

BURNT BY THE SUN – 2

FIRST FILM

“INTRODUCTION”

From an original idea by **Nikita Mikhalkov**

Screenplay

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1. EXT. THE GARDEN OF A DACHA. AN ARBOUR (VIEW OF KOTOV) – EVENING

In a close up shot, a knife is carefully spreading butter on a slice of bread.

Stalin

(off camera)

WHEN I WAS STUDYING AT THE SEMINARY, MOTHER HAD FOOD GIVEN TO ME WHENEVER THE OCCASION PRESENTED ITSELF. WHAT I LIKED MOST WAS HAVING A PIECE OF BREAD SHE'D BAKED HERSELF IN HER OWN OVEN SPREAD WITH BUTTER FROM OUR VILLAGE. THEN COVERING IT WITH JAM.

A hand puts some jam on the slice of buttered bread.

Stalin

(off camera)

IT WAS ABSOLUTELY DELICIOUS...I WATCHED THE JAM SPREADING OVER THE BUTTER AND WAITED. I USED TO IMAGINE THE TREAT TO COME, BUT I WAITED - DEVELOPING MY WILLPOWER.

Under a large arbour, there is a richly laid table. A cheerful group is sitting around it: Stalin in an unbuttoned white tunic; Vorochilov; Beria; Boudionny; Kotov in ceremonial uniform with his decorations; Maroussia, in an elegant dress; Mitia, in the uniform of a NKGB commandant. A small orchestra is playing on a platform behind the arbour. All the musicians are identically dressed: boater, white tussah silk trousers, striped sleeveless shirt, canvas shoes. They are playing the tango "Deceptive sun". A silky voiced soloist is singing: "the deceptive sun tenderly takes its leave of the sea..." Behind the trees it is just possible to make out the placid young men, perspiring in their plain suits, who make up the guard for these illustrious guests. In the distance, the sun glistens on the glossy roofs of the official Packards. Bees are buzzing above the table. Stalin carefully bites into a piece of bread spread with jam.

Stalin

(to Boudionny)

SEMION, HAVE YOU EVER EATEN ANYTHING LIKE THIS?

Boudionny

(disconcerted)

ME? *(Making a gesture with his chin towards Vorochilov.)* KLIM HAS.

Vorochilov

HEY! WHY ME? SPEAK FOR YOURSELF, SEMION MIKHAÏLOVITCH,! YOU WERE ASKED THE QUESTION!

Stalin

(with a gesture of weariness)

EH... YOU KNOW NOTHING ABOUT THE GOOD THINGS IN LIFE. BACK THEN I THOUGHT IT WAS BETTER THAN ANY KIND OF CAKE. AND DO YOU KNOW WHY IT WAS SO GOOD? BECAUSE MOTHER HAD PREPARED IT FOR ME WITH LOVE... *(he looks at Maroussia.)* AREN'T I RIGHT?

Maroussia

OH! BUT WE'VE GOT...

Kotov stares at Maroussia; she notices his look. Kotov puts his finger to his lips smiling. Maroussia puts her hand over her mouth. Stalin and the whole table look at them, curiously. Kotov gets up. He goes to Stalin. He leans towards his ear and whispers something.

Stalin

GENERAL, YOU ARE MASTER OF THE HOUSE, I AM ONLY A GUEST... WHY ARE YOU ASKING ME THE QUESTION?

Kotov signals to someone at the far end of the garden. A moment later four cooks appear at the far end of the garden. They are carrying an enormous cake decorated with a moulded representation of the Leader, a smoking chocolate pipe in his mouth. They reach the arbour and place the cake on the table. Stalin admires the cake.

Stalin

IT'S MAGNIFICENT! (*he looks around the guests*) AND NOW, ARE WE ALL GOING TO EAT COMRADE STALIN?

There is silence.

Stalin

WHO IS GOING TO START? (*To Vorochilov.*) YOU, KLIM?

Vorochilov

WELL, LET'S SEE...

Stalin

(*making a chin towards Boudionny*)

SEMION SHOULD START!

Boudionny

BUT WHY ME? SPEAK FOR YOURSELF, KLIMENT EFREMOVITCH,! YOU WERE ASKED THE QUESTION!

Stalin

THAT'S ENOUGH YOU TWO! (*putting his face towards the cake.*) MMM... IT SMELLS GOOD!

At that precise moment, Kotov delicately puts his hand on the Leader's neck and pushes his face into his own image. The guests are all rigid with fear. Stalin struggles, but Kotov increases the pressure. Stalin's face sinks into the confectioner's custard. He bellows. Kotov presses harder. Stalin tries to straighten up but Kotov pushes him even further into the cake. Stalin waves his arms; he looks like a bird. Kotov's hand disappears in the cake, Maroussia leaps up.

Maroussia

KOTOV! KOTOV! WHERE'S NADIA?

Kotov shouts.

2. INT. A CAMP. A HUT – MORNING

Caption: “25 JUNE 1941. SPECIAL CAMP No. 57”

Dawn is breaking. Kotov is sitting in the passage separating the wooden mattresses. Head clasped in his hands, he is shouting with his eyes open. His face is covered with sweat.

Kotov
(he screams)
NADIA! NADIA-A-A!

Several prisoners jump out of bed. They surround him. One of them tries to loosen the vice like grip of his hands.

The prisoner
CALM DOWN, KOTOV, CALM DOWN!

Kotov stops screaming. He opens his eyes. Another prisoner offers him a damp cloth. He wipes his face. The prisoners go back to their places. Only the one that wiped his face stays sitting next to him.

Kotov
(asking the prisoner, without understanding)
WHERE? WHERE IS SHE? WHERE IS NADIA?

The prisoner
WHO? EVERYONE IS HERE...

Kotov looks around the huts. Here and there, bodies are moving. Some are already up and putting on their shoes, others are sitting on their mattress, staring vacantly into the early dawn.

The prisoner
WHO'VE YOU LOST? WAKE UP... IT WILL SOON BE TIME...

Suddenly the door bursts open. Torches cut through the declining darkness. The rays light up Kotov's face. Red Army guards surge into the hut, bayonets fixed on the end of their rifles. They are preceded by the camp commandant, who is wearing a kepi instead of a cap and whose tunic has the blood red stand up collar reserved for officers

Camp commandant
(turning his torch on Kotov's face)
KOTOV! COME HERE!

Kotov hides his face in his hands to avoid the blinding light of the torch.

Camp commandant

GET UP! OUTSIDE!

Two guards grab him under the arms and drag him towards the door.

A guard

FORWARD! QUICK MARCH!

The guards pass in front of the Camp commandant with Kotov. Kotov turns to him.

Kotov

WHERE ARE YOU TAKING ME? WHAT HAVE I DONE? IT WAS ONLY A DREAM!

The guard

OUTSIDE! QUICK MARCH!

The guards drag him out of the hut.

Camp commandant

(to the rest of them)

GET UP! EVERYONE OUTSIDE!

The guards rush to the end of the hut to push the prisoners outside.

3. EXT. THE CAMP – MORNING

Kotov tumbles out of the hut. The confines of the camp are brightly lit by the spotlights on the watchtowers. In front of each hut is a line of guards with dogs. The prisoners are in front of the entrance to the huts. The camp radio starts to crackle. The loud speakers spit out words that are distorted by the metal.

The voice

(in the loud speakers)

ON 22 JUNE, WITHOUT A PRIOR DECLARATION OF WAR, THE AGGRESSORS OF FASCIST GERMANY INVADED OUR MOTHERLAND LIKE COWARDS. WE ARE ORGANISING THE IMMEDIATE EVACUATION OF ALL PRISONERS.

A prisoner

WHAT DATE IS IT TODAY?

Kotov

THE 25TH!

The prisoner

WE'VE BEEN AT WAR FOR THREE DAYS AND KNEW NOTHING ABOUT IT! THE SWINE!

At the end of each passageway there is a canvas covered vehicle. Suddenly several aircraft fly over the camp at low altitude. Kotov just has time to make out the crosses on the wings. All the prisoners look up as they had received an order.

Kotov

(murmuring, his face radiant)

WAR! WAR!

Suddenly the lines of guards scatter. The prisoners race towards each other.

Voices

IT'S WAR! WAR! HURRAH!

The guards try to re-establish order.

The guards

IN LINE! EVERYONE IN LINE! RUN TO THE VEHICLES!

Kotov goes towards the line of prisoners that stretches from his hut where the political prisoners are held, but the camp commandant catches him by the collar and sends him to the other side, towards the common law criminals.

Camp commandant

YOU, ON THE OTHER SIDE.

Kotov

BUT I WAS SENTENCED UNDER ARTICLE 58!

Camp commandant

(opening his brief case)

WHAT ARE YOU ON ABOUT! I'VE RECEIVED A DOCUMENT THAT SAYS: ARTICLE 193, PARAGRAPH 17, SUB PARAGRAPH A. GET MOVING! AND HURRY UP!

With the end of his gun, a guard pushes Kotov towards the group of common law criminals who are worrying about what is going to happen to them.

Kotov

WHAT? BUT WHAT'S THE ARTICLE?

Camp commandant

MAYBE YOU'D LIKE ME TO READ THE PENAL CODE TO YOU, WHILE WE'RE AT IT! MISAPPROPRIATION OF PROPERTY BY ABUSE OF POSITION! CLEAR OFF!

At the same time, several combat aircraft, with crosses on their wings, pass just over the prisoners. One of them drops a bomb on a watchtower that is equipped with a machine gun post. The bomb explodes just next to the watchtower, smashing its footings. The watch tower and the machine gun fall with a crash.

Voices

IT'S WAR! HURRAH! IT'S WAR!

The guards leave their shelter at a run. They line the famous article 58 prisoners up in front of the political prisoner's hut, where a semblance of order has been maintained. Which is where the camp commandant is to be found.

Camp commandant

(to the political prisoners)

LINE UP IN FRONT OF THE VEHICLES! HURRY!

The criminals

(Yelling)

WHY DO THE TROTSKYITES GET TO LEAVE FIRST? WE'RE JUST SWINE, IS THAT IT?

The political prisoners line up in front of the tarpaulin covered lorry. Suddenly the tarpaulin is raised, uncovering four machine gunners, who spray the political prisoners with bullets. There are screams and shouts. The aircraft return, machine gunning the Red Army soldiers who run as fast as they can, abandoning their guns behind them. The lorries burst into flames. In the chaos, Kotov spots his companion in misfortune, miraculously without injury, the Belorussian, Vania. Vania gulps with fear. Kotov throws himself on Vania and drags him by his arm. Another German raid. The bombs explode right in the middle of people running in all directions. Kotov pulls Vania away from the confused and screaming men and runs towards the watchtower, which had created an opening in the fence as it fell.

BEGINNING OF THE FILM CREDITS

4. INT. KOUNTSEVO. STALIN'S DACHA – NIGHT

In the uniform of a NKGB general, Mitia is standing in the entrance hall in front of the captain of the guard's table.

Caption: "27 May 1943. MOSCOW. KOUNTESEVO. STALIN'S DACHA"

Captain of the guard

HAND OVER YOUR WEAPONS.

Mitia undoes his belt and holster and places them on the table. The captain of the guard approaches Mitia and searches him.

Captain of the guard

GO IN.

Mitia goes into the next room. It leads to a corridor, which Mitia enters. There are three doors in front of him. Mitia is unsure, not knowing which door to try. Behind one of them, he hears notes being tentatively played on the piano, as if someone is trying to play a simple melody by ear. Mitia knocks gently at this door.

Stalin

(behind the door)

YES.

Mitia goes in.

5. INT. KOUNTSEVO. STALIN'S DACHA. SALON – NIGHT

The huge room with walls covered in oak panelling is plunged in half-light. At the end of a long laid table Beria is seated with a glass of wine in his hand. In a corner near the table sits a baby grand piano. Stalin is seated, three quarters of his back to the door, and is playing the piano with one finger.

Mitia

COMRADE SUPREME COMMANDANT ...

Stalin

(raising his hand)

GOOD EVENING, COMRADE ARSENTIEV.

Mitia

GOOD EVENING, COMRADE ...

Stalin

(interrupting him)

COME FORWARD.

Beria swallows a mouthful and puts his glass down. He looks at Mitia. The lenses in his glasses sparkle and prevent his eyes being seen. Stalin plays a few more notes.

Stalin

(to Mitia)

THIS PIANO WAS A PRESENT FROM THE SPANISH COMMUNISTS. YOU ARE A MUSICIAN, ARE YOU NOT COMRADE ARSENIEV? TELL ME, IS IT A GOOD INSTRUMENT?

Stalin frees the place in front of the piano. Without sitting down Mitia, runs his fingers over the keyboard, playing a few scales.

Mitia

THE INSTRUMENT IS PERFECT. IT PRODUCES A BEAUTIFUL SOUND.

Stalin

PLAY US SOMETHING.

Mitia

WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE COMRADE STALIN?

Stalin

ANYTHING YOU LIKE.

Mitia approaches the piano stool, he freezes a moment with his head down and then begins playing a Chopin nocturne. For a moment there is only the music that Stalin and Beria are listening to be heard.

Stalin

WHAT BEAUTIFUL MUSIC. AND TELL ME COMRADE ARSENTIEV, DO YOU KNOW WHAT HAS BECOME OF GENERAL KOTOV?

Mitia, having stopped playing, turns towards Stalin and leaps up.

Mitia

THE EX-GENERAL KOTOV, IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE ORDER MADE ON 24 JUNE 1941, WAS SHOT ON 25 JUNE OF THE SAME YEAR IN THE SPECIAL INTERNMENT CAMP NO. 57, GIVEN THE PARTICULARLY DIFFICULT CONDITIONS OPERATING IN THE REGION AT THE TIME.

Stalin

CONTINUE PLAYING, GO ON.

Mitia sits down again and begins to play. Beria gets up from the table and approaches Mitia, who does not stop playing.

Beria

ACCORDING TO OUR INFORMATION, KOTOV WAS NOT SHOT IN 1941. WE HAVE RECEIVED AN EXTRACT OF THE MINUTES OF A SPECIAL MEETING WHICH WAS HELD ON 27 APRIL 1941 ACCORDING TO WHICH KOTOV'S STATUS AS A POLITICAL PRISONER WAS CHANGED TO THAT OF A COMMON LAW CRIMINAL. WE FOUND THE DOCUMENT ON THE BODY OF THE CAMP COMMANDANT. IT IS INTERESTING THAT THE ITEM CONCERNING KOTOV IN THE SPECIAL MEETING OF 21 JUNE 1941 DID NOT EXIST. DO YOU KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT'S EXISTENCE?

Mitia

(jumping up)

ABSOLUTELY NOTHING, COMRADE PEOPLE'S COMMISSIONER...

Stalin

CONTINUE PLAYING, IT'S ONLY A CONVERSATION

Mitia sits down again and continues his piece.

Stalin

SO YOU DON'T KNOW ANYTHING. BUT COMRADE BERIA HAS FOUND THIS DOCUMENT. *(He sucks on his pipe, pensively.)* AND WHAT ABOUT COMRADE KOTOV'S FAMILY? DO YOU KNOW HIS FAMILY COMRADE ARSENTIEV?

Mitia

(continuing to play)

I GREW UP IN PROFESSOR SVERBITSKI'S FAMILY. IT WAS HE WHO TAUGHT ME MUSIC.

Stalin

WE KNEW THAT, BUT IT IS KOTOV'S WIFE AND DAUGHTER THAT INTEREST US AND NOT HIS FATHER IN LAW.

Beria

ACCORDING TO THE DOCUMENTS, KOTOV'S WIFE AND DAUGHTER DIED IN A CAMP FOR THE FAMILIES OF TRAITORS TO THE HOMELAND.

Stalin

WHEREAS IN FACT...?

Mitia freezes.

Beria

IN FACT THAT WAS NOT THE CASE. *(He opens a dossier with papers.)* IN FACT...

Stalin

THAT'S ENOUGH, LAVRENTI.

Mitia

BUT, COMRADE STALIN...

Stalin

YES, YES IT IS A EUPHEMISM TO SAY THAT THEY WERE NOT GOOD PEOPLE. THAT TOO, WE KNOW. AND WHAT'S MORE ITS SEEMS THAT IT WAS ACTUALLY YOU THAT ORDERED KOTOV'S ARREST... IF I'M NOT MISTAKEN?

Mitia

ABSOLUTELY, COMRADE STALIN.

Stalin draws on his pipe.

Stalin

ABSOLUTELY, COMRADE ARSENTIEV. ABSOLUTELY. *(He looks at Beria.)* OBVIOUSLY WE CAN'T CONSIDER THE KOTOV DOSSIER AS CLOSED...

Beria indignantly lifts up the dossier containing the documents

Stalin

(looking towards Mitia)

ONE SHOULD CORRECT ONE'S ERRORS...

Mitia

BUT, COMRADE STALIN, I...

Stalin

YOU MAY LEAVE. A BAG CONTAINING SOME DOCUMENTS IS WAITING FOR YOU IN THE ANTE-CHAMBER. GET THIS AFFAIR CLEARED UP.

Mitia gets up and goes towards the door.

Stalin

BY THE WAY, COMRADE ARSENTIEV...

Mitia stops and turns.

Stalin

TELL ME, WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT KOTOV, *FROM A PERSONAL POINT OF VIEW?*

Mitia's face transforms: it becomes assured and hard.

Mitia

IS IT THE OPINION OF THE CHEKIST OR THE MAN THAT INTERESTS YOU, COMRADE STALIN?

Stalin

(feigning astonishment and turning towards Beria)

DO YOU SEPARATE THE TWO?

Mitia

I CONSIDER THAT...

CUT TO:

6. INT. MOSCOW. THE QUAY HOUSE. MITIA'S APARTMENT – MORNING

The telephone is ringing and ringing. We hear water running somewhere in the apartment. An unmade bed. A half empty bottle of vodka, a small glass, an ashtray full of cigarette ends and a packet of bad dark Kazbek cigarettes are on the ground near the bed. There is a chair in front of the table. On the floor near the chair is a large open travel bag on which there is a pile of well ironed linen with a few packets of cigarettes lying on top. Near the bag sit three tins of corned beef, a packet of biscuits, two jars of condensed milk, a packet of tea and a flask. Mitia's dress uniform with the golden epaulettes of a commandant hangs on the back of the chair. The table.

The ebonite telephone stops ringing. It is on the table. Just next to it lies the belt and holster. The revolver. The cartridge clip is separate: it is full. Under the lampshade of the unlit table lamp is a brand new leather briefcase, with a small leather loop and a lock. The key and a black silk cord are lying on the brief case. The sound of water stops. The telephone continues to ring. Mitia, his hair wet and dishevelled, in a vest and loose trousers and bare feet comes into the room. He goes to the table, picks up the key from the briefcase, threads the lace through it, makes a knot with the two ends and puts it around his neck. He looks out of the window, the panes of which are crossed with bands of paper. We can see the Kremlin. Two photos are stuck right next to the window with drawing pins. On one of them, there is Maroussia, smiling, the little Nadia laughing and a third person of whom only the shoulder and an arm in a jacket with braid on the sleeve can be seen. On the other, with a sullen air, is

Nadia, a little older, and in a pioneer's uniform, the red scarf around her neck with Maroussia and Mitia who is smiling. In the background there is a single story white building.

7. FLASH-BACK. INT. A PIONEER CAMP. THE CAMP DIRECTOR'S OFFICE – DAY

Caption: "JUNE 1941"

The office is decorated with a portrait of Stalin on the wall and with a slogan "We thank Comrade Stalin for our happy childhood". A young 14 year old, Liouba Kovko, is standing just under the portrait. She is wearing a white blouse and the carefully knotted red scarf of a pioneer, a black skirt, white socks and brand new sandals. She is holding a double sheet of squared paper taken from a school book, which is filled with the writing of an industrious young girl.

