

900 Days

Based on Actual Events

By

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INT. KATYA'S APARTMENT - DAY

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.

ADULT KATYA (V.O.)

I was about ten when Leningrad was
blockaded by the Germans.

As her voice-over continues a slow pan around the room shows photos of people later to be recognized as her mother and Katya as a child.

ADULT KATYA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

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.

The pan finally stops on her window and the view of Leningrad fills the screen.

EXT. ITALIAN BRIDGE - DAY

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.

EXT. WINTER PALACE SQUARE - DAY

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.

ADULT KATYA (V.O.)

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.

INT. WINTER PALACE - DAY

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.

EXT. LENINGRAD STREET - DAY

The wide, busy street is bustling with cars, trolleycars 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.

INT. POSH APARTMENT - DAY

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.

ADULT KATYA (V.O.)

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.

INT. SHOE FACTORY - DAY

A rather grim and cavernous factory runs at full-throttle.

ADULT KATYA (V.O.)

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.

INT. WINTER PALACE CAFE - DAY

The schoolchildren are now diving into luscious pastries in the museum cafe. Their faces smudged with whipped cream, they are laughing and eating, happy to be on a field trip. Even the teacher is enjoying a decadent pastry.

INT. SHOE FACTORY - DAY

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.

ADULT KATYA (V.O.)

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.

EXT. LENINGRAD STREET - DAY

The entrance to an impressive looking building is being barricaded by soldiers and a few civilians help too.

ADULT KATYA (V.O.)

We knew that soon the Germans would invade our city.

INT. RADIO HOUSE - DAY

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.

ADULT KATYA (V.O.)

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.

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 and sits her down on a chair.

MARINA

Katya, please stay out of the way. Just sit and listen.

Katya watches the rest of the proceedings from her chair.

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.

SHOSTAKOVICH

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]

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

Office workers 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 (O.S.)

(over 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.

INT. RADIO HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

His speech becomes more impassioned.

SHOSTAKOVICH

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.

EXT. OUTDOOR MARKET - CONTINUOUS

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.

SHOSTAKOVICH (O.S.)
 (over p.a. system)
 Leningrad is my native city. Here is my
 home and my heart....

INT. FACTORY - CONTINUOUS

Factory workers stop to listen to him.

SHOSTAKOVICH (O.S.)
 (over p.a. system)
 ...Soviet musicians, my many and dear
 colleagues, my friends, remember that
 our art is threatened with great danger.

INT. RADIO HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

SHOSTAKOVICH
 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.

MARINA
 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.

AIDE
 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 (V.O.)

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.

EXT. LENINGRAD SUBURBS - DAY

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.

EXT. LENINGRAD STREET - DAY

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.

ADULT KATYA (V.O.)

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.

INT. WINTER PALACE - DAY

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.

EXT. LENINGRAD SUBURBS - DAY

A field of concrete anti-tank obstacles are being set up in the outskirts of the city by a brigade of women and men.

ADULT KATYA (V.O.)

Leningrad was ready for the invasion.

EXT. LENINGRAD STREET - DAY

The street is full of barricades made from sandbags and scrap

wood behind which civilian men and women sit with guns, ready. Waiting.

ADULT KATYA (V.O.)
But the invasion never came.

A few tanks are strategically placed among the streets. It is strangely quiet.

ADULT KATYA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
We were prepared for everything except the one thing Hitler had planned on. A blockade.

EXT. BADAYEV WAREHOUSES - NIGHT

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 Badayev 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.

SASHA
That bastard! He *knew* we only had month's supply of food in there! He knew it!

Dmitri remains calmer, quieter.

DMITRI
How could Hitler know? It was just a lucky shot.

SASHA
He's going to leave us all to starve to death.

Sasha moans and stomps his feet in agony.

SASHA (CONT'D)
And to build the warehouses so close to each other! Of wood! Stupid! We were so stupid.

Dmitri cannot take his eyes off of the blazing warehouses.

DMITRI

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 (V.O.)

Hunger and cold came swiftly after that.
Our beautiful, majestic city soon became
a city of death.

EXT. LENINGRAD STREET - NIGHT

SUPER: 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.

INT. SASHA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Sasha stands at his window looking out over the rooftops of the neighborhood. It is snowing heavily. Sasha is bundled up as much as possible. As he speaks his breath can be seen.

SASHA

Please God, let it get colder.

EXT. LENINGRAD STREET - NIGHT

Dmitri carefully hops down from 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.

FRANTIC WOMAN

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.

DMITRI

I have no bread. I'm sorry, I have none.

As he walks away from her she starts to follow him.

FRANTIC WOMAN

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.

EXT. LENINGRAD STREET - 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"

INT. SASHA'S APARTMENT - 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.

DMITRI

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.

SASHA

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.

SASHA (CONT'D)

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.

DMITRI

What's the occasion? You spoke to Hitler?
You convinced him to surrender?

Dmitri's thinly veiled sarcasm makes Sasha laugh wildly.

SASHA

Close! I am going back to my unit in two days!

Sasha seems genuinely happy about this. They gulp their drinks.

SASHA (CONT'D)

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

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.

SASHA

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.

DMITRI

Last month...I got promoted to the caster machine.

A slight wince crosses Sasha's face.

SASHA

The caster machine?

He covers it up with a grin.

SASHA (CONT'D)

Congratulations! Dmitri, that's great!

Sasha clinks his nearly empty glass to Dmitri's. Dmitri frowns and shrugs off the gesture.

DMITRI

Is it? I wonder how many more medals Aleksei would have had by now.

SASHA

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 (CONT'D)

Show me your feet.

DMITRI

No.

SASHA

Yes! I insist.

DMITRI

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.

SASHA

Take these.

Dmitri starts to balk, but Sasha silences him with one look.

DMITRI

Thanks.

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.

SASHA

Dmitri, they sent for me early. My leave wasn't up until next week.

Dmitri is surprised. He looks up from the embers.

SASHA (CONT'D)

We are going over the lake.

DMITRI

It's frozen already?

SASHA

Yes. Froze early this year, I know. A sign from God.

DMITRI

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.

SASHA

But the cold is a blessing. There is ice on Lake Ladoga already. Maybe enough to carry a truck full of supplies! The

(MORE)

SASHA (CONT'D)

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.

DMITRI

For sure?

SASHA

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.

SASHA

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-

DMITRI

Sasha, I can't help. I can barely walk,
how can I help?

Sasha looks slightly embarrassed for his friend.

SASHA

Of course you can walk...

DMITRI

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

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.

INT. DMITRI'S APARTMENT BUILDING STAIRWAY - DAY

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.

INT. DMITRI'S APARTMENT - DAY

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.

OLGA

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.

OLGA (CONT'D)

We are Mirinovs! We are Mirinovs!

INT. DMITRI'S APARTMENT BUILDING STAIRWAY - DAY

Almost to the top of the stairs now, Dmitri can hear Olga's screaming and ranting. He tries to hurry to the door.

DMITRI

For God's sake, what now?

INT. DMITRI'S APARTMENT - DAY

Dmitri sits on a bed in the bedroom with Olga. She is sobbing. He tries to comfort her.

OLGA

Alik was born of privilege, he wasn't
raised like this. What's becoming of
us?

DMITRI

Shh, shh. Tell me what happened.

She still sobs as she tries to speak.

OLGA

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.

DMITRI

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.

OLGA

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 and goes to the bedroom door.

DMITRI

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.

OLGA

If Aleksei was here you wouldn't speak to me like that.

With his legs already aching and his eyes filled with tears from the smack of the belt, Dmitri remains sprawled across the dresser, dumb-founded.

