead parents, old women hauling their dead husbands.

F) A MOURNFUL DRUMROLL and HAUNTING MOAN OF VIOLINS. The deathly thin Leningraders' mute pleas for bread outside the empty bakeries, the endless piles of bodies outside the city's many cemeteries.

G) The gentle PLUCKING OF A CELLO, haunting and echoey accompanies the wrapping of someone's mother, daughter, father, baby in their shrouds.

H) Units of the Soviet Army use picks and axes to crack open the rock hard frozen ground in the cemetery to accommodate the waiting dead. Each strike into the icy ground is a STEADY BEAT OF TRUMPETS BLARING. They never give up, their beat is endless.

I) The Radio House metronome is in perfect unison with each BEAT, STRUM, BLARE and WAIL of the symphony, both a testament to the unwavering strength and courage of the city.

Suddenly, the piece comes crashing to a dramatic end. Shostakovich coaxes the last few emotional notes from himself, and he is nearly slumped over the keyboard in an emotional exhaustion. He cannot move for several seconds and keeps his head down, perhaps in fatigue, perhaps in respect for his fellow Leningraders.

The sudden silence in the room is like a slap in the face. Marina's eyes are full of tears. Her chest heaves with emotion, but she cannot get any words out. She is profoundly moved. Someone is weeping aloud, but it is not Marina. She turns to see that it is Dmitri. For the first time, Dmitri completely lets go of his emotions and weeps openly and without restraint. Months of pent up emotions pour from him now. Marina holds him in her arms as he weeps with freeing abandonment.

As a chauffeur drives Marina and Dmitri back to the Radio House, Dmitri and Marina sit in the back quietly. With exceedingly few other cars on the road, their ride is smooth and steady. There is a large stack of records on the seat next to them.

Marina and Dmitri hold each other closely, taking in the luxury of the car, but still seemingly out of place in it. No one dares speak. Marina looks at Dmitri tenderly, then kisses him. A sweet, gentle kiss. Though terribly weak and pale, her eyes sparkle at Dmitri.

Shostakovich shuffles toward the door in the conservatory with the Aide in tow carrying his bags. As they reach the door Shostakovich finally speaks. "I've been thinking, Boris. Perhaps you should stay here in Leningrad. I need someone to look after my affairs here, and I think it should be you. After all, as you said, you love this city." The Aide is horror-stricken with this news. Is that a smirk on Shostakovich's face?

In the Radio House whole room is lit with only a few candles. With extreme difficulty Dmitri carries Marina over to her cot in the corner. He tucks the worn blankets around her and sits next to her. Katya is asleep in the next cot, so they keep their voices low. Marina holds onto his hand. Dmitri kisses her hand so hard that she can only smile and manage a tiny laugh. She says, "This has been the most incredible night of my life. That symphony, it tells our story." Dmitri smiles and nods. "You'll stay here tonight?" she asks. He nods again. She smiles her approval. Dmitri sits on Katya's cot since there is more room there next to her. He watches Marina as she falls asleep.

In the far corner of the room Vladimir is asleep at one of the tables. In the broadcast booth a metronome sits in front of the microphone. Its steady heartbeat is the only sound in the dark room. Katya wakes up and groggily says hello to Dmitri. He smiles at her, nods toward Marina. "Shh."

Outside in the empty streets the steady heartbeat of Leningrad can be heard. It echoes through the streets, down the canals, through the parks and over the bridges. It is constant and strong.

Dmitri sits by Marina's bedside in a chair. He is reading a book by dim candlelight. It is a Pushkin book. He looks to Katya, who is fast asleep again. He rubs his tired eyes. He picks up the candle and holds it up close to the book. He reads with intensity.

Hot wax drips onto his fingers and he involuntarily yelps and drops his book onto the floor. It hits the floor with a loud smack. Katya stirs in her sleep for a second, then stills. Fearing he woke Marina he looks to her. Too quiet. "Marina?" Louder this time, "Marina?" He touches her gently to wake her. She does not wake. He stares at her for a long, hard minute. He fights back his tears.

He looks to Katya who mumbles in her sleep. He leans back in his chair and lets himself weep for Marina.



Sasha stands beside his truck with a dockhand. The night is gray and quiet. Sasha is taking care of the paperwork for his load. The dockhand loads the large crates without much strain, tossing them up onto the truck. Sasha notices how easily the dockhand manages the crates compared to when they full of grain or rice. Curious, Sasha puts down the paperwork and stops to watch for a second. Sasha takes a whiff of air. Again. He sniffs harder. The dockhand notices him smelling the air, and he sniffs too. They look at each other with delight.

Sasha approaches the many crates and pries the lid loose with a crowbar. He lifts the lid off the crate, and *there they are*. A whole crate full of beautiful, bright, radiant tangerines. Sasha takes one, cradling it like a precious Fabergé egg.