Liouba

(she reads)

"AFTER WE HAD BEEN SENT TO BED, NADEJDA ARSENTIEVA AND I BEGAN A DISCUSSION IN THE PIONEER CAPTAINS' ROOM ON THE PRINCIPLE: "DOES A PIONEER, A KOMSOMOL, WHO IS ALSO A PIONEER CAPTAIN, HAVE TO APPROVE OF A LEGAL DECISION MADE UNDER SOVIET LAW, EVEN IF IT IS DIRECTED AGAINST THE PHYSICAL PARENTS OF THE PIONEER OR KOMSOMOL?" NADEJDA ARSENTIEVA STATED THAT PARENTS ARE ALWAYS PARENTS AND THEY SHOULD BE RESPECTED AND LOVED WHATEVER THE DECISION OF THE AUTHORITIES. I DISAPPROVED OF THIS POSITION SAYING THAT PARENTS THAT ARE TRAITORS DESERVE TO BE JUDGED IN FULL BY THE PIONEER OR KOMSOMOL, BECAUSE A PIONEER, LIKE A KOMSOMOL – AND WHAT'S MORE, A PIONEER CAPTAIN - BY JOINING THE RANKS OF THE PIONEER OR KOMSOMOL ORGANISATION ONLY HAS THE SOVIET HOMELAND AND THE BOLSHEVIK PARTY FOR PARENTS. TO WHICH NADEJDA ARSENTIEVA RETORTED THAT..."

Liouba suddenly stops reading. She lifts her clear limpid blue eyes, which have an innocent quality.

Liouba

EXCUSE ME, BUT WHY DO I HAVE TO READ THIS TO YOU?

Liouba looks at Mitia. He is sitting on a chair opposite her, wearing a raincoat. Near the window the camp director is also seated, a man with a paunch getting on in years, Iakov Semionovitch Kravetz. He is wearing a white shirt with a ridiculously tight collar with a pioneer scarf, a pair of shorts, with a grotesque white Panama hat on his head and sandals on his bare feet. Mitia looks from Liouba to Kravetz. Kravetz shrugs his shoulders with a little laugh as pathetic as it is repugnant. Mitia unbuttons his raincoat and opens it wide, uncovering the uniform of a NKGB commandant. Liouba looks over the uniform.

Liouba

(nodding)

THANK YOU.

Mitia

CONTINUE, LIOUBA. WHAT DID NADEJDA ARSENTIEVA RETORT?

Liouba clears her throat, coughing into her closed fist, and starts reading again.

Liouba

“NADEJDA ARSENTIEVA RETORTED THAT HER REAL NAME WAS KOTOVA, THAT SHE WAS THE DAUGHTER OF A CONDEMNED ENEMY OF THE PEOPLE, THE EX-GENERAL KOTOV, AND THAT SHE WOULD NEVER RENOUNCE HER FATHER, AND THAT SHE WAS READY TO STATE THIS DURING THE SOLEMN MEETING TO CONFIRM ADMISSION TO THE RANKS OF THE YOUNG COMMUNISTS, THE KOMSOMOLS.”

Liouba takes her eyes from the sheet of paper, folds it and hands it to Mitia.

Liouba

AT THE END THERE IS THE DATE AND MY SIGNATURE.

Mitia unfolds the piece of paper, looks at what is written, nods his head and lifts his eyes to look at Liouba. She looks him straight in the eyes. Mitia turns his head to the camp director. He shrugs his shoulders again and gives a little nervous laugh.

Mitia

(to Liouba)

PERFECT, COMRADE KOVKO! COME A LITTLE CLOSER, PLEASE.

Liouba approaches Mitia. She holds herself straight, her hands behind her back.

Mitia

LIOUBA, YOUR FATHER...

Liouba

MY PHYSIOLOGICAL FATHER, PAVEL SEMIONOVITCH ANTONOV, WHO WORKED IN THE HEAVY INDUSTRY COMMISSARIAT WAS SENTENCED UNDER ARTICLE 58 AND MOTHER AND I PUBLICLY RENOUNCED HIM. I BEAR MY MOTHER'S NAME. I AM A MEMBER OF THE PIONEERS ORGANISATION AND I HAVE REACHED THE RANK OF PIONEER CAPTAIN. MY MOTHER IS A MEMBER OF THE PARTY AND THE FACTORY COMMITTEE AND I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHY YOU ARE TALKING TO ME ABOUT MY PHYSIOLOGICAL FATHER! THAT TRAITOR TO THE HOMELAND, ENEMY OF THE SOVIET PEOPLE, P. S. ANTONOV, HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH OUR FAMILY!

Mitia

YOU ARE PERFECT! WHAT A LOVELY FAMILY, SO FULL OF PRINCIPLES AND SO UNITED! NOW LISTEN TO ME, LIOUBA. NADIA ARSENTIEVA HAS FULFILLED THE TASK THAT WE ASSIGNED TO HER

Liouba

PARDON?

Mitia

DON'T BE OFFENDED, BUT SHE WAS TESTING YOU AT OUR REQUEST, GIVEN THAT YOU WILL SOON BE A KOMSOMOL...

Liouba

AH... I SEE!

Mitia

YOU HAVE SUCCESSFULLY PASSED THE TEST AND TO MARK THE OCCASION WE ARE GIVING YOU A TRIP TO THE FAMOUS ARTEK PIONEER CAMP!

Liouba

OH! YOU AREN'T TEASING ME, ARE YOU?

Mitia

ABSOLUTELY NOT.

Mitia takes an envelope out of the top pocket of his tunic.

Mitia

HERE, THIS IS THE CONFIRMATION WITH YOUR NAME ON IT.

Liouba opens the envelope and takes out the piece of paper. A joyful smile lights up her face.

Mitia

THAT WILL BE ALL LIOUBA, BUT I WOULD LIKE TO URGE YOU...

Liouba

NOT TO TALK ABOUT IT TO ANYONE? IS THAT IT? I FULLY UNDERSTAND, COMRADE!

Mitia

YOU ARE A VERY INTELLIGENT GIRL, LIOUBA. YOU MAY GO NOW.

Liouba gives Mitia the pioneer's salute and leaves the office full of beans. Mitia puts away the piece of paper with Liouba's denunciation in the pocket of his tunic. He stays sitting for a moment, his fingers pressed to his temples.

Kravetz

AH, THAT'S IT... AND I WAS TELLING MYSELF IT WAS A DISASTER... WHEREAS IN FACT... I WAS SURE THERE HAD TO BE... A SECRET BEHIND ALL THAT! AND THERE WE ARE! THAT'S WHY I PHONED YOU STRAIGHT AWAY ... IT'S MAD, WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT IT! *(He laughs nervously, shaking his head.)* AND YOUR DAUGHTER IS PERFECT! YOUR LITTLE NADIA IS ABSOLUTELY PERFECT! WELL I NEVER! *(He shakes his head.)* IT'S AMAZING!

Mitia raises his eyes to Kravetz and fixes him with his gaze.

Kravetz

(getting up and lowering his eyes alternately)

AND THAT... ARTEK! IT'S AMAZING! OUR CAMP WILL BE MOVING TO THE COAST TOO! ON THE BALTIC! IT'S AN IDEAL PLACE! THE PINES, THE DUNES, THE AIR...

Mitia looks Kravetz up and down.

Kravetz

AND SO KOVKO WILL GO TO THE CENTRE AND YOUR LITTLE NADIA, WHAT A GIRL INDEED... YOUR LITTLE GIRL WILL COME WITH US TO THE BALTIC... OH YES! THAT'S IT! I UNDERSTAND! *(he laughs nervously again.)* WOULD YOU LIKE SOME TEA, COMRADE ARSENTIEV?

Mitia looks at Kravetz, who laughs nervously and moves his arms about. He stops and sits back down crossing his arms over his stomach. He looks at Mitia attentively.

Mitia

ANATOLI SEMIONOVITCH KRAVETZ, ARTICLE 58, PARAGRAPHS 3-5, TEN YEARS WITHOUT THE RIGHT TO ANY CORRESPONDENCE: HE IS YOUR BROTHER, ISN'T HE?

Kravetz

PARDON?

Mitia

HE'S YOUR BROTHER?

Kravetz

WHO?! ANATOLI? THAT BASTARD?! HE'S NOT MY BROTHER! BROTHERS LIKE THAT, IN MY OPINION IT SHOULD BE THE FIRING SQUAD STRAIGHT AWAY! WHAT ARE YOU TELLING ME?! ANYWAY, HE'S NOT EVEN MY BROTHER, HE'S MY HALF BROTHER! A BROTHER! AN ENEMY, YES! OF THE WORST KIND!

Mitia

NEVERTHELESS, IN YOUR QUESTIONNAIRE HE IS NOT MENTIONED AT ALL...

Kravetz' face breaks out in a sweat and he begins to tremble revoltingly.

Kravetz

IT'S JUST THAT... COMRADE ARSENTIEV, I'VE NEVER CONSIDERED HIM TO BE MY BROTHER SO I DIDN'T MENTION HM IN THE QUESTIONNAIRE... IT DIDN'T CROSS MY MIND TO MENTION THAT SWINE: IT'S ABSURD!

Mitia

IS THAT WHAT YOU THINK?

Mitia stares at Kravetz.

Kravetz

THAT IS... WELL...

A very long heavy silence hangs in the air. Mitia fixes Kravetz with a cold stare.

Kravetz

(whispering)

COMRADE ARSENTIEV, I MUST HAVE MADE A MISTAKE...

Mitia

A MISTAKE?

Kravetz

ISN'T IT A MISTAKE? NO? WHAT IS IT THEN? YOU CAN'T BELIEVE... NO EH?

A smile appears on Mitia's face. He gets up, buttons his raincoat and goes towards the door. When he gets to the door, he turns back to Kravetz and puts his finger to his lips. Kravetz shakes his head like a doll. Mitia leaves his office.

8. EXT. SMALL TOWN – DAY

Mitia, wearing his uniform hidden under his raincoat and Nadia, in a long sleeved dress, the red scarf of the pioneers around her neck, tennis shoes with white ankle socks on her feet, walk up a quiet road leading to the river bank without talking. Once there, after having made sure no-one is around, Mitia stops. Nadia also stops, her eyes on the ground. Mitia has a tired look; he seems to have aged.

Mitia

NADIA, YOU ARE A BIG GIRL NOW...

Nadia

(throwing her head back)

So?

Mitia

SO, ADULTS ANSWER FOR THEIR WORDS AS WELL AS THEIR ACTIONS. AND THEY DON'T JUST ANSWER FOR THEM: THEY THINK CAREFULLY BEFORE DOING OR SAYING ANYTHING.

Nadia

I DO... AND I THINK CAREFULLY.

Mitia

I SEE. DID YOU TELL ANYONE ELSE APART FROM YOUR BEST FRIEND KOVKO, THAT YOU ARE NOT CALLED ARSENTIEVA, BUT KOTOVA?

Nadia

SO THAT'S WHY YOU CAME RUNNING? YES, I SAID IT. SO WHAT?

Mitia

WHO TO?

Nadia

I WON'T TELL YOU.

Mitia sighs, turns and pulls at a blade of grass and, nibbling the blade of grass, looks for a moment at the river. He turns to Nadia who kicks at the ground with the toe of her shoe.

Mitia

I REALISE THAT OF ALL OF US, YOU ARE THE MOST HONEST AND THE MOST PRINCIPLED.

Nadia

FIRSTLY, I AM NOT ONE OF YOU ALL, I AM SEPARATE. IS IT BAD THEN TO BE HONEST AND PRINCIPLED?

Mitia

I AGREE YOU ARE SEPARATE. ANYWAY, YOU LIVE WITH YOUR GRAND-MOTHERS WHEN YOU WANT. I KNOW YOU AREN'T THINKING ABOUT YOURSELF, YOU COULDN'T CARE LESS THAT YOUR BEST FRIEND IMMEDIATELY BETRAYED YOUR SECRET IN WRITING AND DENOUNCED YOU. YOU COULDN'T CARE LESS ABOUT ME - I CAN UNDERSTAND THAT. BUT TELL ME DON'T YOU CARE ABOUT YOUR MOTHER EITHER? BECAUSE IT'S HER YOU ARE PUTTING AT RISK!

Nadia

WHY? BECAUSE I DON'T WANT TO DISOWN MY... (*Nadia throat constricts, tears fill her eyes.*) ...FATHER. JUST BECAUSE I DON'T THINK HE IS AN ENEMY I AM PUTTING EVERYONE AT RISK? WELL, THEY SHOULD JUST PUT ME IN PRISON TOO - OR SHOOT ME! I DON'T CARE!

Nadia turns and runs away. Mitia catches her up and takes her by her shoulders. Nadia struggles.

Nadia

YOU'RE A LIAR! YOU'RE A LIAR AND YOU'RE SCARED! BECAUSE THEY CAN DO ANYTHING TO ANYONE! BECAUSE YOU'RE ALL COWARDS AND LIARS! FATHER WASN'T A COWARD! YOU, YOU'RE ALL COWARDS! COWARD! YOU SHOW UP TO MAKE SURE I DON'T MAKE WAVES...

Mitia

LET'S SUPPOSE YOU DIDN'T CARE ABOUT YOUR FATHER EITHER, YOU WOULDN'T BE PREPARED TO HURT HIM, WOULD YOU?

Nadia

HOW COULD I HURT HIM, EH? HOW? HE'S DEAD... (*Suddenly an idea goes through her mind; she turns to look at Mitia.*) WHAT?... HE'S STILL ALIVE?

Mitia

(*letting Nadia go*)

HAVE YOU TOLD ANYONE ELSE THAT YOU WERE CALLED KOTOVA AND NOT ARSENTIEVA?

Nadia

IS HE ALIVE?... IS HE ALIVE?

Mitia

DON'T SAY ANYTHING TO ANYONE, CHATTERBOX...

Nadia

UNCLE MITIA, PLEASE, TELL ME WHETHER HE'S ALIVE? I AM NOT A CHATTERBOX. I WON'T SAY ANYTHING TO ANYONE.

Mitia

HAVE YOU TOLD ANYONE ELSE APART FROM YOUR FRIEND LIOUBA THAT YOUR NAME WAS KOTOVA?

Nadia

NO, ONLY HER. PIONEER'S WORD! NOW, TELL ME IS HE ALIVE?

Mitia says nothing.

Nadia

IF YOU LIKE, I COULD GASH MY HAND OR PUT IT OVER A CANDLE SO THAT YOU KNOW I WOULDN'T TELL ANYONE WHEN I SHOULDN'T... *(She clings to Mitia's arm.)* I KNOW YOU AREN'T ALLOWED TO SAY ANYTHING. SO DON'T, JUST MAKE A SIGN WITH YOUR EYES. THAT'S ALL. IS HE STILL ALIVE?

Mitia looks long and hard at Nadia. She sobs and smiles.

Nadia

HE'S ALIVE! I CAN SEE IT IN YOUR EYES! I KNEW IT! I KNEW IT! THANK YOU, UNCLE MITIA!

Nadia suddenly jumps on Mitia's neck, kisses him on his cheek and runs along the road. Mitia stays where he is and touches the cheek Nadia has just kissed. She stops suddenly and turns to Mitia.

Nadia

DOES SHE KNOW?

Mitia

NADIA!... DOES WHO KNOW? DOES WHO KNOW WHAT?

Nadia presses the palm of her hand over her smiling mouth.

Nadia

SORRY! I WON'T SAY A THING! I WON'T SAY A THING!

Nadia steps back, turns and leaves at a run.

Mitia

NADIA, SHE ISN'T FAR AWAY, SHE'S WAITING IN THE CAR, MAYBE YOU COULD SAY HELLO TO HER?

Nadia

(turning back to Mitia but walking backwards)

I CAN'T. I HAVEN'T GOT TIME. MY PIONEERS ARE WAITING FOR ME. WE HAVE TO REHEARSE. I'M ALREADY LATE. TELL HER... NO! THERE'S NO POINT! DON'T SAY ANYTHING!

9. EXT. A ROAD OUTSIDE THE TOWN - DAY

A black car has stopped on the verge.

10. INT. IN THE CAR. THE ROAD OUTSIDE THE TOWN – DAY

Riabov is behind the wheel. Mitia is sitting in the back. He is holding Liouba Kovko's denunciation in one hand and is putting a lighted match to it. The sheet of paper burns.

Maroussia

(off camera)

WHAT'S THAT?

Mitia

(turning the paper so it burns completely)

NOW IT'S ASH...

Mitia throws the piece of blackened and burnt paper out of the window. The wind takes it and carries it off. Maroussia is sitting near Mitia. Mitia follows the sheet of paper with his eyes.

Maroussia

HOW IS NADIA?

Mitia

FINE.

11. EXT. A ROAD OUTSIDE THE TOWN – DAY

The piece of burnt paper catches on a bush. Riabov notices and gets out of the car.

12. INT. IN THE CAR. THE ROAD OUTSIDE THE TOWN – DAY

Maroussia

SHE DIDN'T EVEN WANT TO COME AS FAR AS THE CAR?

Mitia

No.

Maroussia

COULDN'T YOU HAVE CONVINCED HER, MADE HER, BROUGHT HER HERE?

Mitia

NO. THE PIONEERS WERE WAITING FOR HER; THEY HAD TO REHEARSE...

He looks at Maroussia.

Mitia

MAROUSSIA, SHE LOOKS ME UP AND DOWN. IT WOULD'VE LOOKED ODD IF I'D TRIED TO TAKE HER IN MY ARMS AND CARRY HER TO THE CAR, WHILE I WAS CALLING HER MY DAUGHTER. I'M AFRAID THAT ON THE WAY I WOULD'VE HAD TO TELL ANY CURIOUS BYSTANDERS THAT MY GRANDFATHER IS THE MOST IMPORTANT MAN IN RUSSIA...

Mitia turns away from Maroussia and looks out of the window.

Mitia

THE KOTOVS ARE TOUGH.

13. EXT. A ROAD OUTSIDE THE TOWN - DAY

Riabov walks towards the bush that has caught the burnt sheet of paper.

14. INT. IN THE CAR. THE ROAD OUTSIDE THE TOWN – DAY

Maroussia looks at Mitia, who watches what Riabov is doing through the window.

Maroussia

IF SERIOJA WERE STILL HERE, SHE WOULDN'T DO THAT.

Mitia turns to Maroussia and looks at her.

15. EXT. A ROAD OUTSIDE THE TOWN – DAY

Riabov reaches the bush, unhooks the burnt piece of paper and rolls it in his hands, turning it to powder.

16. INT. IN THE CAR. THE ROAD OUTSIDE THE TOWN – DAY

Mitia looks at Maroussia unpleasantly.

Mitia

WHAT WOULDN'T NADIA DO IF SERIOJA WERE STILL ALIVE, EH? BUT WHAT WOULD SHE DO IF HE WERE HERE? AND ANYWAY, WHAT DIFFERENCE WOULD IT MAKE IF HE WERE STILL ALIVE?

17. EXT. THE BANKS OF THE RIVER – MORNING

The bank of the river is hidden under high grass. A large bumble bee buzzes above it.

Caption: "26 JUNE 1941. BELORUSSIA"

The bumble bee is hovering over a flower. The river flows peacefully at the bottom of the bank.

Vania

(off camera)

DAMN IT ALL! WHY DON'T YOU SAY SOMETHING, EH? WHY DON'T YOU SAY SOMETHING, LITTLE SISTER?