DMITRI

But he isn't, Olga. He's dead.

This simple statement strikes her as an insult. She lets out an offended gasp and storms out of the room.

EXT. OUTSKIRTS OF LENINGRAD - DAY

A group of women are digging anti-tank trenches in a large open field. A 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 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.

GRANDMOTHER

Get your white dresses!

INT. RADIO HOUSE - DAY

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.

MARINA

Just think Katya, you can say you met him. The musical genius of our time. You can tell your grandchildren.

KATYA

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.

MARINA

Slowly, Katya! That's all that's left for today.

Katya whines, almost automatically, without thinking what she is saying.

KATYA

Mama, I want some more. I'm still hungry.
Can't you make me some piroshki?

Marina looks pained.

MARINA

Darling, you know I can't. Be strong.
We'll get through.

Katya begins to pout and cry.

KATYA

More! Give me more! I want more!

Katya begins to wail with hunger. Marina quickly grabs a book, settles Katya into her arms.

MARINA

Pushkin will help us. Ssh, listen to
Pushkin. Don't think about the hunger.

Marina begins to read from the book in soothing tones.

MARINA (CONT'D)

"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.

EXT. WINTER PALACE SQUARE - DAY

Sasha and Dmitri walk along the mostly abandoned 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.

SASHA

No, no, no. It was when we went down south to the Crimea, remember?

DMITRI

I thought it was when we went to the public swimming pool that summer.

SASHA

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 (CONT'D)

I remember because we went into that orchard and you were so amazed to see tangerines growing on the trees.

DMITRI

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.

SASHA

It's weird. So quiet. And still.

DMITRI

No pigeons.

SASHA

You shoo them out of the way your whole life, and curse their existence, and now...

DMITRI

Now they'd be worth everything you own.

Sasha shakes his head sadly.

SASHA

We ate them too fast.

Then he perks up.

SASHA (CONT'D)

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

Aleksei told us not to.

SASHA

My urine was orange for two days!

DMITRI

And your mother! She made so much jam
from the berries!

SASHA

Jam on the toast, jam on the ice cream,
jam on everything! She didn't know what
to make from the tangerines though.

DMITRI

Those tangerines were so good. Summer
was so much fun down there. Swimming
and eating all summer long.

SASHA

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.

DMITRI

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.

DMITRI (CONT'D)

She has American shoes.

EXT. OUTSIDE OF KOKKOREVO - MORNING

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.

EXT. LAKE LADOGA - DAY

Sasha's group is out on the ice, 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. The 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.

SASHA

They have faith in us, don't they?

The Redhead nods absentmindedly, nervously. The line of men continues on, very slowly. Each step is a cautious one.

SASHA (CONT'D)
You aren't afraid are you?

REDHEAD
No, sir.

Sasha chuckles.

SASHA
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. The Redhead and the Lead Man both plunge a flag into the snow that covers the ice.

SASHA (CONT'D)
Like Hansel and Gretel, right? So we
can find our way home?

REDHEAD
No sir, I believe it's so the first trucks
will know the path we took.

SASHA
I know, I was just kidding.

REDHEAD
Oh. Sorry sir. I mean...sorry.

The poor Redhead looks petrified of each step he takes in the snow-covered ice. Sasha calls over to him.

SASHA
So what do you do, when you're not busy
being a hero I mean.

The Redhead finally takes his mind off his steps long enough to answer properly.

REDHEAD
I'm a bookseller. On the Nevsky.

SASHA
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.

REDHEAD
Yes sir. I don't know what I was thinking
volunteering for this.

SASHA

Relax, you're doing fine. Just take it slow.

Sasha flashes him a big goofy smile. This makes the Redhead relax a bit. He grins and nods.

EXT. OUTSIDE OF KOKKOREVO - DAY

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.

DRIVER

Sir? Shall we wait here?

HIGH RANK

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.

DRIVER

It's twenty miles across. God knows how long it will take them.

HIGH RANK

Please let the ice be solid. And please, please, keep the Germans away.

EXT. LAKE LADOGA - DAY

The line of men now 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.

LEAD MAN

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.

INT. POSH APARTMENT - DAY

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.

EXT. LENINGRAD STREET - DAY

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 she even realizes what is happening, the woman behind her catches her. Marina has started to pass out.

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.

MARINA

I'm so embarrassed. Thank you. I felt a little weak, but didn't think...

HELPFUL WOMAN

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 to the woman.

HELPFUL WOMAN (CONT'D)

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 visibly 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.

EXT. LAKE LADOGA - DAY

The men 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 the Redhead, who looks deep in thought.

REDHEAD

Sir? Did you mean what you said? About the hero thing I mean.

Sasha finishes off the last of his rations.

SASHA

What? Oh, I was just kidding, I didn't mean anything by it.

Sasha licks every last crumb from his lips. The Redhead grimaces in disgust as he swallows his last bite of the coarse bread. Sasha laughs.

SASHA (CONT'D)

What's the matter? You don't like sawdust?

REDHEAD

Sir?

SASHA

Sawdust.

The Redhead looks alarmed and disgusted.

SASHA (CONT'D)

Don't worry, it's edible. Sort of. And you don't have to call me sir. You're not a soldier.

The 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.

REDHEAD

We kind of are, aren't we? Heroes. If we make it I mean.

The serious tone of the Redhead's voice makes Sasha tone down his normally jovial nature.

SASHA

Of course we are.

REDHEAD

My mother says I'm a coward.

Sasha looks like he is trying to think of something to say. But he says nothing.

REDHEAD (CONT'D)

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

Sure. He needed you there.

The Redhead hangs his head down low.

REDHEAD

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.

SASHA

Everyone is afraid.

The Redhead considers this for a moment, then looks into Sasha's eyes with pride.

REDHEAD

She can't call me a coward now.

EXT. LAKE LADOGA - LATER

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

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.

SASHA (CONT'D)

Pastries for dessert! Thick with cream
and chocolate sauce. And raspberries
and cream. Mmm.

REDHEAD

Sir?

Sasha turns to the Redhead and gives his goofy grin.

SASHA

Or maybe salmon with a large salad?
Trout perhaps?

The Redhead can't help but smile back.

REDHEAD

My mother's roast! With sweet tender
carrots and baby potatoes.

Sasha is happy that the Redhead has joined in.

SASHA

Strong black coffee with sugar.

REDHEAD

And cognac. No, I know! Homemade kvass!

Sasha and the Redhead laugh at their game. The Lead Man
joins in.

LEAD MAN

A roasted chicken! Borsch with thick
sour cream.

Sasha laughs joyously now that the other men join in.

SECOND MAN

Fresh vegetables. Fruit! A beautiful
ripe orange, and a banana. Grapes.

FOURTH MAN

My wife's piroshkis with a bottle of
vodka and a nice cigar.

The men all laugh.

REDHEAD

Heat!

SASHA

Yes! A warm bed and electric lights!

The six men all cheer.

FIFTH MAN

Gasoline and trolley cars!

They cheer again. Sasha starts to hoot and holler but he is suddenly yanked off his feet!

The Redhead plunges under the ice with a huge splash. The rope pulls Sasha toward the hole in the ice. When he surfaces again, the Redhead is shrieking at the top of his lungs.

REDHEAD

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

Bookseller! Hang on, Bookseller!

Sasha screams, tries to keep from being pulled into the hole, tries to pull the rope to get the Redhead out of the freezing water.

The other men pull on the rope, but instead of pulling Sasha and the 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 water pulls Sasha entirely underwater. Below the surface it is quiet and calm. Sasha sees the kicking legs of the Redhead, but Sasha can do nothing.