The dockhand takes the paperwork and scours it until he finds what he was looking for. He is delighted at what he finds. He reads it to Sasha with amazement. "Tangerines for the people of Leningrad. A gift from the people of Armenia.' Tangerines!"

Sasha sits down on the ground, leaning against the tire of his truck. He holds the tangerine to his nose and inhales deeply. He inhales a few more decadent breaths. He lifts the tangerine up in front of him. In the dismal gray glow of the snow-lit night the tangerine is luminous. Beautiful. Glowing. Staring at the tangerine Sasha begins to cry. He is now giddy with delight. He quickly peels the tangerine and bites into it, letting the juices run down his chin and the tears run down his face.



Dmitri tenderly touches Marina's boots. He does not remove them. He gently rubs a bit of dirt off, then pulls her blanket down over them.

Dmitri trudges over to the broadcast booth. He sits down at the desk with his book. He opens to the correct page. He quietly clears his throat. He breathes deeply for a moment. He stops the metronome. "My name is Dmitri Ivanovich Stepanov. I would like to read you a poem. I'd like to read it in memory of...a woman I knew. It's called 'Remembrance'. Pushkin...of course." His voice is a little shaky, but not too bad. He again clears his throat and tries to steady his voice. "When noisy day no more assails the ears of men, and on the silent city slowly night's pallid shadow falls..." He must stop for a second because he is having a difficult time holding back his tears. When he regains his composure, he continues. "While after toil again the wage of sleep repays them wholly. Then in the hush my hours drag out their dismal course, no peace my weary vigils bring me. But through the listless night the serpents of remorse with piercing fangs more shrewdly sting me..." His voice grows stronger as he reads. "Obsessed by seething dreams, the over-burdened soul can neither bear its pain, nor cure it. In silence Memory unwinds her lengthy scroll before me, and I must endure it. And loathing it, I read the record of the years, I curse and tremble like one baited."

Dmitri's passion comes through. He reads it with great emotion, this poem is the most important thing in his life. "For all my bitter groans, for all my bitter tears, the lines are not obliterated." He pauses to let the words sink in. The new stack of records sits on the desk in front of him. He chooses one and puts it on the phonograph player. "We will hold out. We will be heard. We will go on." He plays the record. A beautiful song begins to play. He sits back and truly listens to the music.

The weak morning sun rises over the city again. Adult Katya narrates: "Springtime finally came, the city survived. With more and more food coming in over the Road of Life, by March starvation was no longer a problem."

The snowy bus stop where Dmitri once waited is dark and cold. "My mother of course didn't live to see the public performance of Shostakovich's Seventh Symphony, but many others did." This fades into the view of the same bus stop in the springtime. Where once was snow and a frozen corpse is now a young woman in a springtime dress flirting gaily with a soldier while waiting for the bus.

"On April 9, 1942 Shostakovich played his Seventh Symphony in public with a full orchestra. But I think my mother's private performance meant more to her than anything else could have." The park where Dmitri and Marina rested while taking her dead mother-in-law to the cemetery is snowy and gray. "After my mother died Dmitri volunteered to be a driver on the Road of Life. I don't know what happened to him after that." The park is now green with springtime flowers everywhere, children run past the bench where Dmitri and Marina once sat. Couples stroll hand in hand along the paths, basking in the sun.

"Someone said his truck went under when the ice became soft and he drowned. Someone else heard he stayed on the other shore, outside of the blockade. I don't know." Empty immobile trolley cars sit frozen onto their tracks in the middle of the street. "My mother died on the ninety-seventh day of the siege. That winter of 1941 was the worst. They estimate that thousands died every day of starvation." The scene morphs into a springtime scene of a trolley car full of life, zooming down the street, people jumping on and off as it slows down.

"We would have to endure 803 more days of the siege." The bakery is empty and cold and dark, no food of any kind. "Nearly one and a half million people died in the siege of Leningrad, half the population of the city." The bakery now thrives with plenty of bread and even some pastries. Women chat idly and happily as they wait their turn in line. A young child peers into the pastry case and licks his lips in anticipation.

## KATYA'S PRESENT DAY, 1960

A vast mass burial site and memorial for the dead of the siege of Leningrad stands at the Piskarevsky Cemetery. Dozens of schoolchildren bring offerings of flowers.



Adult Katya says, "Because of my mother's deep love of literature and art, I too have become a writer. I will write her story. I will write all of their stories. I will tell everyone of our 900 days."

Fade to black, then...

SUPER: *"Let no one forget, let nothing be forgotten."* -- Olga Berggolts

Fade to black again.

The clicking of a metronome beats steadily, slowly, unflinching.

There is nothing in the blackness, nothing but that steady heartbeat.

Credits roll.