Kotov

(off camera)

I DON'T UNDERSTAND A BLOODY THING... THEY CHANGED MY STATUS... WHAT DAMAGE? WHAT COULD I HAVE DAMAGED? PUMPS? ME WHO CAME RIGHT UNDER ARTICLE 58... I DON'T UNDERSTAND A BLOODY THING...

Vania

(off camera, in a trembling voice)

WHAT ARTICLE? GUESS WHAT ARTICLE WE COME UNDER NOW! WE'RE FINISHED! COMPLETELY FINISHED! ESCAPING FROM A CAMP MEANS THE FIRING SQUAD! AND I ONLY HAD SIX MONTHS TO GO... THEN I GO AND ESCAPE... AND IF THEY DON'T SHOOT ME, IT'LL BE ANOTHER FIVE YEARS! OH, LITTLE SISTER, MY POOR LITTLE SISTER!

The bumble bee settles on the flower and gets to work

Kotov

YOU REALLY ARE TALKING RUBBISH, VANIA! WHAT ARE YOU ON ABOUT? THE WAR'S STARTED. DO YOU UNDERSTAND? WAR!

Vania

(even more scared)

WHAT WAR? WHERE? WE CAN'T HEAR ANYTHING ANYWHERE! YOUR WAR'S ALREADY OVER! AS IF YOU DIDN'T KNOW THAT IF A WAR STARTED TOMORROW, WE'RE READY FOR VICTORY NOW! OUR TROOPS MUST ALREADY BE IN BERLIN... BUT WHAT IS TO BECOME OF ME? I ESCAPED! YOU HAVE NOTHING TO LOSE, YOUR FAMILY ALL DIED IN THE CAMP, BUT MY MOTHER AND MY GALESSIA WILL NEVER SEE ME AGAIN... WHAT A MESS!

The bumble bees comes out of the flower, takes off and flies over Vania, sitting on the bank holding his head in his hands. Kotov is half lying next to him, resting on his elbows. They are still wearing their camp uniforms with their numbers on. A large tree is growing right alongside them.

Kotov

WHAT ARE YOU SUGGESTING, THAT WE GIVE OURSELVES UP? YOU SAW ALL THE POLITICAL PRISONERS SHOT DOWN JUST LIKE THAT WITH YOUR VERY OWN EYES!

Vania

SO WHAT? THEY'RE ARTICLE 58, BUT I'M NOT, I'M 110: UNPREMEDITATED INJURY TO OLD LOCHOUK, UNPREMEDITATED BLOW TO THE OLD WOMAN'S CALABASH WITH A VAT FULL OF CABBAGE, WHEN I WAS HELPING HER TO GO DOWN INTO HER CELLAR FOR A CARAFE OF HOOCH... AND IT WASN'T MY FAULT. WHY DID SHE GIVE ME THE CARAFE BEFORE I DID THE WORK? IF I HADN'T HAD A DRINK I WOULDN'T HAVE LET THE VAT GO... SO ARTICLE 58, YOU SEE... *(He rocks left and right whimpering.)* WHERE CAN I GO? WHERE CAN I HIDE?

Vania

OH, DAMN IT ALL... I ONLY HAD SIX MONTHS LEFT... OH, MY POOR LITTLE SISTER!

We gradually hear a terrible rumbling approaching, which makes the earth tremble. Vania and Kotov turn their heads in the direction of the rumbling. Some kind of rectangles, gliding in the sky, appear in the whitish mist of the sun. They move forward in the sky coming closer together, alternately appearing and disappearing into the pale beige, nearly white, dust. Vania jumps to his feet, screwing up his eyes so he can see the awful things better.

Vania

WHAT'S THAT? EH?

Kotov doesn't answer. They are enormous kites attached by cables to the German tanks appearing out of the dust. There are a huge number of tanks advancing, monsters emerging from the dust. The crushing heat of the sun, unless it is the dust, gives the impression that creatures from outer space are approaching. The German cavalry advance behind the tanks on large well fed horses. Like the horses, the riders are equipped with anti-dust masks that give them a frightening appearance. Without a sound the mouth of a gun spits out a shell which, whistling, lands at the foot of the large tree, which comes out of the ground and falls into the river.

Vania

(shouting, on his knees, shaking his head)

WHO'S THAT?

Kotov

(turning back towards the river where the large tree is floating)

THAT, VANIA, IS THE GERMANS! IT WOULDN'T APPEAR THAT OUR TROOPS ARE ALREADY IN BERLIN!

18. EXT. ON THE WAY TO THE RIVER. A WOODEN BRIDGE – DAY

The narrow rickety bridge is struggling to bear the weight of the crowds of people and military equipment fleeing to the east in panic. The person in charge of the crossing, a young lieutenant who is completely overtaken by events, is running in all directions trying to stop the flight to the other bank.

The lieutenant commanding the crossing

GET BACK! I AM IN CHARGE OF THIS BRIDGE! I HAVE RECEIVED ORDERS FROM THE REGIONAL COMMANDANT NOT TO LET ANYONE CROSS THIS BRIDGE! GET BACK!

No-one listens to the lieutenant. Lorries drive over carts, smashing them. People on foot rush to the other side, pushing each other and protecting themselves from the military equipment. A terrible racket is coming from the bridge.

The panic is such that people have lost their minds. They only have one idea in their heads: to flee the horror they experienced in the west. Only the lieutenant tries to stop the uncontrollable flow. He takes his gun out of its holster, a mad look on his face, his bulging eyes blazing.

The lieutenant commanding the crossing

HALT! STOP PANICKING! GET BACK!

The lieutenant is jostled, carried along by the crowd but he resists and digs his heels in. He comes face to face with a corpulent man in a work jacket, a rifle slung across his shoulder.

The lieutenant commanding the crossing

GET BACK! HALT OR I'LL SHOOT!

The man in a work jacket, without a word, punches him on the chin so hard that the lieutenant topples over the parapet and falls into the water.

19. EXT. THE BRIDGE. UNDER THE BRIDGE – DAY

Under the bridge a sergeant, a Turkmen explosives expert, is making his way with difficulty along wooden beams that are shaking under the enormous weight, places the dynamite and

connects with wires. An explosives lieutenant is also under the bridge, hanging on to a beam, watching him.

The sergeant

(attaching the charges to the beams)

LIEUTENANT, HOW CAN WE BLOW IT UP? THERE ARE LOTS OF PEOPLE - CARS GOING OVER IT ... *(In Turkmen:)* THERE'LL BE A HECK OF A ROW!

The explosives lieutenant

IT'S NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS. OR MINE FOR THAT MATTER. AND YOU'D DO BETTER TO KEEP YOUR BIG MOUTH SHUT, KHYDYROV. I GOT THE ORDER TO BLOW UP THE BRIDGE AT EXACTLY MIDDAY. AS SOON AS I WAVE THE LITTLE RED FLAG, YOU PRESS THE DETONATOR. DO YOU UNDERSTAND? THE RED ONE!

The lieutenant has two little flags in their covers, one red and one white, attached to his belt. The lieutenant takes out the red flag and waves it under the sergeant's nose.

The sergeant

(looking at the lieutenant and the flag)

YES SIR, BOSS, I KNOW, THE RED ONE! WE BLOW UP THE BRIDGE! BUT WHERE WILL THEY ALL GO? BOOM! WHERE WILL THEY GO?

The explosives lieutenant

IT'S AN ORDER, KHYDYROV. AN ORDER! DO YOU UNDERSTAND? WE'RE JUST SHEEP, THAT'S JUST HOW IT IS, I WAVE THE FLAG AND YOU SET THE THING OFF! *(taking his binoculars from around his neck.)* HERE, TAKE THE BINOCULARS!

The sergeant

(putting the binoculars around his neck)

GREAT, BINOCULARS!

20. EXT. THE RIVER. UPSTREAM FROM THE BRIDGE – DAY

The big trunk blown up by the explosion is floating almost in the middle of the river. Kotov and Vania are in shorts, clinging to it.

Vania

WHERE ARE WE? EH? WHERE ARE WE GOING? WE'VE GOT TO GET TO OUR SIDE!

Kotov

WHO ARE OUR SIDE, VANIA? WHERE ARE THEY? AND WHAT ARE WE GOING TO TELL THEM? WHO ARE WE TO THEM? PRISONERS ON THE RUN, YOU SAID IT YOURSELF.

Vania

WE'VE HAD IT! WHY DID WE ESCAPE? WE SHOULD NEVER HAVE ESCAPED, OH MY POOR LITTLE SISTER ...

Kotov

LISTEN, VANIA. WE COULD'VE NOT RUN AND STAYED THERE, RIGHT NEXT TO THE CAMP COMMANDANT AND WE WOULD'VE BEEN SHOT! SO STOP MOANING, YOU'RE ANNOYING ME!

At that precise moment, several German fighter aircraft pass over their heads. Seeing them, Kotov dives under the water dragging Vania with him.

21. EXT. THE WEST SIDE OF THE BANK BEFORE THE BRIDGE – DAY

The German fighter aircraft arrive just above the water, following the bend in the river. They fly over the bridge, spraying it with machine gun fire and shells. Several vehicles burst into flames. The screams on the bridge get louder. Together the people on foot manage to push the blazing vehicles over the parapet. In the chaos of all the people, carts and vehicles there is a small truck with a large terrified woman clinging to the driver in the cab. In the back, a man getting on in years, with thick glasses and wearing a hat that is too large for him is sitting on some doubtful looking crates covered with a tarpaulin. The driver unsuccessfully tries to start the small truck. The driver of a lorry stops just behind the small truck and a strapping fellow puts his head out of the cab.

The strapping fellow

(shouting in the direction of the old lieutenant sat in front of him)

BLOODY HELL, ARE YOU STUCK?!

The old lieutenant

JUST A MINUTE! JUST A MINUTE! *(Tapping the side of the cab.)* SERIOJA, START UP WE'RE GOING!

The driver, a young blond man with protruding ears, his clothes covered in oil, jumps out of the cab of the small truck and spits in front of him.

The young driver

(to the old lieutenant)

IT'S THE LAST STOP, PAVEL ALEXEÏEVITCH!

The old lieutenant

(to the truck driver)

WHAT DO YOU MEAN, THE LAST STOP?! WE'RE CARRYING SOME VERY IMPORTANT THINGS!

The strapping fellow

(to the young driver)

WHAT'RE YOU CARRYING?

The young driver

IT'S HAD IT, THE ALTERNATOR'S GIVEN UP THE GHOST!

The strapping fellow

(jumping out of his cab)

GET YOUR TANK OUT OF HERE, GODDAMMIT! *(To the young driver:)* GET BEHIND THE WHEEL AND TURN IT INTO THE SIDE!

The old lieutenant

(to the young driver)

IT'S NOT POSSIBLE! WE ARE CARRYING THINGS OF THE GREATEST IMPORTANCE!

A motorised cavalry commandant puts his head out of the cab of the next lorry. His face is covered with a very dirty and very bloody scarf.

The motorised cavalry commandant

I COULDN'T GIVE A DAMN ABOUT YOUR LOAD! I'VE GOT INJURED PEOPLE BACK HERE!

The strapping fellow gets behind the small truck. The commandant, jumping out of his cabin, gives him a hand.

The strapping fellow

(to the soldiers)

HERE, GIVE US A HAND YOU LOT!

The soldiers, the strapping fellow and the motorised cavalry commandant push the small truck to the side of the road. At that moment, having turned round, the fighter aircraft reappear on the other side of the bridge.

The old lieutenant

(clumsily stepping down from the platform of the truck)

REALLY! IT'S NOT GOOD ENOUGH!

Without paying the least attention to the bellowing of the old lieutenant, the strapping fellow climbs into his cab and the traffic starts moving again. One of the aircraft swoops over the crowds gathered on the bank. Trace bullets from the machine guns break up the crowd. Some go through the cab of the small truck and kill the terrified woman, who was screaming, stone dead. The cab catches fire. In its turn, the tarpaulin covering the crates starts to burn.

22. EXT. THE SKY ABOVE THE RIVER – DAY

The fighter aircraft plough on in serried ranks, their wings practically touching. They break through the clouds of smoke rising from the burning vehicles.

23. INT. THE COCKPIT OF A FIGHTER PLANE – DAY

The voice of the detachment commander can be heard in the helmet, distorted by interference.

The detachment commander

DON'T TOUCH THE BRIDGE, OUR TANKS'LL NEED IT.

The pilot in the cockpit

(in the microphone)

I HADN'T FORGOTTEN.

24. EXT. THE RIVER UPSTREAM FROM THE BRIDGE – DAY

The trunk continues to follow the current, carrying Vania and Kotov with it. They hear gunshots and cries from around the bend of the river. Vania looks round, scared.

Vania

D'YOU HEAR? D'YOU HEAR? WHAT IS IT?

Kotov

IT'S THE WAR, VANIA...

Vania

WHAT NOW?

Kotov

IT'S OUR ONLY CHANCE OF SAFETY...

25. EXT. THE CROSSING. JUST BEFORE THE BRIDGE – DAY

Several shells explode right in the middle of the crowd. Tanks are approaching from a distance, practically without a sound, spitting out shells with an almost simultaneous whistle and explosion. One of the shells has just hit the truck, projecting pieces of bodywork into the air and lifting a cloud of bank notes from the disembowelled crates. The dense crowd on the bank starts moving, rushing straight for the bridge, trampling each other. The old lieutenant watches the spectacle, horrified.

The old lieutenant

(whispering)

MY GOD! 16,472,000 ROUBLES AND 67 KOPECKS...

He takes a pencil out of his pocket, puts the lead in his mouth then runs in the direction of the crowd pressing towards the bridge.

The old lieutenant

COMRADES, YOU HAVE TO MAKE A DESTRUCTION STATEMENT! I'LL WRITE IT OUT AND YOU CAN ALL SIGN!

The old lieutenant crouches down and starts to write on a sheet of paper, leaning on his knees. He gets up and bustles around the truck, which continues to burn, catching the people running towards the bridge in passing.

The old lieutenant

COMRADES, YOU ARE WITNESSES. SIGN HERE... YOU SAW IT ALL... OH MY GOD, MY GOD...

No-one pays him any attention. He is jostled, knocked over, his glasses fall under boots. The old lieutenant continues to beg, while crawling in the dust looking for his glasses.

26. EXT. THE CROSSING THE BRIDGE – DAY

The lieutenant in charge of the river crossing, with bulging eyes, climbs back up onto the bridge, soaking wet. He again tries to stop the flow of panicking people.

The lieutenant

HALT! I WILL FIRE ON DESERTERS WITHOUT WARNING! IT'S AN ORDER FROM THE REGIONAL COMMANDANT!

No-one pays any attention to him.

27. EXT. THE CROSSING. BEFORE THE BRIDGE – DAY

A jam has formed at the entrance to the bridge. The explosives lieutenant, holding the red flag in his lowered hand, plants himself in front of the lorry with the strapping fellow and the motorised cavalry commandant cab.

The explosives lieutenant

STOP! STOP! CROSSING IS PROHIBITED! IT'S CLOSED! IN FIVE MINUTES, I AM BLOWING UP THE BRIDGE! MAKE WAY!

The motorised cavalry commandant

(putting his head out of the cab)

YOU'RE MAD, LIEUTENANT! LOOK HOW MANY PEOPLE THERE STILL ARE ON THIS BANK!

The explosives lieutenant

IT'S THE GENERAL'S ORDERS!

The motorised cavalry commandant

(shouting)

WHAT GENERAL FOR CHRISSAKES? WHERE IS YOUR GENERAL? WHERE ARE ANY OF THEM?

Shouts from following vehicles

DON'T STOP! KEEP MOVING!

The explosives lieutenant's face is tense, he turns back to the bridge: the gap is widening between the lorry that he stopped and the vehicles moving on to the bridge. Suddenly, right in the middle, one of the vehicles crossing the bridge brakes. The explosives lieutenant tries to work out why it has stopped.

The explosives lieutenant

(shouting in the direction of the vehicles that have stopped)

DON'T STOP, IDIOT! GET OFF THE BLOODY BRIDGE! HURRY UP!

28. EXT. THE CROSSING. THE BRIDGE – DAY

The soaking wet lieutenant in charge of the bridge is standing in front of the vehicle that has stopped in the middle of the bridge. He is waving his gun around. His eyes are bulging and nerves, which are making him hysterical, contort his mouth. He undoes the belt of his jacket and slides it out of its loops. He places it on the ground.

The lieutenant

(shouting in the direction of the lorry driver)

GO ON, TRY DRIVING OVER THAT TO SEE WHAT HAPPENS! *(he cocks his pistol.)* GO ON! IF YOU DO, I'LL DO YOU IN MYSELF!

The Red Army soldiers on the back platform of the lorry shout; they are dirty, their faces are distorted with fear, the bandages that some have round their heads and others round their arms are stained with blood.

One of the soldiers

LISTEN, YOU CRAP KOMSOMOL! WERE YOU THERE? DID YOU SEE THEM, THE GERMANS? NO? GO ALONG THE BANK, TAKE A LOOK AND THEN YOU CAN START WAVING YOUR GUN AROUND!

Another soldier

IT'S NO USE TALKING TO HIM. HE'S PLAYING THE HERO HERE – THERE, HE WOULD BE THE FIRST ONE OFF, LIKE ALL OUR BRAVE COMMANDANTS. ONLY ONE SUB - LIEUTENANT STAYED WITH US AND HE'S DYING HERE IN THE LORRY.

The injured sub-lieutenant, his jacket covered in blood, is lying in the arms of soldiers on the back of the lorry. His arms are moving around instinctively. Pain and death are written in his eyes. The lieutenant responsible for the crossing, his face white, raises his gun in front of him. It trembles in his hand. A third soldier, with a wound on his neck, bangs the side of the cab.

The lieutenant

IT'S AN ORDER FROM THE REGIONAL COMMANDANT!

Third soldier

GO ON, RUN HIM OVER! DON'T STOP!

The driver presses the accelerator, the motor throbs, the gear box crunches, the lorry moves slowly forward towards the lieutenant who is still holding his pistol. Now holding it in both hands, he aims at the lorry driver.

The lieutenant

(whispering frantically)

AN ORDER FROM THE REGIONAL COMMANDANT...

AN ORDER FROM THE REGIONAL COMMANDANT...

On the back of the lorry, the soldier with the neck wound lifts his rifle, his face disfigured by spite. The lieutenant fires, the bullet ricochets off the door of the lorry and disappears with a whistle. The lieutenant, his eyes bulging with terror, does not seem able to believe he was able to fire. At the same time, the soldier fires his rifle from the back of the lorry. The bullet goes through the lieutenant's jacket in the middle of his stomach; he staggers for a few steps and falls under the lorry, its wheels crushing his head.

29. EXT. THE CROSSING. EAST BANK – DAY

On the bank a load of men and military equipment come from nowhere, Khydyrov, the explosives sergeant, is lying close to his explosive device. He is following the explosives lieutenant with the binoculars.

The sergeant

THIS LOUDMOUTH DOESN'T UNDERSTAND THE WORD RED! SERGEANT KHYDYROV IS NOT A LOUDMOUTH OR BLIND. I KNOW WHAT A RED FLAG IS...BUT WHAT I DON'T KNOW IS HOW WE CAN BLOW UP A BRIDGE WHEN THERE ARE PEOPLE ON IT...

The sergeant's hand rests gently on the detonator

30. EXT. THE CROSSING. BEFORE THE BRIDGE – DAY

The motorised cavalry commandant jumps out of the lorry cab, runs to the explosives lieutenant and grabs him by the collar.

The motorised cavalry commandant

CLEAR THE WAY!

The motorised cavalry commandant pushes the explosives lieutenant, who resists on the verge.

31. EXT. THE CROSSING. THE EAST BANK – DAY

The explosives sergeant looks nervously through the binoculars.