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

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 panicking kicking of the Redhead. It is a moment of clarity for Sasha.

Sasha is calm, still. Almost at peace.

But that calm is suddenly shattered as he is dragged from under the ice to the water's surface. The men's shouts and the splashing of the water is deafening.

The Redhead is being 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.

SASHA (CONT'D)

What would your mother say about *that*?

INT. SHOE FACTORY - DAY

Dmitri searches the area near his machine, looking into boxes. He is unable to do his work.

INT. SHOE FACTORY- OFFICE - DAY

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

Redecorating?

The Supervisor looks at Dmitri wearily.

SUPERVISOR

The wallpaper paste. They say it's made of potato paste.

Unable to continue, he sits at his desk, exhausted and drawn.

DMITRI

Where is the leather for my soles? My box is gone.

SUPERVISOR

Stolen.

The Supervisor shrugs.

SUPERVISOR (CONT'D)

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.

SUPERVISOR (CONT'D)

Dmitri, I won't be in tomorrow.

The Supervisor looks wearily at his piece of wallpaper.

SUPERVISOR (CONT'D)

I think I shall die tonight.

He gently smooths out the delicate paper as Dmitri watches.

EXT. LENINGRAD SUBURBS - NIGHT

On this unusually clear night the 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.

INT. RADIO HOUSE - DAY

Marina sits at a desk 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.

DMITRI

Excuse me.

MARINA

Oh, you startled me. I didn't see you there.

He smiles apologetically.

DMITRI

I'm sorry. But I have some news you might be interested in. My friend is

(MORE)

DMITRI (CONT'D)
 part of the column that crossed Lake
 Ladoga.

Her eyes light up.

MARINA
 Oh, yes. Yes, please tell us!

INT. RADIO HOUSE - LATER

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.

MARINA
 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.

DMITRI
 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.

MARINA
 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.

MARINA (CONT'D)
 They now calculate that the ice is thick
 (MORE)

MARINA (CONT'D)

enough to carry supply trucks, and soon they will be delivering supplies into Leningrad.

Her voice is full of pride and hope.

MARINA (CONT'D)

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.

DMITRI

Uh...hello there.

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.

MARINA

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!

INT. RADIO HOUSE - 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

You made that sound so professional. I didn't have it written like that. That was great.

MARINA

Well, I've been doing this for a while. I've learned to edit as I read.

Dmitri looks around the large room.

DMITRI

You're living here?

MARINA

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.

DMITRI

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.

KATYA

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.

DMITRI

Do you mind if I rest here for a while?

MARINA

Not at all. 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.

KATYA

How come only one of your boots is worn down?

MARINA

Katya, please. Leave him alone.

Dmitri laughs.

DMITRI

No, that's okay.

He looks at his boots more carefully.

DMITRI (CONT'D)

They are kind of falling apart aren't they?

MARINA

Here, cover them with a blanket. Your feet must be freezing.

She moves to get a blanket causing Katya to move from her mother's lap. Marina tosses him a ragged blanket.

KATYA

Is that why you limp?

MARINA

Katya! Enough!

Marina is clearly embarrassed by her daughter's openness. Dmitri takes it in stride. He covers himself with the blanket.

DMITRI

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.

KATYA

Polio feet? What's that?

DMITRI

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".

KATYA

Really? They turn blue? Can I see?

MARINA

Katya, please! Don't be rude. Let Dmitri
(MORE)

MARINA (CONT'D)

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.

MARINA (CONT'D)

Always the performer.

DMITRI

She's in with the right crowd then, isn't she? You and your friends here. Artists, actors, writers. She'll fit right in.

Marina laughs.

MARINA

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. Marina laughs and smooths down Katya's hair.

DMITRI

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.

DMITRI (CONT'D)

Now why is it do you suppose that you can only buy shoes in pairs?

She giggles even more.

KATYA

That's silly.

DMITRI

Why? I'd buy one! "I'd like one right shoe please, that one there."

Katya now has a serious case of the giggles.

KATYA

You can't do that! They'd never match.

DMITRI

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.

DMITRI (CONT'D)

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.

KATYA

Mine are dirty.

MARINA

Well then it's true, isn't it?

They all laugh. A precious, happy moment without a thought of hunger or the cold.

MARINA (CONT'D)

Tell Dmitri who you met.

KATYA

Shostakovich.

DMITRI

Really?

Katya nods, not seeming very impressed with it.

MARINA

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.

MARINA (CONT'D)

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.

DMITRI

I'm sure you will.

MARINA

Most of the orchestra has either been evacuated or they're dead.

She sighs.

MARINA (CONT'D)

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.

He sits up and reaches into a deep pocket of his coat.

DMITRI

Katya, can you guess what I have?

This makes her perk up a bit.

KATYA

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.

MARINA

An apple!

Without even being offered the food, Katya pleads with her mother.

KATYA

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

Where on earth did you get an apple?

DMITRI

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.

DMITRI (CONT'D)

And I think this is meat paste.

He holds out the little tin box to Marina. She seems tempted.

MARINA

Oh, Dmitri, we can't.

DMITRI

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.

INT. RADIO HOUSE - 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.

DMITRI

Can I ask you a question?

Ilya stops what he is doing and gives Dmitri his full attention.

DMITRI (CONT'D)

I understand that Shostakovich was here recently.

INT. RADIO HOUSE STAIRWELL - LATER

Marina leads Dmitri out the door to the main stairwell. Katya hangs on her mothers sleeve.

MARINA

(to 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 (CONT'D)

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.

KATYA

Bye Dmitri!

When she is out of sight, Marina surprises Dmitri by grabbing his hand and kissing it.

MARINA

You are a saint. I owe you our lives.

DMITRI

For a little meat paste? Please, it was nothing.

MARINA

No, it meant everything. It is hope. Not just the food, but the news.

Marina gets a bit teary.

MARINA (CONT'D)

I passed out in the street the other day. Katya is getting weaker every day. I fear for her health.

They begin to walk down the stairs.

MARINA (CONT'D)

She doesn't know it but her grandmother is dead. My mother-in-law. She died two days ago.

DMITRI

Oh, I'm sorry-

She shakes her head.

MARINA

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.

DMITRI

Marina, the cemeteries are getting full. Too many bodies.

MARINA

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.

DMITRI

We'll have to take her ourselves.

EXT. LENINGRAD STREET - DAY

Marina and Dmitri struggle with the corpse, trying to get through the door with it. 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.

MARINA

Katya's father gave her this sled last winter.

EXT. LENINGRAD STREET - DAY

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.

DMITRI

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.

DMITRI (CONT'D)

The radio...that's you isn't it?

She nods.

MARINA

I recorded it yesterday. Funny to hear myself as I walk down the street.

DMITRI

What are you reciting?

She flashes him a look of surprise.

MARINA

Why Pushkin, of course! "The Prophet".
You don't know it?

He shrugs off her question.

DMITRI

I never had much time for poetry.

She is appalled.

MARINA

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!

DMITRI

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.

MARINA

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.

DMITRI

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.

MARINA

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.

MARINA (CONT'D)

It is what keeps us going. That's why we are all working so hard to keep the radio going. No matter what Hitler throws at us, he is not going to silence us.

She gazes out at the cityscape that spread out before them.

MARINA (CONT'D)

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.

MARINA (CONT'D)

I am the audience, Dmitri.

His wrinkled brow shows her he doesn't understand.

MARINA (CONT'D)

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.

EXT. ITALIAN BRIDGE - DAY

In the foreground 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.]