32. VIEW THROUGH THE BINOCULARS. THE CROSSING. BEFORE THE BRIDGE – DAY

In spite of the trembling image, we can make out, right in the middle of the crowd, the explosives lieutenant fighting with the motorised cavalry commandant. The lieutenant's hand lifts the flag.

The explosives sergeant

(off camera)

RIGHT! IT'S RED!

33. EXT. THE CROSSING. THE EAST BANK – DAY

The hand of the explosives sergeant turns the key on his explosive device.

34. EXT. THE CROSSING. THE WOODEN BRIDGE – DAY

There is an enormous explosion. The vehicle transporting the soldiers that ran over the lieutenant, people, horses and cows are all thrown into the air by the blast of the explosion in the middle of bridge's planks and beams.

35. EXT. THE CROSSING. THE EAST BANK – DAY

Sergeant Khydyrov falls to his knees, raises his hand to the sky and shouts something in Turkmen.

36. EXT. THE SKY ABOVE THE PASSAGE – DAY

Two fighter planes fly through the clouds of smoke rising above the exploded bridge.

The detachment commander

(off camera, in German)

KLAUS, WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU? I TOLD YOU NOT TO TOUCH THE BRIDGE!

The pilot

(off camera, in German)

IT WASN'T ME, MAX, WE WERE BOTH DOING THE BANK!

37. EXT. THE WEST BANK BEFORE THE CROSSING – DAY

Hands in the air, the Red Army soldiers, panicking, mix with the civilians. Those that did not have time to cross, climb the top of the bank from where there are the rumblings of German tanks. The tree trunk passes right through the middle of the debris of the exploded bridge and bits of vehicles that are sinking to the bottom. Kotov and Vania, terror stricken, look around. The place where the crossing was is pure hell. Moans, groans, swearing, the droning of the aircraft, explosions of shells falling into the water together make up a sort of apocalyptic nightmare. The German infantry and the tanks fire on any vehicles that are still moving and on the people on foot. Several Red Army soldiers run towards the water and swim desperately to the tree trunk behind the top of which Kotov and Vania are hiding. The aircraft dives at them and sprays them. Several bullets smash into the trunk. Kotov puts his hand on Vania's head, scared stiff, and dives under the water with him. When they come back up, two soldiers also emerge: Nikolaï, the motorised cavalry commandant, wearing a boiler suit, his face covered in soot and the explosives lieutenant. They struggle to get their breath back.

Nikolaï

(to the explosives lieutenant, nastily)

YOU SHOULD'VE DROWNED YOURSELF, LIEUTENANT, BECAUSE I'M GOING TO SHOOT YOU!

The explosives lieutenant

(shaking his head, he cries)

I CAN'T HEAR A THING, I CAN'T HEAR A BLOODY THING!

Nikolaï

(noticing Kotov and Vania alongside)

MORON! YOU BLEW UP THE BRIDGE WHEN THERE WERE PEOPLE ON IT!

The explosives lieutenant smiles oddly.

The explosives lieutenant

(he shouts)

I CAN'T HEAR! THERE'S JUST A BUZZ IN MY HEAD!

Between the branches it is possible to make out fifteen or so men that have fallen from the bridge trying to cling on to soaked planks that have made a sort of raft. A German aircraft flies over the flimsy boat. The waves are so strong and terrible that they destroy the raft; the men fall back into the water struggling among the slippery planks. A shell has just fallen right in the middle of this tangle, finishing off the work.

Kotov

THE GERMANS!

Several German launches go up the river in the direction of the bridge that has been destroyed. The Germans, standing in the launches, spray all those still on the surface with machine gun fire and sub-machine gun fire. Suddenly a shell hits one of the launches. A spray of water goes up in the air smashing the sides of the boat to pieces. Now, German cursing mixes with the Russian screams and abuse that can be heard on the river. A machine gunner thrown out of the launch by the explosion flies, screaming, over the tree trunk and falls into the water. The other launches pass close to the trunk. The Germans do not notice the four men hidden behind the thick foliage. It seems as if the worst is over when suddenly the German who was thrown out of the launch emerges in the middle of the roots of the tree. Encumbered by his kit, a helmet on his head and his machine gun around his neck, the German grabs the tree trunk gasping for breath. He gradually gets his breath back, spits out water and freezes under the gaze of the four pairs of eyes staring at him. He looks at the Russians one after the other. All four stare without a word. They do not yet show any animosity. Or fear. Quite simply, their curiosity is aroused by the fact that for the first time they are seeing, right close up, the mysterious enemy that until now has just been the armour plating of tanks, the aircraft cabins and the anonymous and ruthless, raging mass flooding in from the west. The German looks at them. He looks them over carefully. A stupid smile appears on Vania's face. Seeing it, the German smiles at all four of them. The explosives lieutenant looks at the German open mouthed. The German stops at the faces of Kotov and Nikolaï. Doubtless having read something in their eyes, he stops looking, scans the surroundings with an unconcerned air and suddenly pushes away from the trunk to dive into the water. The torpor instantly disappears. Without consulting each other, all four of them dive under the water jostling each other to catch the German. The undisturbed surface of the water is covered with bubbles. Vani's head appears: he takes a gulp of air and dives again. Kotov and Nikolaï come back up to the surface at the same time and do the same. The surface of the water turns blood red. The explosives lieutenant's head reappears; he spits and coughs and tries to cling to the trunk but does not manage it. In panic he desperately tries to grab hold of the slippery branches and suddenly freezes. He has a far away look in his eyes. His eyes wide open stare at a point in the distance. The current slowly turns his body: a German bayonet is stuck in his chest. The current detaches the body of the explosives lieutenant from the tree...

FADE TO BLACK

38. EXT. THE RIVER – DAY

The trunk continues to follow the current. The German's machine gun is hanging from a branch. Kotov, Vania wearing the German's helmet and a gasping Nikolaï are clinging to the trunk of the tree. They gradually get their spirits back. Blood is flowing freely from several deep injuries on the edge of Nikolaï's right hand. He only now begins to feel the pain. He puts his palm up near his face.

Nikolaï

AH, THE BASTARD! SWINE! BLOODY HELL! HE BLOODY WELL BIT MY HAND! SHIT!
THAT HURTS!

The water around the tree trunk is covered with debris from the bridge and patches of diesel in the middle of which bodies of men and animals are floating. Fish stunned by the explosions,

look like whitish stains on the water. Nikolaï sucks his hand to stop the bleeding. A sob comes from his chest. He suddenly bursts into tears. Kotov looks at the artillery man calmly. Vania is distraught.

Nikolaï

THE BASTARD! IF I FIND HIM I'LL KILL HIM! *(Sobbing)* WE'VE HAD NO FUEL SINCE THE MANOEUVRES! *(Getting confused because of the spasms.)* IT'S NOTHING TO DO WITH YOU, COMMANDANT!... 21 JUNE! THE GERMANS ARE ON THE OTHER BANK... BAH, OBVIOUSLY THEY'RE GOING TO HAMMER US! NO DOUBT! THE SUPPLY BASE IS 60 KM AWAY...40 MINUTES FROM HERE ... *(He sucks his bloody hand and sobs.)* NO! IT'S NOTHING TO DO WITH YOU, COMMANDANT! BECAUSE THAT OVER THERE IS YOUR JOB! 130 VEHICLES AND THEIR MEN! 130! AND THEY BURNED LIKE... *(His jaw trembles.)* THE BASTARDS! THE BASTARDS! LIKE TARGET PRACTICE! SWINE! *(He sucks his hand.)* THEY COULDN'T EVEN DIRECT THEIR TURRETS AT THE GERMANS... AND THEN EVEN THOUGH... INSTEAD OF SHELLS, WE ONLY HAD GOOD FOR NOTHING... AND THEY BURNT! BURNT... 130 VEHICLES AND THEIR MEN! *(He sobs and slowly begins to calm down; his empty look fixes on a point in front of him: he lifts his hand to his face.)* THAT BLOODY HURTS! WHY DOES IT HURT SO MUCH? THE FASCIST DIDN'T HAVE RABIES, DID HE?

FADE TO BLACK

39. EXT. THE RIVER - EVENING

The trunk continues to float with the current. The setting sun shines its last rays on the limpid surface of the water. Calm, silence returns. Once again, it is difficult to believe there is a war on. The three frozen men are carried along by the current, clutching a tree trunk. Their blue lips are trembling, their teeth chattering. A sort of drone coming from the tangle of branches at the top of the tree attracts Vania's attention. He reaches the top of the tree by grabbing one branch after another. Kotov and Nikolaï watch his progress. Vania spreads the branches open carefully. Wild bees are hovering above a hole. Vania turns back to his comrades. A joyful smile appears on his frozen lips. He gently plunges his hand into the cavity and comes out with a honeycomb swarming with bees.

Vania

(smiling, whispering)

HONEY!...

Kotov and Nikolaï quickly move to the hole Vania has discovered. They each in their turn plunge their hands inside. Now they each have a piece of honeycomb. Vania has already started to bite into it: honey drips down his chin. A beatific grin lights up his face. Bees are flying around them. Every thing is calm and quiet. Kotov looks at the honey running down his hand, gleaming in the last rays of the setting sun. He carefully licks a large drop off his forearm. He keeps the honey in his mouth, in no hurry to swallow it. He ends up swallowing. Kotov's eyes mist over, his lips spread into a smile. Nikolaï looks at Kotov attentively...

Nikolaï

LISTEN, I RECOGNISE YOU... DON'T YOU REMEMBER ME?

Kotov looks carefully at Nikolaï. He shakes his head.

Nikolaï

FOR GOODNESS SAKE! SUMMER 36, THE TANKS IN THE WHEAT FIELD! WELL?

40. FLASH-BACK. EXT. THE WHEAT FIELD – DAY

There are some tanks on the edge of a wheat field, wailing. A young lieutenant in the motorised cavalry, Nikolaï, is standing in front of Kotov, who is wearing a vest and loose trousers.

Kotov

NOW THEN, LIEUTENANT, DON'T YOU RECOGNISE ME?

Nikolaï

No!

Kotov grabs a kepi from an officer standing near Nikolaï, puts it on his head and turns sideways on to Nikolaï.

Kotov

WHAT ABOUT LIKE THAT, DO YOU RECOGNISE ME NOW?

Nikolaï

COMRADE KOTOV!... GENERAL!

41. EXT. THE RIVER – EVENING

Nikolaï looks at Kotov, who shakes his head.

Kotov

YOU'RE MISTAKEN, I AM A COMMON LAW CRIMINAL... ARTICLE 193, PARAGRAPH 17, SUB-PARAGRAPH A. I STOLE 10,000 ROUBLES OF PUMPS, ABUSING MY POSITION... YOU ARE MISTAKEN, COMMANDANT...

Kotov turns away from Nikolaï and bites into a piece of honeycomb while looking at the river, which is gradually pushing the trunk towards the bank.

42. FLASH-BACK. EXT. RIVER – DAY

Little Nadia, her arms around her father General Kotov's neck, is sitting on his lap. The current of the river is gently carrying their boat along.

Kotov

(tenderly, touching Nadia's forehead with his lips)

YOU'RE VERY HOT... YOU'RE NOT ILL BY ANY CHANCE?

Nadia

NO. *(She snuggles even closer to her father's cheek.)* I love you more and more.

Kotov

(softly)

YOU AND I WILL ALWAYS TRAVEL LIKE THIS.

The boat seems to fade into the last rays of the setting sun.

43. INT. MOSCOW. THE QUAY HOUSE. MITIA'S APARTMENT – MORNING

The rays of the dawn sun are reflected in the Moskova. The light is also reflected in Mitia's window, making a strange pattern on the ceiling of his apartment.

Caption: "MAY 1943"

Mitia, in uniform and boots, tightens his belt, slides his leather briefcase through the loops, throws his bag over his shoulder, puts the magazine in the pistol and puts it away in its holster. He looks at the table he has left without tidying: a heap of cigarette ends overflowing from the ashtray, an empty bottle, an open can of food. He looks around the room once. He picks up the newspaper lying on the floor, pushes the mess into it, crumples up the newspaper, takes it with him and walks out of the apartment.

44. EXT. MOSCOW. THE QUAY HOUSE INNER COURTYARD – MORNING

A Willis car is waiting for him in front of the entrance to his building. Riabov, leaning with his elbows on the bonnet of the car, is looking bored in his NKGB lieutenant's uniform. Mitia comes out of the building. Riabov, with a broad grin, puts his hand out to him.

Riabov

GOOD MORNING, DMITRI ANDREEVITCH.

Mitia, without shaking Riabov's hand, opens the door.

Mitia

LET'S GO.

Riabov, instantly changes the look on his face and with a concerned air, sits behind the wheel. The Willis starts up and leaves the courtyard, passing under an immense archway.

45. INT. INSIDE THE WILLIS. MOSCOW – MORNING

Riabov

WHERE ARE WE GOING?

Mitia

TO THE FRONT.

Riabov

WHICH FRONT?

Mitia

THE REAL FRONT. DO YOU REMEMBER GENERAL KOTOV?

Riabov

OF COURSE.

Mitia

I HAVE HAD ORDERS TO FIND HIM.

Riabov

BUT ISN'T HE...

Mitia

NO... THAT'S WHY I HAVE ORDERS TO FIND HIM

Riabov keeps quiet. They drive on for a moment without a word.

Riabov

AND THEY'VE ASKED YOU AGAIN?

Mitia

US, YOU AND ME.

Riabov

BUT IT'S NOTHING TO DO WITH ME!

Mitia

(like a vulture)

WHAT DO YOU MEAN, NOTHING TO DO WITH YOU? WHO BEAT HIM UP? ME MAYBE?
IT WAS YOU, RIABOV! AND OBVIOUSLY YOU DIDN'T FINISH THE JOB...

46. FLASH-BACK. EXT. A FIELD OF WHEAT – EVENING

A car has stopped in the middle of a wheat field.

47. INT. INSIDE THE CAR. THE WHEAT FIELD – EVENING

Riabov, his face distorted, is bending over the front seat and with all his strength is hitting someone sitting on the back seat with his enormous fists.

48. INT. INSIDE THE WILLIS. MOSCOW – MORNING

Mitia looks at Riabov's neck as he drives through the streets of Moscow.

Riabov

AND YOU HAVE NO NEWS OF YOUR DAUGHTER?

Mitia turns his eyes to the road. He shakes his head.

49. FLASH-BACK. EXT. SMALL TOWN NEAR THE FRONTIER – MORNING

Caption: "AUGUST 1941"

The furthest jetty from a sea port. A barge is tied up on one side of the jetty and on the other side a large NKVD launch is guarded by two Red Army soldiers, with navy blue stand up collars, carrying rifles with bayonets.

50. EXT. THE BRIDGE OF THE BARGE. NEAR THE QUAY – MORNING

On the deck of the barge, there is a large tarpaulin, with an immense red cross, spread out and wounded Red Army soldiers. Under the direction of Kravetz, the superintendents and the pioneer captains, the pioneers from the camp are in the process of climbing the gangway. Nadia is among them.

Kravetz

BE CAREFUL ON THE GANGWAY! WATCH YOUR FEET! FIND A PLACE ON THE DECK!
DON'T TOUCH ANYTHING! I BEG YOU, MAKE SURE NOTHING HAPPENS TO YOU!...

Nadia arrives on the deck. She picks her way through the middle of the wounded soldiers and looks at them, terrified. She gets to the other side and kneels down among an isolated group of pioneers. Little Olia is sitting near Nadia. She is quietly crying, her eyes staring at her feet. One of them has a shoe on it, the other is bare. Nadia, glancing at the wounded men, takes Olia by the shoulders.

Nadia

WHERE IS YOUR SHOE, LITTLE OLIA?

Olia

(her face snuggled up against Nadia's shoulder)

I'VE LOST IT!

Nadia

DON'T CRY. THERE'S NO POINT. LOOK AT THE LOVELY FINGERS YOU HAVE... LOOK AT THE LITTLE ONE. DO YOU KNOW WHO IT IS?

She takes Olia by the little finger. It tickles Olia. A smile appears on her weeping face. Olia shakes her head and looks Nadia in the eyes.

Nadia

IT'S COMRADE VOROCHILOV, OUR MOST IMPORTANT FIELD MARSHAL! AND THIS FINGER IS... BOUDIONNY!

Olia laughs softly.

Olia

AND THIS ONE?

Nadia

THAT'S THE BIGGEST ONE: IT'S COMRADE STALIN!

Olia laughs.

Olia

OH, THAT TICKLES!

Kravetz goes on to the deck in the direction of his pioneers, surrounded by superintendents and pioneer captains.

Kravetz

(looking at all his protégés and turning to one of the superintendents)

ARE THEY ALL HERE?

The supervisor

YES...

Pendiourine, the captain of the barge, appears on the deck, a loud speaker in his hand. He puts it up to his mouth.

Pendiourine

YOUR ATTENTION, PLEASE. DURING THE VOYAGE, THE ENEMY AVIATION MAY TRY TO PROVOKE US! WE ARE NOT THE FIRST CONVOY! IT HAS ALREADY HAPPENED AND I CAN CATEGORICALLY STATE THAT THE GERMANS WILL NOT TOUCH US! WE ARE UNDER THE PROTECTION OF THE RED CROSS! SO, IF YOU SEE ENEMY AIRCRAFT, STAY CALM AND DO NOT RESPOND TO ANY PROVOCATION FROM THE GERMAN PILOTS! THOSE WITH WEAPONS, PLEASE HAND THEM OVER TO ME IMMEDIATELY! THEY WILL BE RETURNED TO YOU ON YOUR ARRIVAL!

Pendiourine waits a moment, then moves forward on the bridge. He approaches Kravetz.

Pendiourine

DO YOU HAVE ANY WEAPONS?

Kravetz

YOU MUST BE MAD! THEY'RE CHILDREN! HOW COULD THEY HAVE WEAPONS?

Pendiourine

UNDERSTOOD. NO SMOKING OR DRINKING ON BOARD!

Pendiourine approaches the wounded soldiers. Kravetz watches him.

Kravetz

NO SMOKING? THAT'S UTTER NONSENSE!

Nadia observes Pendiourine who is going round the wounded men.

Pendiourine

DO YOU HAVE ANY WEAPONS?

The injured man

HOW COULD I? THEY DON'T HAND THEM OUT IN HOSPITAL...

Pendiourine goes to the next wounded man - a sergeant lying on a stretcher, covered with a soldier's great coat. His face is sunken; he is unshaven. His eyes are closed. After waiting a moment next to him, Pendiourine decides not to wake him and goes on to the next wounded man. It is a young soldier with his arm plastered up to his shoulder. He has a thin, nervous face. His eyes burn with fighting spirit.

Pendiourine

DO YOU HAVE ANY WEAPONS?

The soldier

(in a quiet voice)

FUCK OFF...

Pendiourine

UNDERSTOOD!

Nadia turns and sees men loading crates, trunks, busts of Lenin and Stalin on to the NKVD guarded launch. Standard plaster busts of the Leaders, all identical, are lined up on the deck of the launch, transforming it into a kind of strange museum. A young fashionably dressed woman strolls on the deck. A bald well padded man gives the orders for loading the goods. One of the dockers drops a box. It breaks as it falls to the deck. Files spill out documents with lilac seals. The bald man catches several sheets that the wind doesn't carried off. The docker feverishly picks up the files and puts them back in the broken box.

The bald man

CAN'T YOU BE CAREFUL?! THOSE ARE THE PARTY ARCHIVES!

The docker

IT'S MY FAULT!

The bald man

TAKE IT TO THE HOLD!

The woman

AND BE VERY CAREFUL! THERE'S ALSO A PORCELAIN DINNER SERVICE AND A CRYSTAL CHANDELIER IN ONE OF THE CRATES!

Nadia looks out to sea: enormous seagulls are flying over the sea.

51. EXT. THE DECK OF THE BARGE – DAY

The barge makes its way out to sea. The wounded, like the camp director Kravetz and Olia on Nadia's lap, are sleeping. Nadia's eyes close. Her nose itches. Suddenly she feels the insistent look of the sergeant on her. She opens her eyes. Their eyes meet.

The sergeant

CHILD, WOULD YOU BE GOOD ENOUGH TO BRING ME SOME WATER...?

Nadia

OF COURSE...

Nadia gently moves Olia's head off her lap. She gets up and quickly goes towards a little structure built on the deck next to which is an immense earthenware jar full of water and a tin cup. Nadia tips the jug using all her strength and fills the cup. She quickly returns to the sergeant.

Nadia

HERE...

The wounded man gives her a broad smile full of goodness.

The sergeant

HELP ME, MY CHILD, I CAN'T MANAGE ON MY OWN...

Nadia bends down to the level of his stretcher. She doesn't know what to do.

The sergeant

LIFT MY HEAD...

Nadia

RIGHT AWAY, RIGHT AWAY...

She lifts the sergeant's head and puts the cup to his lips. He drinks greedily. He throws his head back.

The sergeant

THANK YOU MY CHILD...

Nadia decides to straighten the large coat covering him. She lifts it up. She sees that the sergeant's legs have been amputated at the knee and are tightly bound with blood soaked bandages.

The sergeant

DON'T BOTHER MY CHILD... DON'T LOOK... YOU SHOULDN'T...

Nadia

SORRY, I...

She grabs the cup.

Nadia

DO YOU WANT ANY MORE?

The sergeant

NO THANK YOU. MAY GOD PROTECT YOU!

There is a rumbling in the sky. Nadia lifts her head. Several German fighter planes are flying straight at them.

Pendiourine is having his breakfast on the bridge. He scans the sky. Irritated, he places his spoon in his dish and hands it to a sailor who is standing nearby.

Pendiourine

AH BAH, THAT'S TOO BAD! THEY'VE GOT NO MANNERS!

Pendiourine gets hold of his loudspeaker and turns it in the direction of the deck

Pendiourine

YOUR ATTENTION, PLEASE! DO NOT PANIC! NOTHING WILL HAPPEN! WE ARE UNDER THE PROTECTION OF THE RED CROSS! THEY ARE TRAINING, THAT'S ALL...

52. INT. THE COCKPIT OF FIGHTER PLANE No. 1 – DAY

The Luftwaffe commandant, Kurt Staube, is sitting behind the joystick. He is wearing an immaculate white silk scarf around his neck. The sea stretches out in front of him and the barge appears to be coming towards him at top speed.

Staube

(into his microphone)

WILLY, HERE'S THE TUB AGAIN FOR TARGET PRACTICE!

Willy

(through the radio noise)

I CAN SEE IT, COMMANDANT! WHAT ARE OUR ORDERS?

Staube

(into the microphone)

IT'S THE RED CROSS! WE'LL MAKE A TRAINING ATTACK! ON MY COMMAND:
TRAINING ATTACK!

53. THE DECK OF THE BARGE – DAY

Nadia is sitting near the wounded sergeant. She sees the planes coming very close and suddenly swoop up again. The beginnings of panic can be seen on the deck. The wounded are heaving themselves up. Little Olia starts crying. Pendiourine is the only one that stays calm.

Pendiourine

DEAR PASSENGERS! THE GERMANS WILL NOT BOMBARD US! I REPEAT, WE ARE
UNDER THE PROTECTION OF THE ...

His words are lost in the din of fighter planes diving on the barge. A first plane, then a second, third, fourth and fifth. They skim over the deck of the barge and disappear once more into the sky. The soldier with the wounded hand clenches his teeth as he watches the planes. His right hand is rigidly held inside his bag.

54. INT. THE COCKPIT OF FIGHTER PLANE No. 3 – DAY

Lieutenant Martin Grass is at the controls. He has the cheerful face of a child. A lock of blond hair has escaped from his helmet. The machine gunner Hans Hoffman is sitting in the radio seat. He looks as chubby as his superior officer.

Hoffman

MARTIN, I'M FED UP WITH THESE TRAINING FLIGHTS.

Grass

WHAT DO YOU SUGGEST, HANS? WE AREN'T ALLOWED TO TAKE POT SHOTS AT THE
OLD TUB! IT'S THE RED CROSS! IT'S THE CONVENTION!

Hoffman

I KNOW, BUT I'M GOING TO ANYWAY!

Hoffman opens the lock on the side door. He attaches jump belt to his parachute straps. He unbuttons his trousers and takes them off.

Grass

(dying with laughter)

HEY, WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO, HANS?

Hoffman

(his trousers around his knees)

I AM GOING TO BOMBARD THE CAPTAIN OF AN ENEMY SHIP.

Grass bursts out laughing.

Grass

WHAT IF YOU MISS HIM?

Hoffman

DO YOU WANT TO BET?

Grass

(busting out laughing)

WHAT?

Hoffman

A CASE OF VEUVE CLICQUOT.

Grass

YOU'RE ON!

Hoffman

WHEN YOU GO OVER THEM, GO OVER ON THE RIGHT WING! AT 30 DEGREES! BUT TRY NOT TO TEAR THE BRIDGE OFF WITH MY ARSE!

Grass

I'LL TRY, BOMBARDIER!

55. EXT. THE DECK OF THE BARGE - DAY

The screaming and trembling children are all huddled up against Nadia.

Nadia

STOP CRYING! STOP! YOU HEARD, THE CAPTAIN SAID THAT NOTHING WILL HAPPEN!
WE JUST HAVE TO BE PATIENT!

Pendiourine is still standing on the bridge, the loudspeaker in his hand.

Pendiourine

COMRADES, IT IS NOT AN ATTACK! THE GERMANS ARE CARRYING OUT TRAINING MANOEUVRES! THIS ISN'T THE FIRST TIME! KEEP CALM!

The amputee sergeant stares at the wounded soldier who is looking into the sky, his hand stuffed in his bag. The soldier face's has a nervous tic. His eyes betray the madness that hate has engendered. Feeling someone looking at him the soldier turns back to the sergeant.

The sergeant

WHAT'S THE MATTER, BROTHER?

The soldier

(unpleasantly)

NOTHING! HOLD YOUR TONGUE AND REST!

The sergeant turns away from the soldier and half closes his eyes. The fighter planes come down again in a dive. The first, the second... they fly over the deck in a deafening roar of engines. Everyone sees the third aircraft turn on to its left wing. A large pair of pink buttocks are sticking out of the side door. The plane dives.

56. INT. THE COCKPIT OF FIGHTER PLANE No. 3 – DAY

Hans Hoffman is suspended from the belt of the parachute in the doorway of the side door, his trousers down. Martin Grass grips the joystick and flies straight at the barge.

Hoffman

MARTIN, WATCH YOURSELF! I MIGHT LET A SALVO GO BEFORE TIME!

Grass

GET READY, HANS! IN FIVE SECONDS, DROP THE SHELL! 1, 2...

Hans Hoffman, clutching at the handle, tipped over backwards as far as possible, starts straining. The helmet earphones spit out a few words.

Staube

(off camera)

LIEUTENANT, WHAT'S GOING ON?

Grass

NOTHING, SIR! WE ARE MAKING A TRAINING DIVE ON THE TARGET!

The deck of the barge disappears under Grass's plane.

Staube

(off camera)

LIEUTENANT, YOU MISSED YOUR TARGET!

Grass
SORRY, SIR!

Staube
(off camera)
START THE DIVE ON THE TARGET AGAIN!

Grass
YES SIR! AGAIN!

Hoffman
MARTIN, I'M GOING TO SHIT ON THEM!

Grass
YOU'RE GOING TO LOSE YOUR BET!

Grass pulls the joystick towards him.

57. EXT. THE DECK OF THE BARGE – DAY

The aircraft swoops vertically with the pair of buttocks sticking out of the side door. Everyone is watching it. The face of the wounded soldier has a nervous cramp. His hand seems to be rigid in his bag.

58. INT. THE COCKPIT OF PLANE NO. 3 – DAY

Grass turns to Hoffman.

Grass
READY?

Hoffman
GO TO HELL, MARTIN! I'VE BEEN READY FOR THE LAST FIVE MINUTES OR MORE!

Grass
STRAIGHT AT THE TARGET, BOMBARDIER!

59. THE DECK OF THE BARGE – DAY

The aircraft drops down towards the barge again, lying on its left wing. The pair of pink buttocks are still sticking out of the side door. About 3 metres above the barge, the aircraft rights itself. It flies in the direction of the bridge where Captain Pendiourine is standing with his loudspeaker still in his hand. Then something that no-one expected happened. The

wounded soldier with his face contorted by cramp removes his large good hand from his bag. It is firmly holding the handle of a rocket launcher. Coldly aiming at his target, he presses the trigger. A sparkling red ball goes right through Hans Hoffman. The aircraft passes over the barge.

60. INT. THE COCKPIT OF PLANE No. 3 – DAY

The rocket explodes in the cockpit. Martin Grass turns. He sees his friend Martin Hoffman's body suspended by the belt of his parachute like a broken doll. He sees an enormous hole in his body and through it, the barge and the sea going away into the distance.

Grass

SHIT! OH, SHIT! HANS! MY MATE! HANS! HANS!

The pierced body see-saws on the end of the parachute belt.

Grass

OH NO! NO!

Staub

(off camera)

LIEUTENANT, WHAT'S GOING ON?

Grass

THE BASTARDS FIRED AT HANS! HE'S GOT A HOLE THE SIZE OF MY HEAD IN HIM! HANS!... THE SWINE! WE DIDN'T TOUCH THEM AND THEY'VE KILLED HANS!

Staub

(off camera)

LIEUTENANT, BACK TO BASE! ORDER TO THE WHOLE UNIT! BACK TO BASE!

Grass

(trying to wipe away his tears, but spreading them even more)

THEY'VE KILLED HANS! THEY'VE KILLED HIM! THE BASTARDS! THE BASTARDS!

Staub

(off camera)

I FORBID ANY ATTACK, LIEUTENANT GRASS! DO YOU HEAR ME?! THAT'S AN ORDER!

Grass

(pulling the joystick towards him)

WAIT, HANS, WAIT! MY CARROT HEAD! THEY'LL PAY FOR THIS!

Grass turns his aircraft. The barge comes closer at top speed.

Staub

(off camera)

GRASS! WHAT ARE YOU DOING! COME BACK!

Grass tears off his helmet with the earphones. His finger is on the trigger of the machine gun.

61. EXT. THE DECK OF THE BARGE – DAY

Martin Grass's plane dives towards the barge. The machine gun crackles. The bullets pierce the wounded on the deck. Pendiourine is killed. The bridge is destroyed. The aircraft swoops upwards. What is happening on the deck is indescribable. The wounded crawl towards the little structure. Children are screaming. Nadia looks horrified, the leader of the pioneers is killed stone dead, his ugly features horsy and his eyes wide open.

62. INT. THE COCKPIT OF PLANE No. 3 – DAY

Grass puts his helmet with the earphones back on.

Staub

(off camera)

LIEUTENANT GRASS! YOU MORON! WHAT'VE YOU DONE?

Grass

THEY KILLED HANS, SIR!

Staub

(off camera)

YOU FOOL! I'LL STRIP YOU OF YOUR EPAULETTES MYSELF! LISTEN TO ME ALL OF YOU! PREPARE TO ATTACK! READY... ATTACK! SINK THEM ALL! GRASS, YOU SON OF A BITCH, DIVE ON THE OLD TUB FIRST!

Grass

YES SIR!

Staub

(off camera)

ATTACK! ATTACK! GRASS, YOU MORON, GET GOING! ATTACK!

Grass pulls the joystick towards him. The aircraft swoops up almost vertically.

63. EXT. THE BARGE. THE SEA – DAY

The planes move to attack. The first bombs destroy the stern of the boat. The barge rears up. People roll down the deck and fall in the water. The planes attack again and again. The machine guns spray the passengers.

Kravetz, along with the soldier with the rocket launcher, children and sailors, dies... The sea splutters under the impact of high calibre bullets. The water turns red.

64. EXT. THE SEA. UNDER THE WATER – DAY

Dead bodies and a few crates fall slowly to the bottom: beams spared by the bullets pierce the water. A soldier desperately tries to get back up to the surface, but his head disappears under the water. He has been hit and his body, leaving a red trail behind him, falls to the bottom. Nadia goes back up to the surface for air. Her head hits something soft and elastic. It is the tarpaulin with the red cross on it that covered the deck of the barge. Nadia starts hitting at the tarpaulin but she is short of oxygen. She forces herself to calm down, dives again and swims in the direction of the light coming through the surface of the water and goes up to the surface at that point.

65. EXT. THE SEA – DAY

Nadia puts her head above water and takes deep breaths of air. A hand comes and supports her.

The sergeant

(off camera)

HANG ON, MY CHILD...

66. INT. THE COCKPIT OF PLANE No. 1 – DAY

Commandant Kurt Staube looks at the sea, which is disappearing behind thick smoke and the beginnings of fog.

Staube

(into his microphone)

GREAT! BACK TO BASE! THE FOG IS COMING DOWN! LIEUTENANT GRASS!

67. INT. THE COCKPIT OF PLANE No. 3 – DAY

Grass holds his joystick. Hans' body is lying under his feet.

Grass

YES SIR!

Staube

(off camera)

STAY IN THE AREA! I WANT YOU TO CLEAN UP ALL YOUR SHIT, IF THERE'S ANY LEFT!

Grass

YES SIR! I'LL MAKE A GOOD JOB OF IT! I SWEAR!

68. EXT. THE SEA – DAY

A thick fog has come down over the sea. A black mine is floating on the surface of the water. Nadia and the amputee sergeant are clutching one of the ceramic rods sticking out of it.

Nadia

THEY'RE ALL DEAD! ALL THE CHILDREN, OLIA, ALL, ALL OF THEM!

The sergeant

GOD REST THEIR SOULS!

The sergeant makes a sign of the cross. Nadia looks at him wide eyed. Her blue lips start trembling.

The sergeant

HAVE YOU BEEN BAPTISED?

Nadia

NO... I AM A PIONEER CAPTAIN AND WILL SOON BE A KOMSOMOL...

The sergeant

WOULD YOU LIKE ME TO BAPTISE YOU, MY LITTLE KOMSOMOL?

Nadia

WHAT DO YOU MEAN? WHO ARE YOU?

The sergeant

ME? I'M A PRIEST. FATHER ALEXANDER... WHAT'S YOUR NAME?

Nadia

NADIA. NADEJDA KOTOVA...

The sergeant

NADEJDA... THAT'S A PRETTY NAME... VERA - FAITH, NADEJDA - HOPE, LIUBOV - LOVE AND THE MOTHER OF THEM ALL, SOPHIA - DIVINE WISDOM... I'M GOING TO BAPTISE YOU, MY CHILD...

Nadia

NO, MY FATHER IS A COMMUNIST....

The sergeant

IS HE ALIVE?

Nadia

OBVIOUSLY! OF COURSE HE'S ALIVE!

The sergeant

GOOD. WHO KNOWS, NADEJDA: MAYBE BAPTISING YOU WILL HELP YOUR FATHER. COME ON, I BAPTISE YOU NADEJDA...

Nadia

WHAT FOR? GOD DOESN'T EXIST...

A plane is rumbling overhead. It appears just above their heads for an instant, before disappearing into the fog.

69. INT. THE COCKPIT OF PLANE No. 3 – DAY

Between two layers of fog, Martin Grass can see a mine with two people clinging to it.

Grass

DIRTY HYPOCRITES!

Grass turns his plane.

70. EXT. THE SEA – DAY

The rumbling of the plane gets louder and closer. The plane comes out of the fog and flies over the heads of Nadia and the sergeant. He sprays them with a burst of machine gun fire. The bullets come thick and fast near them. The plane disappears into the fog. The sergeant looks at the low grey sky between two layers of fog.

The sergeant

HE'LL BE BACK... HE'S NOT GOING TO LET US GO... DEAR LORD, SAVE US POOR SINNERS!

The sergeant crosses himself. Nadia carefully and with a severe air looks at the man's face. She lifts her head.

71. INT. THE COCKPIT OF PLANE No. 3 – DAY

Grass sees that his attack has failed. The two people clinging to the mine were not hit. One of them looks up. Grass prepares to attack again.

72. EXT. THE SEA– DAY

The noise of the aircraft fades and then increases once more. Nadia looks at the sergeant with as much hope as terror in her eyes.

The sergeant

WITH THE HELP OF THE HIGHEST, THE LIVING WILL ENTER INTO THE HOUSE OF OUR HEAVENLY FATHER AND WILL SAY TO THE LORD: GOD IS MY DEFENDER AND MY REFUGE, I EXULT IN HIM...

We hear the noise of the plane coming closer. The sergeant raises his voice.

The sergeant

DO NOT BE AFRAID OF THE DARK, OR ARROWS, OR DARKNESS, OR THE DEVIL...

The plane comes out of the fog and flies straight at them. The bullet misses Nadia and the sergeant, still clinging to the mine, by a few centimetres.

The sergeant

BECAUSE YOU, DEAR LORD, ARE MY JOY: THE ALMIGHTY HAS GIVEN ME REFUGE!

73. INT. THE COCKPIT OF PLANE No. 3 – DAY

Seeing that he has missed his target again, Grass turns again. The altimeter is at almost zero. A red light starts flashing just next to it. An alarm goes off. To stop it making him lose his concentration, Grass switches the sound off.

74. EXT. THE SEA – DAY

On edge because of the plane flying over her as well as because of the sergeant's terrible voice and the words he is speaking in an obsolete language, Nadia's tears start to fall. She does not even notice that her lips are silently repeating the words of the psalm that the sergeant is reciting.

The sergeant

EVIL WILL NOT TOUCH YOU, YOUR BODY WILL BE SPARED THE WOUNDS...

75. INT. THE COCKPIT OF PLANE No. 3 – DAY

Grass does not notice that the red light is now continuously lit. The arrow of the altimeter is almost on zero. Suddenly the fog lifts. The surface of the water is just in front of the plane's nose. Grass pulls the joystick towards him with all his strength.

Grass

NO-O-O-O!!!

76. EXT. THE SEA – DAY

The plane appears out of the fog just above the water; it touches the surface of the water with the tip of a wing, puts its nose in the water and spins. Pieces of bodywork whistle through the air.

The sergeant

(at the limit of his voice)

AS IT IS THROUGH THE VOICE OF HIS ANGEL THAT GOD WILL ANNOUNCE THE GOOD NEWS ABOUT YOU AND WILL PRESERVE YOU ON YOUR JOURNEY...

Nadia

(whispering)

AS IT IS THROUGH THE VOICE OF HIS ANGEL THAT GOD WILL ANNOUNCE THE GOOD NEWS ABOUT YOU AND WILL PRESERVE YOU ON YOUR JOURNEY...

The plane explodes under the water. A plume of water and fire rises above the water. A wave submerges Nadia and the sergeant.

77. EXT. THE SEA – DAY

The mine. Nadia and the sergeant are still clinging to the rods sticking out of the mine.

The sergeant

I BAPTISE YOU, NADEJDA, SERVANT OF THE LORD, IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER...

The sergeant sprinkles water on Nadia's face.

The sergeant

THE SON...

He takes more water and washes Nadia's face.

The sergeant

AND THE HOLY GHOST. AMEN!