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.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Marina and Dmitri walk along a pathway in a large park, Marina still pulling the sled.

MARINA

Look at your shoes. They're falling off your feet! We must stop and rest.

DMITRI

No, it's all right. Let's keep going.

MARINA

Please, let's rest. I have to stop.

They go to a park bench and sit down, exhausted. Dmitri tries to fix his shoes, pulling and pushing the leather in ways it doesn't want to go.

MARINA (CONT'D)

How are your feet? Bad? We can stay here for a while.

He shrugs.

DMITRI

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

"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.

DMITRI

Let me guess...Pushkin.

MARINA

Of course!

EXT. PARK - LATER

Dmitri and Marina continue to walk through the park. It is now Dmitri's turn to pull the sled again.

From Marina and Dmitri's POV we 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.

DMITRI

We can't take both of them.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

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.

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

Is there any more room?

The Sapper gestures toward the piles of bodies.

SAPPER

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.

MARINA

I don't want to just leave her here.
Can't I find a nice place for her?

SAPPER

Just leave her here, we'll find a nice place for her.

As Marina continues to plead with the Sapper in the background, 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.

MARINA

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.

DMITRI

Nothing. Let's go.

INT. BAKERY - DAY

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.

OLGA

But why can't I use it? This is my husband's card.

ATTENDANT

One person, one ration. Your husband is dead, he gets no food.

OLGA

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.

ATTENDANT

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.

EXT. LENINGRAD STREET - DAY

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.

OLGA

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.

OLGA (CONT'D)

I'm so glad to see you.

She uses her most pitiful tone of voice.

OLGA (CONT'D)

I was just at the bakery and they wouldn't give me any bread.

DMITRI

What do you mean, they ran out?

OLGA

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-

DMITRI

You tried to use Aleksei's ration card?

OLGA

Of course. He was MY husband, I deserve to use his card.

Dmitri is fed up with her.

DMITRI

Olga, you can't use someone else's card anymore.

OLGA

But he was my husband!

DMITRI

It doesn't matter anymore. It's not allowed.

OLGA

But we need more food!

She starts to get hysterical, but Dmitri uses a soothing voice and manages to calm her down.

DMITRI

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 (CONT'D)

And the ice road is open now, that should
(MORE)

DMITRI (CONT'D)
 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.

OLGA
 Did you get the apples from Sasha?

Dmitri looks forlorn.

OLGA (CONT'D)
 You promised he was bringing apples.

She seems oblivious to his guilty expression.

OLGA (CONT'D)
 Just think, apples! Oh, the children
 will be so happy. Did you get them?
 Where are they?

DMITRI
 I didn't get them.

She looks like she's about to cry.

OLGA
 But you promised! You said you were
 bringing apples home!

DMITRI
 I'm sorry! He...he said maybe next time.

OLGA
 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.

INT. DMITRI'S APARTMENT - DAY

Yuri is indeed sitting listlessly on his cot as Dmitri and Olga come in. Deep dark circles hang under his eyes and his face is gaunt. Dmitri puts on a friendly face.

DMITRI
 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.

ALIK

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.

OLGA

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

(to Yuri)

Did you go down to get your ration today?

YURI

Yeah.

ALIK

Misha had to carry him!

DMITRI

Who?

ALIK

The neighbor downstairs. Mama made him carry Yuri to get his rations.

DMITRI

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

Mama yells at us all the time now. She cries a lot too.

DMITRI

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 (CONT'D)

Tell you what. Tomorrow I will bring us
all some food. I promise.

Alik looks at his uncle and smiles. Yuri pays no attention.

EXT. MAKESHIFT MILITARY BARRACKS - NIGHT

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.

COMRADE

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.

COMRADE (CONT'D)

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.

COMRADE (CONT'D)

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.

SASHA

I'll look at it later.

Sasha's lack of good humor puzzles his Comrade who tries to joke with him.

COMRADE

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 (CONT'D)

What's the matter? That's my best Hitler joke!

SASHA

I almost gave myself up to Hitler.

His comrade looks puzzled.

COMRADE

What do you mean?

SASHA

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.

COMRADE

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

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.

COMRADE

Oh come on, Sasha.

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.

(MORE)

SASHA (CONT'D)

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.

COMRADE

What made you decide to come back up?

SASHA

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?

COMRADE

You didn't. He hasn't won.

SASHA

But if they hadn't pulled me out-

COMRADE

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.

COMRADE (CONT'D)

Sasha? Don't tell that story to anyone else, okay?

EXT. LENINGRAD STREET - DAY

The late-rising sun casts a gloomy glow over the snowy streets. 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.

DMITRI

What do you have?

SHADY BLACK MARKET MAN

Meat cakes. A thousand roubles.

DMITRI

What kind of meat?

SHADY BLACK MARKET MAN

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.

SHADY BLACK MARKET MAN (CONT'D)

You interested or not?

Hunger wins out over disgust, and Dmitri succumbs to the offer of food.

DMITRI

Let me see them.

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 (CONT'D)

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.

SHADY BLACK MARKET MAN

Two meat cakes.

Dmitri nods and takes them quickly, turns and leaves.

INT. DMITRI'S APARTMENT - DAY

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

Is it ready yet? Can I have some?

DMITRI

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.

OLGA

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.

OLGA (CONT'D)

What do you have?!

ALIK

Mama, Dmitri brought us meat!

She 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.

DMITRI

Wait! It's hot!

OLGA

Where did you get that? Oh my God, meat!

Olga rushes around the room grabbing plates and setting the small table excitedly.

OLGA (CONT'D)

Sit down Yuri. Alik, here put this bread on the table. Cut it for us.

He 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

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.

OLGA

You're not having any?

Dmitri shakes his head.

DMITRI

No, you three share it.

She leans over and kisses him on the cheek.

OLGA

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.

INT. RADIO HOUSE - NIGHT

Marina and Dmitri 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 another corner a young woman is almost finished wrapping a body in a sheet. Such gruesome matters now go almost unnoticed.

DMITRI

What will you do after the war?

MARINA

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.

MARINA (CONT'D)

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.

MARINA (CONT'D)

What will you do?

DMITRI

I don't know. Go back to the factory I suppose. My dreams were never very big.

MARINA

Perhaps you just haven't found your niche yet. Be patient.

DMITRI

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.

MARINA

Never mind. You're destined for something better.

DMITRI

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 speaks.

DMITRI (CONT'D)

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."

MARINA

I'm sure he's right. You won't end up like that.

Dmitri stares at the floor like a guilty little child.

MARINA (CONT'D)

Dmitri...

He still studies his boots.

MARINA (CONT'D)

Don't do that.

DMITRI

Do what?

MARINA

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.

DMITRI

"Coat of shame?"

He chuckles.

DMITRI (CONT'D)

Who do you think you are talking to, Dostoevsky?

She smiles at his good-natured joking.

DMITRI (CONT'D)

Perhaps you can write after all. You see, it's in your blood too.

MARINA

But not yours?

He shakes his head vigorously.

DMITRI

No. Not me. I just work in a shoe factory.

MARINA

Look at the humble beginnings of Stalin. He was born into poverty, and he raised himself above it to rule this country.

DMITRI

Stalin...what has he done for us?

Marina is surprised to hear his attitude toward their leader.

MARINA

What do you mean? He's the greatest leader we've ever had.

DMITRI

Where is he now, Marina? Where is your great leader right now? I'll tell you where, in Moscow. Is he here with us? No.

MARINA

You can't expect him to stay here in Leningrad.

DMITRI

Stalin has left us here to die. He's as bad as Hitler.