Nadia, frozen, looks at the sergeant wide eyed. She seems to be listening from deep down in her soul. The sergeant takes off the little silver cross he is wearing around his neck and offers it to Nadia.

The sergeant

KISS IT...

Nadia piously touches the cross with her frozen lips.

The sergeant

NOW, CROSS YOURSELF THREE TIMES.

The sergeant puts the cross round Nadia's neck.

Nadia

HOW? I DON'T KNOW HOW TO DO IT.

The sergeant shows her. Nadia crosses herself without taking her eyes off the sergeant.

The sergeant

NADEJDA... MY CHILD... I ... HAVE NO FEAR... PRAY...

Nadia

HOW DO YOU PRAY? I DON'T KNOW THE WORDS.

The sergeant

THE WORDS... THE WORDS AREN'T IMPORTANT... WITH YOUR HEART, PRAY WITH YOUR HEART... MAY GOD PROTECT YOU... TURN AROUND MY DAUGHTER...

Nadia

WHAT FOR?

The sergeant

TURN ROUND!

Nadia closes her eyes. She turns.

The sergeant

LIVE, NADEJDA, SERVANT OF THE LORD...

The sergeant lets go of the mine. The current takes him away from the mine and Nadia. He disappears into the fog. Nadia waits for the sergeant to give her permission to open her eyes again. She finally opens them without permission. She is alone.

Nadia

ALEXANDRE! COMRADE!... WHERE ARE YOU?

Silence. The water slops around the mine. Nadia starts getting frightened. She clings with all her remaining strength to the rods on the mine and starts sobbing.

Nadia

(crying)

NO! NO! IT CAN'T BE! I CAN'T DIE! COME BACK, PLEASE! I STILL HAVE TO FIND MY FATHER! YOU SHOULDN'T DO THINGS LIKE THAT! IT'S SO DISHONEST! I'M ONLY A LITTLE GIRL! IT SHOULDN'T BE ALLOWED! NO! NO-O-O!!

Nadia suddenly hears a rumbling. The NKVD launch responsible for the Party archives suddenly appears out of the fog.

A voice on board

ZINA, DON'T STAY ON DECK. IT'S FREEZING UP HERE AND YOU'LL CATCH COLD!

The launch disappears into the fog.

Nadia

(she shouts)

HEY! HELP! I'M HERE!

The noise of the motor stops.

The voice on board

WHAT'S HAPPENING? WHY ARE WE STOPPING?

Another voice

I COULD SWEAR THERE'S A GIRL HERE SOMEWHERE!

First voice

WHAT'S ALL THIS NONSENSE?

Nadia

HERE! HERE! I'M HERE! ON THE MINE!

Second voice

YOU HEARD: SHE'S ON A MINE!

First voice

HAVE YOU GONE MAD?! A MINE! I'M TRANSPORTING THE PARTY ARCHIVES! COME ON, LET'S GO!

Nadia hears the engine of the launch start up again. The sound fades slowly in the fog. The wave raised by the launch reaches Nadia. The mine starts to pitch in the water. Nadia raises her eyes to the sky.

Nadia

DEAR GOD! SAVE ME! SAVE ME PLEASE, DEAR GOD! HOW CAN I FIND FATHER IF I DIE? HELP ME PLEASE DEAR GOD... DEAR GOD...

The mine and Nadia disappear in the fog.

FADE TO:

78. EXT. THE SEA NEAR THE SHORE – DAY

The mine is pitching on the waves. Nadia, her head against the machine, eyes closed, is holding on to the ceramic rods. It seems as if the mine is murmuring something. Suddenly Nadia feels the bottom under her feet. She gently lets go of the mine. The water is up to her waist. The mine stops, so does she. Nadia looks at the mine astounded.

Nadia

THE MINE... THANK YOU, MINE...

The mine rocks on the waves. You can now distinctly hear a sort of faint humming. Nadia leans towards the mine and kisses it. She blows softly as if she were blowing on cinders to kindle them.

Nadia

GO BACK TO SEA NOW, PLEASE ...

Pitching a little on the waves, the mine goes back out to sea. Nadia leaves the water backwards without taking her eyes off the mine that disappears into the fog.

Nadia

(whispering)

THANK GOD... AND YOU, FATHER...

Nadia walks out on to the sandy shore. Suddenly we hear the launch's engine.

Voice on board

ARE YOU A SAILOR OR NOT?! WHERE ARE YOU TAKING US?! I'M TRANSPORTING THE PARTY ARCHIVES! AND PERSONAL GOODS WORTH AT LEAST 100,000 ROUBLES! IF WE SINK, WHO'S GOING TO PAY ME BACK?

A few metres from the shore, an explosion turns the fog into an orange haze. There is a terrifying noise. Nadia sits on the sand. A plaster head of Stalin falls just next to her. Documents bearing a lilac coloured seal fall out of the sky.

79. INT. THE VILLAGE'S SOVIET BUILDING IN THE LOUNINE'S OFFICE – DAY

NKGB Captain Lounine is sitting at a table in a huge, nearly empty, room. Papers are lying on the table. A telephone. A middle aged man, wearing a suit that is too large for him and a white shirt buttoned to the neck, without a tie, is sitting opposite him.

Krouglov

AND SO, I... I WASN'T THERE, I WAS AT MY SISTER'S, A GOOD FIVE KILOMETRES AWAY... SHE'D FALLEN SERIOUSLY ILL. AND TWO DAYS LATER, THE GERMANS WERE THERE... I FOUND OUT ABOUT THE CALL-UP WHEN THEY WERE ALREADY A HUNDRED KILOMETRES PAST THE VILLAGE...

Caption: "May 1943. THE LIBERATED TERRITORIES. THE HQ OF THE SPECIAL INFILTRATION DETACHMENT, "DEATH TO SPIES""

Krouglov

THAT'S HOW I CAME TO BE IN OCCUPIED TERRITORY... I DIDN'T MAKE ANY WAVES...OF COURSE I HAD TO WORK FOR THE BASTARDS...I CUT WOOD, I SWEEPED THE KOMMANDANTUR'S COURTYARD... BECAUSE I'VE GOT A FAMILY, A WIFE, CHILDREN, A MOTHER... MY FATHER DIED BEFORE THE WAR...

Lounine looks at the man, his face expressionless. He takes no notes and indeed gives the impression he is not listening.

Krouglov

I SHOULD HAVE JOINED THE PARTISANS, BUT AT THE TIME THERE WEREN'T ANY NEAR US... AND THEN THE GERMANS WOULD'VE KILLED MY FAMILY...AND THEN... WHAT ELSE...

Lounine

THAT'S ENOUGH. WELL, CITIZEN...

Krouglov

ANDREÏ BORISSOVITCH KROUGLOV...

Lounine nods.

Lounine

THE WAR TO LIBERATE YOUR VILLAGE IS SADLY NOT YET OVER. YOU WILL AGAIN HAVE TO SERVE YOUR HOMELAND.

Krouglov

WITH PLEASURE!

A sergeant carrying a machine gun enters the office at that moment.

The sergeant

CAPTAIN! EXCUSE ME, BUT...

Mitia enters just behind the sergeant, politely pushing him aside.

Mitia

(to Lounine)

COMMANDANT ARSENTIEV. FROM CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION...I CONTACTED YOU BY RADIOGRAM.

Mitia takes off his cap and smoothes his hair with a weary air.

Lounine

YES, COMMANDANT. *(To the man:)* YOU MAY LEAVE. *(To Mitia:)* SIT DOWN, PLEASE.

The man gets up and goes to the door and leaves.

80. EXT. INNER COURTYARD OF THE VILLAGE'S SOVIET BUILDING – DAY

The courtyard is surrounded by a high blind fence. Some hundred men in civilian clothes are sitting in the courtyard. They completely fill it under the bright sunlight. Their faces are sweating and betray their fear and incomprehension. The soldiers carrying machine guns are watching them. Krouglov goes into the courtyard, pushes a way through the men and sits on the ground. His closest neighbours immediately turn to him.

Voices

WELL, WHAT HAPPENS IN THERE? WHY HAVE WE BEEN ARRESTED? WHAT DO THEY WANT? WHAT ARE THEY ASKING?

Krouglov

(disconcerted)

WHO KNOWS! THEY ASKED ME WHAT I WAS DOING DURING THE OCCUPATION. I TOLD HIM AND HE DIDN'T EVEN LISTEN...I REALLY DON'T UNDERSTAND A THING...HE DIDN'T EVEN WRITE MY NAME DOWN! HE EVEN TOLD ME THAT I WOULD PROBABLY GO TO THE FRONT... BUT WHY DIDN'T HE WRITE MY NAME DOWN?

First man

HE DOESN'T NEED YOUR NAME! IT'S THE SPECIAL INFILTRATION DETACHMENT HERE, THE ONE THEY CALL "DEATH TO SPIES"! THEY'RE GOING TO TRANSFER US TO THE MILITARY COMMAND, THEY'LL TAKE OUR NAMES THERE AND THE RED ARMY SOLDIERS WILL GIVE US OUR PAPERS!

Second man

WHY COULDN'T THEY HAVE CALLED US UP DIRECTLY TO THE MILITARY COMMAND? WHY DID THEY COME AND CART US OFF IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT WITH MACHINE GUNS? WHY ARE WE UNDER ESCORT, LIKE PRISONERS?

Krouglov

I DON'T KNOW.

81. INT. THE VILLAGE'S SOVIET BUILDING. LOUNINE'S OFFICE – DAY

Lounine is still sitting behind the table. Standing in front of the window, a dark tobacco cigarette between his fingers, Mitia turns his back to him.

Lounine

HE HAD TWO SLIGHT WOUNDS THAT MEANT I WAS AUTHORISED TO PRESENT HIM FOR TRANSFER FROM THE DISCIPLINARY BATTALION TO THE REGULAR UNITS...

Mitia

AND WHY DIDN'T YOU TRANSFER HIM?

Lounine

BECAUSE HE REFUSED, COMMANDANT.

Mitia

FOR WHAT REASONS?

Lounine

HE OBVIOUSLY COULDN'T BEAR TO BE SEPARATED FROM HIS COMRADES IN ARMS... ANYWAY, THAT'S HOW HE WORDED HIS REFUSAL.

Mitia puffs on his cigarette. The smoke rises to the ceiling

Mitia

AND WHO WERE HIS COMRADES IN ARMS?

Lounine

A FORMER ARTILLERY COMMANDANT AND THE OTHER, A COMMON LAW PRISONER, LIKE HIM... THEY'D ALL COME THROUGH IT TOGETHER WHEN THEY WERE PICKED UP.

Mitia

AND THEN?

Lounine

THEN HIS SENTENCE IN THE DISCIPLINARY BATTALION CAME TO AN END. THEN, AS FAR AS THE LAW WAS CONCERNED, HE SHOULD'VE BEEN TRANSFERRED TO THE TROOPS...

Mitia

AND?

Lounine

AND HE REFUSED AGAIN WITH THE SAME EXCUSE...

Mitia

WHEN WAS THAT?

Lounine

IN 1941. OCTOBER...

82. EXT. A SMALL RAILWAY STATION NEAR THE FRONT – MORNING

There are tarpaulin covered lorries parked in the field next to the station.

A Red Army soldier in a muddy uniform, wearing a padded work jacket, dirty rumpled puttees over heavy shoes patched up with barbed wire, a second rate Russian fur hat with the earflaps folded back, is guarding the signal box. A puffing locomotive pulls into the station pulling three heated goods wagons used for transporting people. The train draws to a halt. The doors of the wagons open noisily. Some very young tall strapping fellows wearing brand new perfectly fitted uniforms and with brand new rifles jump from the train. Captain Lyssiakov, a stocky but well built man, jumps from the first wagon, his cap perched gallantly over his right eyebrow, his toothbrush moustache clipped to the millimetre.

Lyssiakov

COMPANY! FALL IN!

The ragged soldier watches the miracle unfold before his eyes, open-mouthed.

Caption: “OCTOBER 1941”

Coming out of his state of shock the soldier rushes into the signal box.

83. INT. THE SIGNAL BOX – MORNING

A lieutenant is snoring on a pile of rags, wearing a uniform that is as muddy as the soldier's. There are the remains of food and empty bottles on the table. The soldier falls on him and starts to wake him.

The soldier

LIEUTENANT! LIEUTENANT! WAKE UP!

The lieutenant grumbles something indistinct, pushing the soldier's hand away

The soldier

WAKE UP! SEE WHAT'S HAPPENING! HEY...!

The soldier runs to the window. He looks out.

84. EXT. A SMALL RAILWAY STATION CLOSE TO THE FRONT – MORNING

The strapping young fellows line up as straight as a die.

Lyssiakov
(*to the company*)
ATTENTION!

The soldiers are immobile, chins that have yet to see a razor held proudly high. Their eyes spit fire, their faces breath good health. The rifles are at their feet. Lyssiakov reviews the company. He stops on the left flank.

85. INT. THE SIGNAL BOX – MORNING

The ragged soldier is glued to the window. Behind him, the lieutenant gets up slowly. He puts his hands on either side of his head and rocks heavily from side to side.

The lieutenant
WHAT A SWINE YOU ARE! REALLY LOSKOUTKOV! YOU'VE MANAGED TO WAKE ME UP!

The soldier turns back to the lieutenant and stands to attention.

The lieutenant
WHAT? WHAT'S HAPPENING OVER THERE?

The soldier
(*whispering*)
SIR, OVER THERE... SOMETHING'S GOING ON!... THERE'S A FULL REGIMENT, LIEUTENANT!

The lieutenant has difficulty fixing his eyes on the soldier. He looks him up and down dubiously.

The lieutenant
YOU... HAVE YOU BEEN DRINKING OR SOMETHING?

The soldier
ABSOLUTELY NOT, SIR!

86. EXT. A SMALL RAILWAY STATION CLOSE TO THE FRONT – MORNING

Captain Lyssiakov walks along the perfect, almost magical, line of amazing young men. He stops.

Lyssiakov
PRESENT ARMS!

In two movements, their rifles are up on their shoulders

Lyssiakov

ON THE ORDER! INTO THE VEHICLES! BY SECTIONS! FORWARD! MARCH!

Keeping their line, the soldiers separate into sections, run to the vehicles and climb into the lorries. They slam the tailboards shut. Lyssiakov, his hands behind his back, marches to the front lorry and climbs into the cab. The vehicles start up one after another and leave the small station. At that moment, the lieutenant and the soldier come out of the signal box. The lieutenant looks around the deserted station. He turns to the soldier and stares at him.

The lieutenant

SO, WHAT IS IT?

The soldier

THERE WAS A REGIMENT, HERE, SIR! I SAW IT WITH MY OWN EYES! THEY WERE ALL VERY TALL, WITH UNIFORMS, YOU SHOULD'VE SEEN IT! IN NEXT TO NO TIME THEY HAD PRESENTED THEIR ARMS! AND THEIR COMMANDANT, WELL HE LOOKED LIKE A FILM ACTOR!

The lieutenant

(sighing heavily)

YOU'RE JUST AN IDIOT, LOSKOUTKOV! BACK TO YOUR POST!

The soldier

YES SIR!

The soldier goes towards the signal box at a brisk march. The lieutenant follows him with a look of utter dismay on his face.

87. INT. IN ONE OF THE LORRIES – MORNING

Bursts of laughter are coming from all sides. There is only one young man that isn't laughing, a Caucasian: Gouram Katsétadzé. He looks in front of him, concentrating. A tall red haired fellow, Sazonov, looks at Gouram.

Sazonov

KATSÉTADZÉ, 'VE YOU GOT LICE?

Katsétadzé

YOU'RE MAD! WHAT'RE YOU AFTER? WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FOR?

Sazonov

LICE, LITTLE GOURAM! AT THE FRONT, EVERYONE HAS THEM. IT'S ALMOST PART OF THE REGULATIONS.

Katsétadzé

SO LOOK FOR THEM ON YOURSELF!

This triggers more laughter. Sazonov puts his rifle to his shoulder.

Sazonov

AT THE NAZI INVADERS! FIRE AT WILL! BANG! BANG! BANG!

Katsétadzé

LOWER YOUR WEAPON YOU IDIOT! THERE'S PEOPLE HERE!

Sazonov

IT'S NOT LOADED!

Katsétadzé

LOWER IT! IT'S NOT A TRAINING WEAPON! IT'S REAL!

Sazonov

(lowering his rifle)

YOU BET! BUT WHY ARE YOU TAKING IT LIKE THAT MY LITTLE GOURAM?

Katsétadzé

BECAUSE WE'RE GOING TO THE FRONT!

Sazonov

YOU SCARED OR SOMETHING?

Katsétadzé

WHAT DID YOU SAY? WHO'S SCARED? ME? I'M GOING TO KILL THOSE BASTARDS WITH MY BARE HANDS! I'M GOING TO HAMMER THEM! I SWEAR ON MY MOTHER'S LIFE AND ON MY LITTLE BROTHER'S!

After these words, said with typical Caucasian rage and an unfeigned hatred, silence falls over the lorry. Another soldier fiddles with his key ring. His neighbour elbows him.

The neighbour

LIOKHA, WHY'VE YOU GOT SO MANY?

Liokha

IT'S THE KEYS TO OUR NEW APARTMENT. *(He shows them.)* THAT, THE BIG ONE, IS THE DOWNSTAIRS FRONT DOOR. IT'S A FRENCH LOCK. ME AND MY FATHER FITTED IT IN SPRING WHEN I WAS ON LEAVE... THAT'S THE ONE TO MY MOTHER'S ROOM. THAT'S TO THE DRAWERS OF MY DESK... *(He looks at the keys smiling.)* MINSK, 9/7, GORKI STREET, APARTMENT 17...

Hearing these words, the young men all fall silent, thinking, heads down.

Sazonov

THE GERMANS'VE BEEN IN MINSK A LONG TIME... MAYBE YOUR BUILDING ISN'T THERE ANYMORE...

Liokha raises his head sharply.

Liokha

NO! THAT'S NOT TRUE! I STILL HAVE THESE KEYS BECAUSE THE BUILDING IS INTACT! YOU ARE ONLY SAYING THAT, SAZONOV, BECAUSE YOU KNOW THEY BURNT YOUR VILLAGE DOWN! BUT I'M SURE MY HOUSE IS STILL THERE!

Liokha hides his keys in his pocket. Sazonov smiles nastily.

Sazonov

THAT REMAINS TO BE SEEN...

88. EXT. OUTPOST. NEAR A TRENCH— MORNING

Fog is covering everything. A formation of soldiers made up of men newly arrived in the disciplinary battalion are near a trench. The collars of their faded uniforms have been ripped off. Their weapons are an ill assorted mixture: some have rifles, others shovels and still others Molotov cocktails. The ones that have been in the battalion longest hold themselves a little apart. Kotov, Vania and Nikolaï. They are armed to the teeth: they have German machine guns, knives on their belts and full cartridge belts. Many are wearing German uniforms. Lieutenant Izioumov, unshaven, walks backwards and forwards in front of the formation of the "new boys". Behind him are the soldiers in the Red Army attack battalion.

Izioumov

YOU ARE SOLDIERS IN THE DISCIPLINARY BATTALION!

Nikolaï

(whispering)

"THE LEADER OF THE SOVIET PEOPLE, THE SUPREME COMMANDER OF THE ARMY, COMRADE STALIN..."

Izioumov

THE LEADER OF THE SOVIET PEOPLE, THE SUPREME COMMANDER OF THE ARMY, COMRADE STALIN, PROMPTED BY THE WISE PRINCIPLES OF SOCIALIST HUMANISM...

Nikolaï

(whispering)

"... HAS GIVEN YOU, COWARDS, DESERTERS, THIEVES..."

Izioumov

... HAS GIVEN YOU, COWARDS, DESERTERS, THIEVES WHO ARE BARELY GOOD ENOUGH TO BE SHOT, THE POSSIBILITY OF RIGHTING YOUR WRONGS WITH YOUR BLOOD IN THE VERY FIRST BATTLE AND OF BLENDING BACK INTO THE RANKS OF THE GLORIOUS RED ARMY.

Nikolaï

(whispering)

"A WOUND RECEIVED IN COMBAT, FACE TO FACE WITH THESE GERMAN BASTARDS ..."

Izioumov

A WOUND RECEIVED IN COMBAT, FACE TO FACE WITH THESE GERMAN BASTARDS MEANS THAT YOU ARE AWARE OF THE WRONG YOU HAVE COMMITTED AND THAT YOU DESERVE TO BE PARDONED. A WOUND IN THE BACK MEANS THAT YOU ARE STILL COWARDLY AND THAT YOU ONLY DESERVE A BULLET BETWEEN THE EYES!

One of the “new boys” armed with a shovel meets Izioumov’s gaze.

The “new boy”

(stepping forward)

LISTEN, LIEUTENANT! GIVE US PROPER WEAPONS! I’M A RED ARMY COMMANDANT!

Izioumov

WHAT? A COMMANDANT? COMMANDANTS COMMAND REGIMENTS! WHERE’S YOUR REGIMENT THEN? YOU WANT A WEAPON? YOU ARE SHIT, YOU’RE NOT A COMMANDANT! YOU’LL WIN YOUR WEAPON IN BATTLE! ANY OTHER QUESTIONS?

No-one says anything.

Izioumov

NO MORE QUESTIONS. EVERYONE INTO THE TRENCHES, YOU BASTARDS!

The men in the disciplinary battalion jump into the trenches and start to get organised. But they freeze, stupefied. A company of very elegant teenagers with Captain Lyssiakov at their head are marching at walking pace out of the trees.

Lyssiakov

COMPANY! HALT!

The company stops, the teenagers stay tense as if they are on parade. From the bottom of the trench, the men in the disciplinary battalion stare at them wide eyed.

Lyssiakov

AT EASE!

Lyssiakov notices Izioumov.

Lyssiakov

LIEUTENANT, COME HERE!

Izioumov puts a bad cigarette in his mouth and walks towards Lyssiakov. Lyssiakov watches Izioumov approach lazily, the cigarette hanging out of his mouth. The muscles of Lyssiakov’s face tense. Izioumov arrives in front of him and looks at the teenagers.

Izioumov

WHAT ALL THIS THEN?

Lyssiakov

LIEUTENANT! YOU ARE IN FRONT OF A SENIOR OFFICER! WHAT ABOUT YOUR MANNERS! YOU'RE LETTING YOURSELF GO! GO BACK TO WHERE YOU STARTED FROM AND COME BACK HERE PROPERLY!

Izioumov looks attentively but wearily at Lyssiakov. He spits out his cigarette at Lyssiakov's feet. He goes away and then returns to Lyssiakov at a march and salutes.

Izioumov

CAPTAIN! LIEUTENANT IZIOUMOV! SIR!

Lyssiakov

AT EASE!

Izioumov lowers his hand.

Lyssiakov

REPORT!

Izioumov

YES, SIR! I DON'T GIVE A FUCK ABOUT RANK! I HAVE JUST RECEIVED ORDERS FROM THE DIVISIONAL COMMANDER TO LEAD THE DEFENCE OF THIS TERRITORY! ALL UNITS HERE, INCLUDING THEIR OFFICERS, COME UNDER MY ORDERS! *(Relaxing, he pulls out another cigarette.)* AND WHO ARE YOU?

Lyssiakov

(choking with indignation, losing all control)

WHO? ME?!... I COMMAND THE KREMLIN OFFICER CADET COMPANY!... THE CREAM OF THE NATION!... SELECTED FOR THEIR HEIGHT: 1.83 M! *(He shouts.)* YOU HAVE IN FRONT OF YOU THE ELITE OF THE RED ARMY!

Izioumov

(raising his voice)

LISTEN CAREFULLY, MY FUCKING ELITE! 1.83 M! I REALLY DON'T NEED YOU HERE! IT'S NOT RED SQUARE HERE! THERE WON'T BE ANY PARADES! YOUR CHERUBS WILL HAVE TO DIG TWO METRE DEEP TRENCHES! 1.83 M! BETTER TO'VE SENT ME LILLIPUTIANS FROM THE CIRCUS! THE ELITE, YOU'RE JOKING! I NEED WILD ANIMALS HERE! MOLES TO DIG HOLES! SNAKES TO CRAWL! *(He nods in the direction of the trench.)* OR ONES LIKE THEM WHO'VE GOT NOTHING TO LOSE! AND THAT WE COULDN'T CARE LESS ABOUT LOSING! ANYWAY, DID YOU KNOW THERE'S A WAR GOING ON HERE? DIDN'T THEY EXPLAIN THAT TO YOU AT THE KREMLIN?!

Lyssiakov

YOU DON'T FRIGHTEN ME, LIEUTENANT! WATCH US DURING THE ATTACK!

Izioumov

WHAT ATTACK, CAPTAIN?! PRAY THAT YOUR ELITE WON'T HAVE TO LEAVE THE TRENCH AND THAT THEY DON'T SHIT THEMSELVES WHEN THE GERMANS LAND ON US!

Lyssiakov's face swells with anger.

Lyssiakov

IT'LL BE DIFFERENT, LIEUTENANT, AFTER I'VE CONTACTED THE DIVISIONAL COMMANDER! AND NOW, SHOW US OUR PLACE IN THE DEFENCES!

Izioumov nods in direction of the trench where the men in the disciplinary battalion have not lost a word of the argument between the two officers.

Izioumov

YOUR PLACE IS OVER THERE...

Lyssiakov

KREMLIN OFFICER CADETS WITH COMMON LAW PRISONERS? I'LL REMEMBER THAT!

Izioumov goes towards the shelter.

Lyssiakov

(turning to the officer cadets)

COMPANY! GET INTO A DEFENCE POSITION IN THE TRENCH!

Suddenly there is a whistling above the heads of the officer cadets. Something explodes in the air with a din. Lyssiakov and the officer cadets throw themselves on the ground. Silence returns. Lyssiakov lifts his head. The men of the disciplinary battalion look at them imperturbably from the trench. Izioumov is right next to them, cigarette hanging from his lips, perfectly calm.

Izioumov

DON'T CATCH COLD, CAPTAIN, THE GROUND'S NOT HEATED...

Izioumov turns and walks to the shelter. Lyssiakov jumps to his feet and dusts himself off amid a clanking of weapons. The company follows his example. Lyssiakov jumps into the trench first, followed by the entire company. Officer cadet Sazonov, the red haired adolescent seen in the lorry, finds himself alongside Kotov.

Sazonov

WHAT WAS THAT? A SHELL?

Kotov

NO. THEY'RE PUTTING OUT MARKERS. TO ADJUST THEIR FIRING DISTANCE. THEY'RE TESTING OUR DEFENCES. THERE'S NO DANGER.

Sazonov

YOU'RE A SOLDIER, AREN'T YOU?

Kotov says nothing.

Sazonov

I SEE... HAVE YOU ALREADY FOUGHT?

Kotov nods.

Kotov

YES.

Sazonov

WHERE?

Kotov

HERE AND IN THREE WARS... OTHER WARS...

Sazonov

WHAT'S THE DISCIPLINARY BATTALION FOR?

Kotov

(making a sign in the direction of the "new boys" in his battalion)

THINK ABOUT IT: WHO DO YOU GIVE OPERATIONS TO WITH SHOVELS AGAINST TANKS?

Sazonov

I SEE... WHAT WAS YOUR RANK?

Kotov

I WAS A GENERAL...

Sazonov

GENERAL? COME ON, STOP IT...

Kotov

YES, GENERAL... OF THE ENGLISH, JAPANESE AND GERMAN REGIMENTS.

The officer cadet looks at Kotov, taken aback.

Sazonov

I'VE SEEN YOU SOMEWHERE BEFORE...

Kotov

DO YOU LIKE SWEETS, SOLDIER?

Sazonov

YES, OF COURSE...

Kotov

MAYBE IT WAS ON A BOX OF SWEETS?

The officer cadet grumbles. Then he bursts out laughing. Kotov smiles, uncovering his crowns, which sparkle.

89. INT. THE SHELTER – MORNING

Lieutenant Izioumov blows into the field telephone. Izioumov's aide de camp, Iourka Goloubev, struggles with the door he is trying to lift off its hinges.

Izioumov

THE 7TH! THE 7TH! BLOODY HELL!

Izioumov bangs the telephone down. Goloubev gets the door off and puts it on his back.

Izioumov

GOLOUBEV, WHAT ON EARTH ARE YOU DOING?

Goloubev

WHAT CAPTAIN? IT CAN BE PUT BACK IN TWO SECONDS BUT IT WILL GET LOST EVEN QUICKER. IF WE HAVE TO RUN, I WON'T HAVE TIME TO UNHOOK IT...

Izioumov

RUN WHERE?

Goloubev

(adjusting the door on his back attaching it with straps)

DOESN'T MATTER, FORWARD, BACK...I WON'T FIND ANY MORE DOORS LIKE THIS. THE GERMANS MADE IT. LOOK HOW MANY HOLES THERE ARE AND NOT ONE HAS GONE RIGHT THROUGH. IT'S THE BEST DOOR IN THE DIVISION.

Izioumov makes a weary gesture, unhooks the phone and turns the handle.

Izioumov

THE 7TH! THE 7TH!

Goloubev, the door on his back, leaves in the direction of the trench.

90. EXT. THE TRENCH – MORNING

The officer cadets are grouped together, trying not to mix with the men in the disciplinary battalion. Kotov, Vania and Nikolaï are sitting near them. A sudden agitation takes hold of the trench. Kotov and the others rush to the parapet. In the distance, there is movement in the fog, Izioumov picks up his binoculars. Lyssiakov picks up his.

Izioumov

PREPARE FOR BATTLE!

Lyssiakov

PREPARE FOR BATTLE!

Shouts

(one after the other)

PREPARE FOR BATTLE!

The wait is tense. The movements become clearer in the fog: vague shadows crawl towards the trench. Officer cadet Sazonov leaps on his gun. More because of the tension than by choice, Sazonov's finger gets cramp and presses the trigger. The single shot rings out alone in the fog.

Izioumov

(shouting)

STOP! WHO FIRED?

Izioumov runs along the trench and stops near Sazonov.

Izioumov

YOU... ELITE CRAP! WHO GAVE YOU THE ORDER TO FIRE?

Sazonov stiffens in front of the lieutenant.

Sazonov

IT'S MY FAULT, LIEUTENANT!

Izioumov

YOUR FAULT? THE NEXT TIME I'LL HAVE YOUR HEAD OFF!

Izioumov turns away from Sazonov and goes back up the trench. Sazonov takes up his position behind the parapet once more and glances across to Kotov. He pricks up his ears. We hear the long painful mooing of a dying cow.

Nikolaï

BRAVO, YOUNG MAN! YOU'VE HIT A COW! AND FIRST TIME! CONGRATULATIONS!

Kotov

(tapping Sazonov's shoulder)

DON'T TAKE ANY NOTICE. IT HAPPENS TO EVERYONE...

A long squeal that gets louder cuts through the silence. Sazonov turns his head.

Sazonov

EH? WHAT?

Kotov

MINES! THAT'S MORE DANGEROUS!

The searing squeal crosses the trench and there are little explosions just behind. Another squeal can be heard followed by other small explosions that are closer to the trench.

Kotov

1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8...

Squealing, explosions.

Kotov

NO, 7.5 SECONDS... IF WE RUSH STRAIGHT FORWARD, WE SHOULD HAVE TIME!

Sazonov

TIME FOR WHAT? UNDER FIRE?!

Kotov

IT'S POSSIBLE! OTHERWISE, WE'LL ALL STAY THERE! THE SALVOES MUST BE ABOUT FIFTEEN METRES WIDE. WE GO OVER THE TOP AND THEN WE COME BACK.

The next salvo explodes right next to the trench. Kotov sees Izioumov run to Lyssiakov and explain something to him. Kotov and all the men in his battalion are watching them.

Lyssiakov

(he shouts)

WHAT?! LEAVE THE TRENCH?! ABANDON THE DEFENCES?! IT'S TREASON!

Izioumov

WELL THEN, YOU'RE GOING TO DIE HERE A HERO WITH ALL YOUR ELITE, YOU DAMN FOOL! AND AS FOR TREASON, I'VE GOT A QUESTION FOR YOU: IF YOU LOSE YOUR ELITE HERE UNDER FIRE WHAT WILL THAT BE CALLED? DIDN'T THEY EXPLAIN THAT TO YOU AT THE KREMLIN?

Lyssiakov goes bright red, but says nothing. He makes a sign with his hand as if to say "Do what you want."

Izioumov

ON MY COMMAND! AFTER THE NEXT SALVO, WE RUN STRAIGHT FORWARD FOR THIRTY METRES TOWARDS THE EXPLOSIONS! GET READY!

Kotov

THE LIEUTENANT'S GOOD! HE KNOWS WHAT WAR'S ABOUT!

The salvo lands just on the edge of the trench.

Izioumov

LET'S GO!

The men jump out of the trench. They run as fast as possible. The squealing of the flying explosions catches them. They throw themselves to the ground. The mines fall right into the trench.

Izioumov

AFTER THE NEXT SALVO, WE GO BACK TO THE TRENCH! GET READY!

Officer cadets and men in the disciplinary battalion are lying alongside Kotov.

Kotov

(he shouts)

COUNT! AND COUNT OUT LOUD! UP TO 7! AND LIE DOWN!

The salvo explodes. They run back in the other direction.

Officer cadets

(all together)

1, 2, 3, 4...

The men in the disciplinary battalion

(all together)

5, 6, 7!

Kotov

(he shouts)

ON YOUR BELLIES!

The all throw themselves flat on their stomachs in the trench. Kotov finds himself next to Captain Lyssiakov.

Kotov

WISE DECISION, SIR!

Lyssiakov turns to Kotov without a word.

Shouts

TANKS! TANKS!

Kotov looks towards the front. He hears the rumbling of engines, but can't see them.

Kotov

WHERE?!

Vania

BEHIND!

Kotov turns straight round. The tanks are in the rear.

Officer cadets

THEY'RE OURS! OURS! HURRAH!

Lyssiakov

OURS!

Several flashes rip through the fog. Shells explode next to the trench. Men fall into the bottom of the trench, their blood spurting all around.

Kotov

(shaking Lyssiakov by the shoulder)

THE GRENADES! THE GRENADES!

Lyssiakov

(not hearing Kotov)

WHY ARE THE GERMANS THERE?! WHERE'S THE FRONT LINE?! WHAT'S GOING ON IN THIS WAR?!

Sazonov runs towards Lyssiakov. He has no cap, his hair is all over the place, his trembling lips and eyes full of tears betray his terror.

Sazonov

CAPTAIN! CAPTAIN! KOUMANKO, PLECHAK AND LITTLE MICHA ARE ALREADY DEAD! DO YOU UNDERSTAND? DEAD!

Lyssiakov

(his eyes bulging with fear)

BACK TO YOUR POSITION, SAZONOV! FORWARD MARCH!

Sazonov, stiffening in front of Lyssiakov, makes an 180 degree turn with the same precision as if he were on parade. He runs along the trench; the second salvo has just hit right in the middle of a group of officer cadets. Uncoordinated shots come from all sides in the trench. The bullets ricochet off the tanks that are advancing at top speed. Panic spreads through the trench. Some climb on to the parapet. They are immediately mown down by tank machine gun fire and by bursts of German infantry submachine gunfire, close behind the tanks. Gouram Katsétadzé looks in front of him, his eyes bulging. Howling like a wild animal, he jumps out of the trench and runs in the direction of the advancing Germans. They don't touch him. A tank in his way even swerves to avoid him. Gouram stops, taken aback. The tank behind brakes near him for a moment. The trap of the gun turret opens. A gloved hand throws something at Gouram's feet. Gouram falls on the bar of chocolate, its paper decorated with a portrait of Hitler, that had just been thrown to him. A burst of submachine gun fire cuts down Gouram from above. The tanks and German infantry pass right next to Gouram who is dying. The trench resists with its last bit of strength. Kotov runs to the Maxim gun, his group is spread out next to it. He grabs the gun - a long burst of fire mows down the Germans. Right alongside, Officer Cadet Sazonov digs at the ground and screaming desperately, tries to hide. Another officer cadet presses his hand against his neck from where a stream of blood is spurting.

The officer cadet

I'M GOING TO DIE! DO YOU HEAR! I'M GOING TO DIE!

The tanks start flattening the trench. Terrible howling can be heard. The German infantry goes into the trench. Hand to hand fighting starts. The Maxim gun cartridge is soon empty. Kotov lets go of the submachine gun, grabs a shovel and breaks the neck of a German that throws himself on him. The German falls at his feet. Captain Lyssiakov, collapsing under the bodies of his comrades, puts his hands out to Nikolai.

Lyssiakov

HELP ME! PLEASE, HELP ME OUT OF HERE!

The lieutenant grabs the captain's arms. He is very light: in fact the whole of the bottom half of his body is missing.

Lyssiakov

THANK YOU! THANK YOU COMRADE! THEY'D'VE SWALLOWED ME UP! I'D NEVER HAVE GOT OUT ON MY OWN!

The Germans jump into the trench. Vania tries to pull his bayonet out of the guts of a German soldier, who bent double, falls on his knees clinging on to barrel of the rifle.

Vania

LET GO! LET GO! GIVE IT ME BACK, D'YOU HEAR! BASTARD!

The German infantry advance along the trench where towards Lieutenant Izioumov. One of them hits Izioumov on the head. They grab him and take him out of the trench.

Izioumov

FRIENDS! HELP!

Kotov grabs the legs of a German machine gunner, tears the machine gun out of his hands and hits him violently with the butt. He directs the barrel of the machine gun towards the Germans dragging Izioumov, who is stubbornly resisting.

Izioumov

FIRE, SOLDIER! FIRE!

Kotov presses the trigger. The burst of machine gun fire mows down the Germans and Izioumov. Tanks flatten the trench engulfing the bodies with earth.

Kotov

GRENADE! GIVE ME A GRENADE!

The tank approaches Kotov. Fallen on his back, he sees the enormous caterpillar tracks coming towards him. Strips of human flesh and heavy military coat fall from it. The caterpillar engulfs Kotov with earth. A key ring on a chain hangs from the caterpillar tracks. They touch Kotov's face. Lumps of earth fall on his face.

Kotov

(he shouts)

NADIA! NADIA!

The rattle of the caterpillar tracks smother his screams. Kotov is lying with his mouth wide open deformed by the scream. Lumps of earth fall on Kotov, covering his eyes and obstructing his mouth.

Something moves under the earth covering the trench. Suddenly a hand appears, then a second. Kotov extracts himself from the earth suffocating. We hear nothing. Kotov slowly pulls himself out of the partially destroyed trench. It is surrounded by pools of blood, bodies and unrecognisable pieces of human bodies. A hand is lying on its own. The watch on the wrist continues to mark out the seconds. Kotov starts listening to the loud ticking of hundreds of watches. It comes from the wrists of dead Germans and Russians, either buried or in the

open. Kotov puts his hands over his ears. When he takes his hands away, the terrible ticking has stopped.

A voice
HELP!

Kotov turns in the direction of the voice. Iourka Goloubev is stuck under a piece of tank; the tank gun, still welded to it, is intact. The door attached to his back has saved him. Kotov runs to him.