Marina gasps at this comment. Even Katya looks up from her schoolwork at Dmitri. But he does not retract or offer apologies.

Dmitri's comments catch the ear of the 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.

DMITRI (CONT'D)

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.

DMITRI (CONT'D)

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.

MARINA

I have faith he will still save us. I have to.

Dmitri shakes his head in discontent. Katya goes back to her schoolbook.

DMITRI

You understand, don't you Ilya?

Ilya doesn't respond.

DMITRI (CONT'D)

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.

KATYA

Now Dmitri can have his boots!

Marina and Dmitri watch in horror at Katya's all too casual acceptance of death.

INT. DMITRI'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Dmitri stands at the stove 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.

EXT. OUTSIDE OF KOKKOREVO - MORNING

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

I knew I could count on you!

The two of them embrace in a bear hug.

DMITRI

Actually I was hoping to maybe just ride along.

Sasha's enthusiasm is not diminished by hearing this.

SASHA

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.

DMITRI

New boots.

SASHA

Good. You'll need them. We don't turn
(MORE)

SASHA (CONT'D)
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 they climb
into Sasha's truck.

INT. SASHA'S SUPPLY TRUCK - DAY

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
Isn't it dangerous to have our lights on?

Sasha gives a dismissive shrug.

SASHA
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
Relentless? Did you think they would
bomb us for a week and tire of it and
give up? Why should they?

SASHA
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
Oh come on, even Stalin no longer protects
us. He's down in Moscow in the Kremlin
having a cognac with his officers.

SASHA
Dmitri!

Sasha's voice is full of disdain, though his tone implies this is a familiar conversation for him and Dmitri.

SASHA (CONT'D)

Comrade Stalin is doing everything he can to break the blockade.

DMITRI

Yeah, no doubt pleased that Moscow is under no such strain.

SASHA

He will save us! He will save Mother Russia from the German bastards.

Dmitri shakes his head and smiles resignedly.

DMITRI

You and Marina would love each other.

The argument quicken forgotten, Sasha is now excited at the mention of a woman's name.

SASHA

Marina? And just who is Marina?

DMITRI

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.

SASHA

Dmitri has a woman!

EXT. LAKE LADOGA - DAY

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.

INT. SASHA'S SUPPLY TRUCK - DAY

Dmitri looks ahead and sees the truck in front of them is missing its doors.

DMITRI

What happened to that truck? How did it get damaged?

SASHA

Oh, it's not damaged. They took the doors off on purpose.

DMITRI

Coldest winter for decades, no heat, not enough warm clothing. They needed the fresh air?

SASHA

Some of the drivers take the doors off because....

He's reluctant to finish his sentence.

DMITRI

They needed *more* hardship?

SASHA

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.

DMITRI

Can't they just leave the doors open?

SASHA

Tried it. Force of the water just slams them shut.

Dmitri looks concerned. He stares at their heavy closed doors.

DMITRI

And we have our doors on...why?

SASHA

We'll be fine. I just can't handle being any colder.

Dmitri puts his hand on the door handle, ready. Sasha laughs.

SASHA (CONT'D)

Relax. We'll be fine.

Sasha calls Dmitri's bluff of nonchalance about Marina and tries to get his goat.

SASHA (CONT'D)

So this Marina. She and I would get along you say?

Dmitri chuckles.

DMITRI

Well, you both could sit for hours and agree on how wonderful Stalin is. But I think that is the extent of your similarities.

SASHA

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.

DMITRI

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. He speaks to the air.

SASHA

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.

DMITRI

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.

SASHA

Even Stalin himself cannot take away my
God.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - DAY

Marina, POLINA and Katya plod slowly across the wide entrance to a train station. Military men patrol the area. Though Polina is still a heavysset woman she doesn't look healthy.

POLINA

If Ivan Ivanovich doesn't have any more tucked away somewhere, I don't know what we'll do.

MARINA

He's more of a poet than a musician.
Mostly books I'm afraid.

POLINA

My voice will give out if I have to read one more book on the air.

Katya looks casually at the vivid Stalinist propoganda posters that plaster the train station's facade. She is absorbed in them as the two women talk.

MARINA

Plus he's been nearly deaf for the last ten years.

Marina keeps one eye on Katya as she wanders ahead.

MARINA (CONT'D)

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.

MARINA (CONT'D)

Katya, no! Stop! Don't pick that up!

Marina runs as best she can to Katya, who is surprised at her mother's outburst. Polina also stands puzzled.

MARINA (CONT'D)

Come here, don't touch it!

Marina glances to the military men still wandering around the train station. A few watch her with interest.

KATYA

Why? What is it?

Now Katya is even more curious to pick up the paper.

MARINA

Keep going, let's go. Keep walking.

Marina rushes them away from the papers, away from the soldiers.

POLINA

Marina?

MARINA

Just go.

EXT. LAKE LADOGA - CONTINUOUS

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.

INT. SASHA'S SUPPLY TRUCK - DAY

Sasha slows down, rolls down his window to ask a sentry what's happening.

SENTRY

Oh God, it's awful. The first bus of evacuees went under.

Dmitri and Sasha exchange sad glances.

SASHA

No. No, no, no!

DMITRI

How many?

SENTRY

The bus was full. Women and children. We thought the ice was safe, that's why we started letting them-

DMITRI

How many did you save?

SENTRY

They just couldn't get down there, it was too cold...

SASHA

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.

SENTRY

That was the very first bus, so it was packed. We just couldn't...we didn't know...

DMITRI

My God.

Sasha snatches his icon down from his visor, closes his eyes and offers a silent prayer while clutching it.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING HALLWAY - DAY

MARINA

Go ahead, darling, go play with Kook.

Marina and Polina wait and watch until Katya goes inside the apartment. Only when she is inside does Marina turn to Polina.

MARINA (CONT'D)

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.

POLINA

Those poor gullible women.

MARINA

Now you can get shot if you pick up any papers in the street.

INT. POSH APARTMENT - DAY

Marina and Polina enter the cozy apartment of the poet to meet Katya standing, confused. She hold a dog's collar with a tiny jingling bell.

KATYA

Where's Koko?

INT. POSH APARTMENT - 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.

IVAN IVANOVICH

I did it. How could I do it?

He holds the collar tenderly in his hands. He turns it round and round so the bell jingles lightly.

IVAN IVANOVICH (CONT'D)

I had to Marina, I had to. I'm starving.

This makes him wail even harder, and Marina cannot help but cry too.

IVAN IVANOVICH (CONT'D)

Oh my God.

He clutches his bony hands to his mouth, shrieking in disgust and horror.

IVAN IVANOVICH (CONT'D)

How could I do it? My poor Koko.

EXT. KOBONA - DAY

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

Come on.

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.

MILITARY MAN

...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.

DMITRI

What did you say?

MILITARY MAN

Nothing. Just rumors.

DMITRI

Tell me.

Sasha doubles back and tries to pry Dmitri away. Dmitri yanks himself out of Sasha's grip.

DMITRI (CONT'D)

Tell me!

MILITARY MAN

This ice road is putting a strain on the army, the supplies. They say Stalin might divert the supplies.

DMITRI

Oh, I see, we're too much trouble, is that it?

SASHA

Dima, don't shoot the messenger, come on.

DMITRI

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!

MILITARY MAN

I'm not saying I agree, I'm just telling you that...maybe he thinks we're flogging a dead horse here.

DMITRI

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

Do you think attacking them will help?
They're just drivers!

DMITRI

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!

SASHA

Dima, I don't-

DMITRI

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 (CONT'D)

Go ahead, defend him! Be blind!

Sasha's anger builds up, grows as Dmitri pushes him, taunts
him, screams at him.

DMITRI (CONT'D)

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.

DMITRI (CONT'D)

Do it!

Sasha lunges at Dmitri, this time easily knocking him to the
ground harshly.

SASHA

There!

Sasha backs away after only one hit.

SASHA (CONT'D)

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.

DMITRI

Okay.

Dmitri nearly smiles.

DMITRI (CONT'D)

Now help me up you asshole.

Sasha helps Dmitri to his feet. They slowly walk toward the shack. Dmitri is now stiff and tries to shake it off.

DMITRI (CONT'D)

You pushed hard enough.

SASHA

Oh you big baby. You landed in two feet of soft snow.

INT. SHACK - DAY

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.

KOBONA MAN

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.

DMITRI

Ninety-sevens?

Sasha is busy making his tea as he answers, rummaging for a spoon, some sugar perhaps.

SASHA

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. 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.

SASHA (CONT'D)

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.

DMITRI

Stalin is not going to save us. Our comrades will save us.

EXT. KOBONA - LATER

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

Dmitri, listen. You do realize that you are now outside the blockade?

Sasha stops him before they reach the truck.

SASHA (CONT'D)

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-

DMITRI

Stay? Here?

SASHA

Yes! There's no need to go back. You've broken through the ring!

Dmitri looks back to the docks and it appears that the thought

hadn't occurred to him.

SASHA (CONT'D)
They're always needing help here. You could stay.

DMITRI
Why don't you stay?

SASHA
Me? Because I can't. I have to drive.

DMITRI
A soldier's duty.

SASHA
But why should you go back? We could use you here.

Dmitri thinks a moment, obviously considering the chance of freedom.

SASHA (CONT'D)
They evacuated so many people already, but not enough. People are dying for the chance to evacuate.

Sasha seems to read Dmitri's mind:

SASHA (CONT'D)
Those who are evacuated are not cowards.

DMITRI
No. I'm going back. I'm needed there.

Sasha sighs, knows there's no point in arguing with Dmitri.

INT. MUSIC CONSERVATORY - DAY

Dmitri sits in the small inner office of the music conservatory waiting patiently on a threadbare sofa. A pale young scurvy-ridden SECRETARY finally comes through a side door.

SCURVY SECRETARY
I'm sorry to keep you waiting. We've only got a skeleton crew here now I'm afraid. Oh. No pun intended.

INT. MUSIC CONSERVATORY-AIDE'S OFFICE - DAY

The Aide sits across from Dmitri at an enormous desk.

He is surprisingly healthy-looking, his outfit is well-tailored and he is well-groomed.

AIDE

What can I do for you?

DMITRI

Shostakovich.

The Aide eyes Dmitri suspiciously. Recognition registers with the Aide, but not Dmitri.

AIDE

What about him?

DMITRI

I wanted to know if I could speak with him.

The Aide raises an eyebrow.

AIDE

Speak with him? Oh I'm afraid that's impossible.

DMITRI

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.

AIDE

But that's quite impos-

DMITRI

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 -

AIDE

But, you can't-

DMITRI

- must hear it. She works at the Radio House, and-

The Aide is now losing patience with Dmitri.

AIDE

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.

DMITRI

Evacuated?

AIDE

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.

AIDE (CONT'D)

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.

DMITRI

Records!

The Aide approaches Dmitri as Dmitri crouches down and dives into the records excitedly.

DMITRI (CONT'D)

The Radio House...we need these!

The Aide stands right next to Dmitri who is still crouched down rifling though the records.

DMITRI (CONT'D)

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-

AIDE

Yes, I'm quite aware of the Radio House. We work closely with them.

Dmitri is glad to hear this.

DMITRI

Then you know! They'd love to have these records. May I take a few?

AIDE

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.

DMITRI

But...we need them.

AIDE

Do you consider yourself a good Soviet citizen?

Puzzled, Dmitri considers the seemingly irrelevant question. He swallows hard.

DMITRI

Of course.

AIDE

Is that so? A firm supporter of Stalin?

Dmitri winces.

DMITRI

I...want to keep the Radio House going...

AIDE

Those against Stalin are against the Mother Russia.

Dmitri can't take his eyes off the Aide's perfect boots.

DMITRI

But I...I want to keep Leningrad alive...Stalin will know that we aren't giving up...

The Aide still towers over him menacingly.

AIDE

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?

DMITRI
He isn't hearing us.

AIDE
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.

DMITRI
It's not for Stalin. It's for his people.

The Aide turns on his heels and returns to his desk.

AIDE
I'm sorry, no. You cannot have them.

DMITRI
Not even one? Just one.

AIDE
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.

AIDE (CONT'D)
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.

INT. STORAGE ROOM- DAY

The Aide stumbles through the small dark 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.

EXT. BREAD LINE - DAY

Olga waits in a long line outside of a bakery. It is another overcast day and more German planes are overhead, and distant shellings can be heard.

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.

WORRIED WOMAN

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.

OLGA

How much more?

German planes scream directly overhead and the women practically have to yell to be heard.

WORRIED WOMAN

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 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.

EXT. MUSIC CONSERVATORY - DAY

Dmitri comes out of the 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.

SCURVY SECRETARY

Excuse me.

Dmitri turns to her.

SCURVY SECRETARY (CONT'D)

You wanted to meet Shostakovich?

DMITRI

I wanted to talk to him.

SCURVY SECRETARY

I know him. I studied with him for three years.

She seems a bit too eager to help, suspicious. Dmitri pays her little mind.

DMITRI

He's been evacuated.

SCURVY SECRETARY

To Moscow, yes I know. But he's coming back to collect some of his things.

This gets Dmitri's attention.

DMITRI

When?

SCURVY SECRETARY

Tomorrow. He's only allowed to stay one day.

DMITRI

Can you get me to see him? Can you arrange a meeting?

She cocks her head to the side and narrows her eyes at him.

SCURVY SECRETARY

Depends.

He gets the idea.

DMITRI

What do you want? I can get you jewelry, gold.

SCURVY SECRETARY

I can't eat gold. If you get me some bread perhaps, a loaf? Some potatoes?

DMITRI

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.

SCURVY SECRETARY

Where do you live?

INT. RADIO HOUSE - DAY

Marina sits at the 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.

MARINA

...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.

MARINA (CONT'D)

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.

KATYA

Mama, you look so tired. You need a nap.

MARINA

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

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.

MARINA

Oh. Yes. Of course.

Katya looks to her disorientated mother. Marina only smiles as she lays down.

KATYA

Get some sleep, Mama.

INT. DMITRI'S APARTMENT BUILDING STAIRWAY - DAY

Dmitri and the Scurvy Secretary stand outside Dmitri's door.

DMITRI

Don't say anything about the ring to my sister-in-law.

INT. DMITRI'S APARTMENT - DAY

Olga sits on her bed. She hears the front door open and shut in the main room.

OLGA

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 (CONT'D)

Wasn't that meat delicious?

The brief conversation in the living room is over, and the front door shuts.

OLGA (CONT'D)

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.

OLGA (CONT'D)

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 (CONT'D)

Please go get Yuri's blanket. It's on the cot. He's cold.

She smiles sweetly at Dmitri. He doesn't move.

OLGA (CONT'D)

(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

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.

OLGA

No. He's fine where he is. Can you get the blanket please?

Dmitri leaves the room.

OLGA (CONT'D)

Won't potatoes be nice, Yuri? I haven't had a potato in months.

Dmitri brings the blanket and kneels down beside her.

DMITRI

Please, let me take him.

OLGA

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.

OLGA (CONT'D)

He has his father's hair, doesn't he Dmitri?

Dmitri puts his head down into his hands.

EXT. LAKE LADOGA - DAY

There are several trucks in front of Sasha's truck out on the ice road. 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.

INT. SASHA'S SUPPLY TRUCK - DAY

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.

SASHA

Hello! How many today?

SOLDIER

Forty seven!

SASHA

What's the record so far?

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.

SOLDIER

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. 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

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.

SOLDIER

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.

SOLDIER (CONT'D)

Back up! Back up!

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.

SOLDIER (CONT'D)

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.

SASHA

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.

SASHA (CONT'D)

Can you help me take these doors off?

EXT. LAKE LADOGA - LATER

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.

EXT. CEMETERY - NIGHT

Dmitri is at the same cemetery as before. 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.

EXT. SIDE FENCE OF CEMETERY - NIGHT

Dmitri drags the sled over the uneven ground along the fence 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.

DMITRI

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.

EXT. CEMETERY CENTER - 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.

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.

DMITRI

Forgive me, Yuri.

EXT. LENINGRAD STREET - NIGHT

Dmitri slowly trudges down a dark 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.

DMITRI

Bastard!

Stalin's huge smug face stares down at Dmitri. Dmitri screams at the top of his lungs.

DMITRI (CONT'D)

You damn bastard!

He grabs some nearby rubble from a recent bombing and throws it at the huge mural.

DMITRI (CONT'D)

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.

HEAD SOLDIER

Hey! What do you think you're doing?!

DMITRI

Baaastaaaard!

INT. JAIL - DAY

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.

GUARD

Did you sleep well, my darling?

Dmitri rubs his head and tries to wake himself up. He looks at his surroundings.

DMITRI

I was hoping this was a dream.

GUARD

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.

GUARD (CONT'D)

Treason is punishable by death! Instead of feeding you we should kill you.

DMITRI

Treason? You call that treason? All I was doing was-

GUARD

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

Look, I have to be somewhere. I've got to meet someone at nine this morning.

GUARD

You don't speak German by any chance do you?

DMITRI

Of course not.

GUARD

Are you sure? Perhaps you are a spy. Spreading anti-Stalin rumors about town.

Dmitri is getting tired of the Guard toying with him.

DMITRI

Look, how soon can I get out of here? I'm supposed to meet someone-

GUARD

Yes, yes, at nine, I heard. You're meeting your German lover perhaps? Or maybe you have a rendezvous with your Nazi colleagues?

DMITRI

If you must know, I have a meeting with Shostakovich.

This news sends the Guard into spasms of hoarse laughter. He slaps his knee.

GUARD

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.

GUARD (CONT'D)

Well, your eminence, forgive me, I apologize. Here, let me share my breakfast with you!

The Guard hands him a mug through the bars.

DMITRI

What is it?

GUARD

Hot water.

Dmitri guzzles the hot water as if it were rich coffee with cream.

GUARD (CONT'D)

With salt. We're not savages.

Dmitri notices a clock on the wall that reads 10:30. He moans.

DMITRI

I assume that clock is right?

GUARD

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.

GUARD (CONT'D)

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.

GUARD (CONT'D)

Go to your German lover.

Dmitri darts out of the cell. The Guard is not far behind him.

INT. SHOSTAKOVICH'S APARTMENT - DAY

Shostakovich is rummaging through his papers at his desk. 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.

SHOSTAKOVICH
Please child, sit down!

She immediately sits down on an old settee. He immediately softens his mood after barking at her.

SHOSTAKOVICH (CONT'D)
I'm sorry, but I just cannot take you.
I would if I could.

SCURVY SECRETARY
I understand.

She coughs violently.

SHOSTAKOVICH
I'm only allowed one Aide.

She looks enviously to the Aide stuffing the suitcase. He gives her a smug smile.

SCURVY SECRETARY
I know.

Her tone of voice suggests she knows it is a death sentence.

He 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.

SHOSTAKOVICH
Let's finish up and get going. We're meeting Kirkorov in half an hour.

SCURVY SECRETARY
I could play for you! Would you like that?

SHOSTAKOVICH
No, no. We have to get going.

She seems so eager to help, but so easily brushed aside.

SCURVY SECRETARY
Can I help you to the station?

SHOSTAKOVICH
No, we'll be fine. Come on, Boris, we should go.

AIDE

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

My name is Dmitri Ivanovich Stepanov.

Shostakovich pays little mind of Dmitri and continues scurrying around the room getting his luggage together.

SHOSTAKOVICH

So? What do you want?

Dmitri tries to catch his breath. He sees the secretary on the settee.

DMITRI

I had an appointment with you...this morning.

SHOSTAKOVICH

Oh yes. I was expecting you hours ago. I'm sorry, but we're leaving now.

DMITRI

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.

AIDE

Should I get rid of him?

Dmitri gives the Aide a hard stare. Shostakovich ignores the Aide's question.

SHOSTAKOVICH

You should have 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

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.

INT. RADIO HOUSE - DAY

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.

EXT. LENINGRAD STREET - DAY

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.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

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.

INT. BAKERY - DAY

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.

INT. SHOSTAKOVICH'S LOBBY - DAY

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.

AIDE

What is that?

Shostakovich of course recognizes the instrument instantly. He seems surprised.

SHOSTAKOVICH

It's a metronome.

AIDE

Great. Let's go, sir. I have a car waiting. At least in Moscow we have *music* on the radio.

Dmitri has hobbled half way down the staircase leading into the lobby.

DMITRI

That is our heartbeat!

The Aide stops and turns to Dmitri. Dmitri awkwardly limps down a few more steps.

AIDE

What?

Dmitri is incensed at the Aide's flippant attitude.

DMITRI

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.

AIDE

Annoying clicking...that keeps you going?

DMITRI

That p.a. system is the only thing Leningrad has. The Radio House is still
(MORE)

DMITRI (CONT'D)

going, despite the fact that they are all dying, they are determined to keep it going.

The Aide squirms uncomfortably as Dmitri lectures him in front of the whole lobby full of people.

AIDE

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.

DMITRI

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.

DMITRI (CONT'D)

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.

DMITRI (CONT'D)

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 (CONT'D)

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 slowly 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

Bravo, young man. Bravo! Tell me your name again.

INT. DMITRI'S APARTMENT - DAY

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.

DMITRI

Olga! Come in here!

She comes into the main room, frantic. She's grabbing things from around the room, gathering them up.

DMITRI (CONT'D)

Olga, look! Look what I got! What are you doing?

OLGA

What is that? Food? Is it food?

DMITRI

Sauerkraut I think. And some canned beets.

She rips a few cans from his arms.

OLGA

Good Lord, Dmitri! Where did you get this? Oh, my God!

He grins ear to ear.

DMITRI

You're not going to believe this.

OLGA

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.

DMITRI

Shostakovich.

OLGA

Shostakovich? What about him?

He still grinning, but she is so set on opening the cans she doesn't notice.

DMITRI

Shostakovich gave them to me.

She looks at him with suspicion.

OLGA

Don't be silly. So you took some jewelry. It's okay, Dmitri, I've been selling them myself.

DMITRI

No, really. I met Shostakovich today, and he gave me all of these.

OLGA

Trouble is there's no one willing to buy 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.

OLGA (CONT'D)

What happened to your face?

He doesn't remember for a few seconds, then he puts his fingers up to his face.

DMITRI

Oh, nothing, I just...

OLGA

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.

OLGA (CONT'D)

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.

INT. RADIO HOUSE - DAY

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.

KATYA

Hi Dmitri. Hey, what's wrong with your face? Did you fight some Germans?

He gingerly touches what's left of his bruises.

DMITRI

Yeah. Got into a fist-fight with Hitler. He looks worse. Where is everyone?

Her smile disappears.

KATYA

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

Maybe I can help you. I was good at math. Would you like that?

KATYA

Dmitri, do you have any bread?

He looks over to Marina, who hasn't noticed him come in yet.

DMITRI

No, I sure don't.

Katya seems let down in her overly dramatic way. He milks the situation for all it's worth.

DMITRI (CONT'D)

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 hold them up with a flourish.

DMITRI (CONT'D)

Ta da!

Marina hears Dmitri, and starts to come over to them. She moves so slowly and looks ever weaker than before.

DMITRI (CONT'D)

Go get us a can opener, would you kid?

She pouts dramatically and scolds him.

KATYA

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.

MARINA

Dmitri!

She kisses him on the cheek.

MARINA (CONT'D)

Again? You are a gift from heaven.

Dmitri makes sure Katya is out of earshot.

DMITRI

What's wrong with Katya? She looks so...

MARINA

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.

MARINA (CONT'D)

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.

MARINA (CONT'D)

You're hurt.

DMITRI

It's nothing.

Suddenly uncomfortable at their intimacy, he shifts the attention.

DMITRI (CONT'D)

Oh here...

He takes Yuri's small boots from his coat pockets.

DMITRI (CONT'D)

For Katya.

Marina gratefully takes the shoes, stroking them with appreciation.

DMITRI (CONT'D)

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.

KATYA

Can we share with Vladimir?

Marina nods.

MARINA

Of course.

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.

MARINA (CONT'D)

I can't believe you got this.

Dmitri grins ear to ear.

DMITRI

You think that's amazing, wait 'til you hear who I got it from.

EXT. LENINGRAD STREET - DAY

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.

DMITRI

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.

INT. DMITRI'S APARTMENT - DAY

Now feeling well-fed, Olga is curled up on her bed with an ear to ear grin.

OLGA

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.

EXT. LENINGRAD STREET - LATER

The afternoon sun is starting to set. Dmitri and Marina get up from a bench where they have been resting and continue and plod along.

MARINA

How much farther?

DMITRI

We're almost there Marina. We can do it. A mile maybe.

MARINA

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.

MARINA (CONT'D)

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.

DMITRI

Wait here.

EXT. LENINGRAD STREET - LATER

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.

EXT. LENINGRAD STREET - LATER

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.

INT. MUSIC CONSERVATORY - NIGHT

The Aide unlocks the main door 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.

DMITRI

Please...come help.

INT. MUSIC CONSERVATORY - NIGHT

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.

INT. BALLROOM-MUSIC CONSERVATORY - MOMENTS LATER

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

Marina? You must be Marina. Where is young Dmitri?

AIDE

He's coming.

The Aide sets Marina down delicately onto a velvet sofa that has been pulled into the center of the large opulent ballroom.

MARINA

I'm so honored to be here. I met you before, when you spoke at the Radio House.

SHOSTAKOVICH

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 vibrance behind it.

SHOSTAKOVICH (CONT'D)

Dmitri tells me you're quite a fan of mine.

MARINA

Oh yes. I think your music is magical.
You're just-

SHOSTAKOVICH

Now, now. Don't embarrass me. An
artist's ego can be fragile.

She smiles at him.

SHOSTAKOVICH (CONT'D)

Dmitri can be a pretty persuasive young
man. I was set to return to Moscow
tonight, hours ago.

Marina looks concerned.

MARINA

Oh, I'm sorry. He didn't tell me.

SHOSTAKOVICH

No, don't worry about it. I agreed to
stay as long as it took you to arrive.

She seems surprised by his flexibility.

MARINA

Oh?

SHOSTAKOVICH

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.

SHOSTAKOVICH (CONT'D)

I wouldn't stay and perform my Seventh
for just anyone. But he convinced me.

She is delighted. The Aide goes to the piano and pulls out
the bench, straightens the sheet music.

MARINA

Your Seventh?

SHOSTAKOVICH

Of course. What did you think you were
here for?

MARINA

Why just to meet you again, to have the
chance to talk to you.

SHOSTAKOVICH

I'm not much of a talker. I'm a musician.

Shostakovich goes to the piano and sits down.

She is beaming now, barely able to contain herself. She whispers breathlessly to herself.

MARINA

The Seventh!

Dmitri finally catches up and drags himself to the sofa, and collapses next to Marina. She pays no attention to his fragile state and hugs him enthusiastically.

MARINA (CONT'D)

Oh Dmitri!

He returns the embrace and smiles as she clings to him.

CLOSE UP ON SHOSTAKOVICH AT HIS PIANO.

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 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.

INT. AIDE'S CAR - NIGHT

A chauffeur drives Marina and Dmitri back to the Radio House. They 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.

INT. BALLROOM-MUSIC CONSERVATORY - NIGHT

Shostakovich shuffles toward the door with the Aide in tow carrying his bags. As they reach the door Shostakovich finally speaks.

SHOSTAKOVICH

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?

INT. RADIO HOUSE - NIGHT

The 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.

MARINA

This has been the most incredible night of my life. That symphony, it tells our story.

Dmitri smiles and nods.

MARINA (CONT'D)

You'll stay here tonight?

He nods again. She smiles her approval at him. He goes and 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 him. He smiles at her, nods toward Marina.

DMITRI

Shh.

EXT. LENINGRAD STREET - NIGHT

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.

INT. RADIO HOUSE - LATER

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.

DMITRI

Marina?

Louder this time.

DMITRI (CONT'D)

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 quietly in her sleep. He leans back into his chair and lets himself weep for Marina.

EXT. KOBONA - NIGHT

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 are 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 goes to one of 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 Fabrege 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.

DOCKHAND

"...*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 he 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. Tears run down his face.

INT. RADIO HOUSE - NIGHT

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 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.

DMITRI

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.

DMITRI (CONT'D)

(reading)

"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.

DMITRI (CONT'D)

"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.

DMITRI (CONT'D)

"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

(MORE)

DMITRI (CONT'D)
 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.

DMITRI (CONT'D)
 "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.

DMITRI (CONT'D)
 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.

EXT. LENINGRAD CITYSCAPE - MORNING

The weak morning sun rises over the city again.

ADULT KATYA (V.O.)
 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.

EXT. LENINGRAD STREET - DAY

The snowy bus stop where Dmitri once waited is dark and cold.

ADULT KATYA (V.O.)
 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.

ADULT KATYA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 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.

EXT. PARK - DAY

The park where Dmitri and Marina rested while taking her dead mother-in-law to the cemetery is snowy and gray...

ADULT KATYA (V.O.)

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.

...now a green park 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.

ADULT KATYA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

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.

EXT. LENINGRAD STREET - DAY

Empty immobile trolley cars sit frozen onto their tracks in the middle of the street.

ADULT KATYA (V.O.)

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.

This changes into a springtime scene of a trolley car full of life, zooming down the street, people jumping on and off as it slows down.

ADULT KATYA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

We would have to endure 803 more days of the siege.

INT. BAKERY - DAY

The bakery is empty and cold and dark, no food of any kind.

ADULT KATYA (V.O.)

Nearly one and a half million people died in the siege of Leningrad, half the population of the city.

Now seen as a thriving bakery 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.

EXT. PISKAREVSKY CEMETERY - DAY

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 (V.O.)

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, unflinchingly.

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

Credits roll.