Goloubev
(to Kotov)
LISTEN, UNDO THE VICE A SMIDGIN, OK? I CAN'T BREATHE ...

Kotov goes under the tank gun, blocks it on his shoulder and tries to lift it. Iourka crawls and extracts himself from under the gun turret. The door, attached to his back, gets caught in the armour plating and stops him moving. The earth opens up under him sucking him with it.

Iourka
I CAN'T BECAUSE OF THIS FUCKING DOOR!

Kotov notices a German bayonet in front of him.

Kotov
(in a groan)
A BAYONET!

Kotov pushes the bayonet in the direction of Iourka's outstretched hand with his foot. The bayonet slowly falls into the hole left by the shell. Iourka grabs the bayonet, cuts the straps and leaps out with a bound. Kotov lets the gun down again. As it falls, the gun turret breaks the door. Iourka looks at the gun turret, with the debris of the door underneath it and shakes his head in wonder.

Iourka
AH WELL! *(He looks at Kotov.)* THANKS MATE!

Kotov
(Stretching his hand out to Iourka to help him up)
THANK YOUR DOOR...

Iourka and Kotov walk alongside the trench. Nikolaï, deaf, is on all fours shaking his head. Kotov and Iourka take him under the arms and lift him up.

Iourka
ALRIGHT?

Nikolaï
I DON'T KNOW...

Iourka

YES! YES!

All three of them now move forward. Lieutenant Izioumov is sitting, collapsed against the tracks of the damaged tank. German bodies are strewn over the ground near him. Vania is trying to bandage the lieutenant's injured body. Kotov, Iourka and Nikolaï go up to them.

Izioumov

(gently)

YOU'RE ALIVE, THEN YOU LOT?

Kotov

(looking at Izioumov)

EH?

Izioumov makes a weary gesture with his hand

Vania

HE'S WOUNDED ON HIS CHEST AND THIGH...

Izioumov

WHERE'S THE OTHER ONE, THE CAPTAIN OF THE ELITE?...

Nikolaï

THE KREMLIN CAPTAIN'S DEAD ... THERE WAS ONLY HALF OF HIM LEFT...

Izioumov

YES, HALF. THE OTHER HALF WAS TORN OFF ...

Izioumov shakes his head exhausted.

Izioumov

SON OF A BITCH! 240 KIDS! 1.83 M!... THE ELITE! MOWED DOWN IN ONE GO. CANNON FODDER!... WHAT ON EARTH MADE THEM SEND THEM HERE?!... AND THE TANKS! WHERE ARE OUR TANKS? AND WHERE HAVE OUR FAMOUS RUSSIAN EAGLES GOT TO, EH?.... OUR FUCKING AVIATION HEROES?! WHERE ARE THEIR PLANES? PARADING OVER RED SQUARE?! WITH THE SKY ALL TO THEMSELVES! I KNOW, I'VE SEEN THEM!... *(He spits blood, wipes his bloody lips with the back of his hand and looks at the blood in amazement.)* THE BASTARDS!... AND THE ARTILLERY, STALIN GAVE ORDERS! WHERE ARE THEIR GUNS?!... THERE'S JUST CANNON FODDER AND THAT WON'T STOP THE GUNS! OH NO!... THAT'S HOW IT GOES, COMRADE STALIN!... 1.83 M... 240 KIDS! IN ALL, MORE THAN 500 MEN CRUSHED BY TANKS! IN QUARTER OF AN HOUR! WHAT FOR, FOR CHRISSAKES?! *(He starts coughing again; he doesn't wipe his mouth; blood and saliva dry on his chin.)* UP THERE... *(The captain lifts his eyes to the sky.)* UP THERE, IN THE KREMLIN IS THERE ANYONE THAT KNOWS HOW TO BEAT THE GERMANS? HOW TO GIVE THEM A GOOD HIDING?

Iourka

STALIN KNOWS!

Izioumov

WHO'S THE STUPID BASTARD THAT TOLD YOU THAT, SOLDIER?

Iourka

IT...YOU DID SIR...

Izioumov falls silent, his head dropped on his chest. He raises his eyes to the men. He looks weary.

Izioumov

GIVE ME SOMETHING TO DRINK, WARRIORS...

Kotov takes a flask that is hanging off the belt of a dead German. It's empty.

Vania

WAIT! HOLD ON OLD MATE!

Kotov, Vania, Iourka and Nikolai spread out looking for water. Kotov finds a full flask on the body of a dead officer cadet; he starts unhooking it. At the same time comes the dry crack of a gun shot. Kotov turns quickly. Izioumov is sitting near the tank, his head lying his shoulder, the butt of a pistol in his right hand. Blood is flowing from his temple. Suddenly a squeal cuts through the air. German aircraft appear in the low clouds. With their sirens wailing, the aircraft get closer. From the sky fall not bullets or bombs but a shower of small aluminium spoons. The planes disappear over the horizon. Kotov picks up a spoon. It has a hole in the centre. Around it is written "Training". Along the handle is written: "Ivan, go home, I'll be back soon." Kotov easily crushes the spoon in his hand.

Kotov

THE BASTARDS! GO ON! SHOW OFF, MAKE THE MOST OF OUR STUPIDITY!

Kotov sits on the ground and starts rocking from side to side.

92. INT. THE VILLAGE'S SOVIET BUILDING. LOUNINE'S OFFICE – DAY

Lounine is fiddling with a pencil. Mitia watches him.

Lounine

IT WAS REAL CHAOS THERE... IT WAS IN THE VERY FIRST DAYS OF THE WAR...

Caption: "MAY 1943. LIBERATED TERRITORIES. THE HQ OF THE SPECIAL INFILTRATION DETACHMENT "DEATH TO SPIES""

Lounine

NOBODY REALLY UNDERSTOOD QUITE WHAT HAPPENED. ON ONE SIDE THERE WAS THE DISCIPLINARY BATTALION AND THE OFFICER CADET BATTALION FROM THE KREMLIN AND ON THE OTHER SIDE THE GERMANS WHO WERE MOVING THE FRONT...

Mitia

CAPTAIN, IT'S OLD HISTORY ALL THAT. IT DOESN'T INTEREST ME. WHAT INTERESTS ME IS WHAT HAPPENED TO KOTOV.

Lounine

YES, YES. EXCUSE ME. SO ALL FOUR OF THEM STAYED. MIRACULOUSLY THEY MANAGED TO GET OUT OF IT ALIVE. I HAVE THE REPORTS OF THE SPECIAL INFILTRATION DETACHMENT INTERROGATORS, ONCE THEY WERE ABLE TO REJOIN OUR TROOPS. NOTHING SPECIAL, REALLY. IT WAS A LIGHTWEIGHT INTERROGATION. THEY WERE FROM THE DISCIPLINARY BATTALION SO THEY HAD TO SPEND A WEEK UNDER ARREST BEFORE A NEW DISCIPLINARY BATTALION COULD BE FORMED... HE SPENT THE WAR IN THIS BATTALION UNTIL SPRING OF 42... NOTHING IN PARTICULAR HAPPENED DURING THAT PERIOD...

Mitia

EXCEPT...? I CAN SEE YOU'VE GOT SOME INFORMATION.

Lounine

INDEED, YOU'RE RIGHT. IN SUMMER 1941, THROUGH HIS COMMON LAW FRIENDS, HE TRIED TO FIND OUT WHAT HAD BECOME OF HIS DAUGHTER. *(He looks attentively at Mitia.)* DID YOU KNOW HE HAD A DAUGHTER?

Mitia

HIS FAMILY SITUATION IS OF NO INTEREST TO ME.

Lounine

IT WAS USEFUL INFORMATION. SOMEONE HAD DENOUNCED HER. I DIDN'T STAND IN HIS WAY.

Mitia

WHY?

Lounine

HE'S A COMMON LAW PRISONER, NOTHING TO STOP HIM CORRESPONDING. I DID WONDER WHY HE ASKED THE COMMON LAW PRISONERS AND NOT ME. HE WAS COMPLETELY WITHIN HIS RIGHTS TO MAKE AN OFFICIAL APPLICATION AND RECEIVE AN OFFICIAL RESPONSE.

Mitia

WHAT RESPONSE?

Lounine

THE ONE THE COMMON LAW PRISONERS GAVE HIM: THAT HIS DAUGHTER WAS REPORTED MISSING IN AUGUST 41...

93. EXT. A VILLAGE – DAY

The village seems to be asleep under the burning rays of the August sun. In the orchards, the apple trees are breaking under the weight of the fruit. The houses seem hazy in the midday heat.

Caption: “27 AUGUST 1941”

All other sounds are covered by the deafening noise of the crickets, the buzzing of millions of insects and the songs of thousands of birds. A dusty road splits the village in half. On the edge, a little away from the outskirts of the village, two noisy doors on an enormous barn seem to lead into a black hole. The road remains deserted for a moment. Suddenly a cart full of gypsies comes out of nowhere and rolls into the village. An enormous gypsy with a black beard is whipping a sweating horse without pity. Just avoiding overturning the cart, the gypsy turns into a little alley behind the well. A moment later, a German motorised unit made up of combat cars, small tanks and motorbikes comes in to the village raising clouds of dust. The Germans drive through the village without stopping. Some cyclists are following them. They try to keep their formation but the thick dust prevents them: bikes zigzag, trying to stay on course despite the skidding caused by the sand. Three cyclists come to a halt by the well. One of them shouts something to the other cyclists who don't stop. The second German undoes the rope on the well and the bucket falls rapidly. The third moves away a little, unbuttons his flies and urinates against a fence. His attention is caught by something in the alley and he goes off. The second German is already lifting his bucket, turning the handle. The first German takes the flasks off the bikes, puts them on the bench in front of the well that the dampness has turned green and unscrew the tops. The third German comes back from the alleyway pulling the horse and cart. He is followed by the gypsy family, who are crying in despair and waving their arms around. An old woman in a long skirt and with a multicoloured scarf on her head grabs one side of the cart, trying to stop it. Two young women join in the old woman's cries. Hanging on to the skirts of one them is a little dirty 5 year old girl, who is crying. The gypsy with the black beard and two youngsters that have to be his sons show the third German papers and documents. The third German pulls the horse to the well. The gypsy with the black beard now offers his papers to the three Germans. The women fall silent, more hopeful as they watch them. The third German pushes the gypsy with the black beard away. The women start howling again and grab the sleeves of the Germans, who escape from their grip. The gypsy with the black beard grabs two guitars from the cart. He holds them out to his sons. They start playing. During this time, the oldest gypsy delicately picks up a worn case, from which he takes a violin and joins in with the guitarists. The women grab their rattles from the cart and start singing, spinning their skirts. Suddenly there is a long burst of machine gun fire. The gypsies, men and women, fall, mown down in the dust. A little smoke comes out of the end of the third German's machine gun. He changes the cartridge. The little five year old girl, the only one to escape, her eyes bulging with terror, continues to dance in front of the Germans.

The little girl

“HE IS HANDSOME IN HIS RED SHIRT...”

The Germans watch the little girl in silence. Without stopping dancing, she stops singing. She is hypnotised by the barrel of the machine gun.

The little girl

DON'T KILL ME PLEASE. I'LL CARRY ON SINGING AND DANCING...

The little girl spins, lifting her shawl over her head and blowing away a lock of hair that has fallen on her forehead. The third German passes his tongue over his lips dry and wipes his forehead. The little girl sings quietly.

The little girl

(singing "Katioucha")

"THE APPLES AND PEAR TREES ARE IN BLOSSOM...

THE RIVER DISAPPEARS IN THE MIST.

KATIOUCHA ARRIVES ON THE BANK,

ON THE STEEP BANK..."

The second German

(to the third)

WHY DID YOU DO THAT?

The first German looks at the little girl without a word. The third German shakes his head, wipes his forehead again, spreading the dirt over his face, puts his machine gun back over his shoulder and looks at his two companions unpleasantly.

The third German

WHAT THE MATTER WITH YOU, LOOKING AT ME LIKE THAT?! HEY, I WAS JUST CLEANING UP! THEY'RE GYPSIES!

The second German

ARE YOU SS?

Third German

GET LOST!

The third German goes in the alley behind the well.

94. EXT. THE VILLAGE. THE COURTYARD OF A HOUSE IN THE ALLEY – DAY

The third German goes up to a little garden gate, kicks at it and goes in. He picks an apple, wipes it with a dirty handkerchief, noisily bites into it and starts chewing. He closes his eyes and sighs loudly. He opens his eyes and suddenly notices Nadia, a few paces away from him, as she is getting up from among the nettles and slowly moving away from him. A nearly empty bag, attached by a strap, bangs on her back. She's wearing heavy military shoes, a dark skirt in rough fabric and a old patched blouse. Wide-eyed with fear, Nadia looks at the German; a grimace resembling a smile appears on his lips. Nadia's back hits the gate: she opens it and goes through into the alley. The German watches her, bites into the apple and unhurriedly follows Nadia.

95. EXT. THE VILLAGE. THE ALLEY – DAY

Nadia, her legs wobbling, runs to the house next door, whose windows overlook the alley. She knocks on the glass pane: the curtains are closed.

Nadia

OPEN THE DOOR, PLEASE! FOR THE LOVE OF GOD, LET ME IN!

The curtain barely moves behind the pane. The German goes through the gate behind Nadia, still chewing and getting closer to her. She dashes towards the next house and bangs on the door.

Nadia

OPEN UP! PLEASE LET ME IN!

No-one answers the door. The German slowly approaches, throws the core away and brushes off the front of his tunic. The first and second Germans appear behind him at the bottom of the alley: they watch what is going on. Nadia rushes to the next house. She bangs with all her might on the windows and doors. Nothing happens. The third German slowly continues on his way. The second German disappears from the field at the bottom of the alley and reappears holding his bike.

The second German

(getting on his bike)

GO TO THE DEVIL! I'M OFF!

The second German goes off ringing his bell. Nadia looks around her, powerless, and sees on a knoll the barn with its doors wide open. She rushes towards it. The German follows her.

96. EXT. THE VILLAGE. NEAR THE WELL – DAY

The first German goes back to the well. He fills the flasks that are on the bench from the bucket, carefully screws the tops on again and hooks the flasks back on to the bikes. The little girl is still mechanically dancing, singing quietly. The second German is already at the bottom of the road zigzagging along. The first German looks at the barn on the knoll. He sees the third German arrive and disappear into the black hole. The first German climbs on his bike, grabs the handles of the second bike and turns in the alley.

97. EXT. THE VILLAGE. NEAR THE BARN – DAY

The first German arrives in front of the barn doors and gets off his bike. He gently leans the two bikes against the barn, being careful not to upset the water, and goes inside. Nothing can be heard except the buzzing of flies, the chirring of crickets and the lazy barking of a young dog.

98. INT. THE VILLAGE. THE BARN – DAY

The flies are buzzing. It is very dark: only dust shines in the rays of light that filter through the gaps in the roof and walls of the barn. The third German is crucified against a wall with a pitchfork through his throat. The first German is a little further on lying in the hay, an axe in his head. Nadia, as if petrified, stands in the doorway, leans against the door post and looks in horror at the bodies of the two Germans. A young woman is standing right in the middle of the barn – it is Katia. Her hands are covered in blood and are trembling a little. Katia's dress is torn and covered in blood stains. The woman turns to Nadia. .

Katia

WHO ARE YOU?

Nadia

A lump in her throat

I... MY NAME IS NADIA KOTOVA. WHAT ABOUT YOU?

Katia

KATIA. ARE YOU FROM HERE?

Nadia

No. I'M GOING TO THE FRONT.

Katia

I LIVE IN TOWN AND I CAME TO SEE MY AUNT IN THE NEXT VILLAGE. THEY KILLED HER WHEN SHE REFUSED TO GIVE THEM HER COW. TALK ABOUT A VISIT... YOU DIDN'T MISS HIM!

Katia nods towards the German with his head split open.

Nadia

(terrified)

ME?... BUT IT WASN'T ME!

Katia

WHO WAS IT THEN? PUSHKIN, IS THAT IT?

Nadia shakes her head.

Katia

DON'T YOU REMEMBER?

Nadia

IT WASN'T ME... I COULD NEVER HAVE...

Katia

I COULD... NOW, I CAN DO ANYTHING TO THOSE BASTARDS.

We hear the second German outside, shouting.

The second German

KLAUS! JURGEN! LET'S GO! THE WARRANT OFFICER IS LOOKING FOR US! IT'S
NEARLY TIME TO EAT!

The second German goes into the barn. Blinded by the sunlight, he peers into the dark to let his eyes acclimatise.

The second German

HEY! JURGEN! I WAS WRONG! LET'S NOT FALL OUT OVER THE GYPPOS! KLAUS? *(He notices the third German pinned to the wall.)* SHIT! SHIT! *(He recognises the first German.)* SHIT!

Trembling, the second German takes his machine gun, presses the trigger and sprays the whole barn as he backs off towards the door. The bullets go through the walls and riddle the hay. When his second magazine is empty, he leaves the barn at a run.

99. EXT. THE VILLAGE. NEAR THE BARN – DAY

The second German jumps on his bike and stuffs his whistle in his mouth. Whistling with all his strength, he hurtles down the hill at top speed.

100. INT. THE VILLAGE. THE BARN – DAY

Nadia and Katia jump down into the hay from the loft of the barn and carefully move towards the door. They look outside and then leave.

101. EXT. THE VILLAGE. NEAR THE BARN – DAY

Nadia and Katia, bent over, run along the side of the barn in the high grass and head straight for the edge of the forest.

102. EXT. THE VILLAGE – DAY

Crickets are chirring, insects are buzzing, birds are singing. A cloud of dust is rising from the place where the German column disappeared initially. The same motorised column is coming back, in a line that is just as straight as when they were headed in the other direction. The soldiers jump out of the combat cars and sidecars; they scatter into the courtyards, firing on dogs, breaking down doors, breaking windows with their rifle butts and forcing the women, old folk and children out.

103. EXT. THE VILLAGE. THE EDGE OF THE FOREST ON THE KNOLL BEHIND THE BARN– DAY

Lying in the grass high at the edge of the forest ,Nadia and Katia watch what is happening.

Nadia

HOW MANY ARE THERE OF THEM?!

Katia

WHO, THE GERMANS?

Nadia

NO, THE VILLAGERS. YOU WOULD’VE THOUGHT THERE WASN’T ANYONE THERE.

The Germans push the villagers into the barn. From where Nadia and Katia are, they can hardly hear the hubbub and sobs rising from the crowd.

Nadia

WHY ARE THEY PUSHING THEM INTO THE BARN?

Katia

THEY WANT TO KNOW WHO KILLED THE JERRIES.

Nadia

(whispering)

WHAT ARE THEY GOING TO DO TO THEM?

Katia

(with an little unpleasant smile)

NOTHING NICE IN MY OPINION.

Nadia

BUT, WE’VE GOT TO DO SOMETHING!

Katia

AND WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Nadia

BUT IT ISN’T THEIR FAULT. THEY DIDN’T KILL THE GERMANS.

Katia

WHO THEN?... YOU?

Nadia

N-N-NO...

Katia
ME THEN?

Nadia looks Katia in the eyes without a word. Katia turns away.

Katia
SHUT UP THEN.

Nadia falls silent. She looks at the old women moaning and the children crying. Tears spring into her eyes. The soldiers start pushing the people into the barn. A howl of pain comes out of the crowd. A woman and her children move away from the group. Machine gun fire catches her. The woman pushes her children away. They run towards the high grass, but in their turn are mown down by a burst of machine gun fire.

104. EXT. THE VILLAGE. THE EDGE OF THE FOREST ON THE KNOLL BEHIND THE BARN- DAY

Nadia is weeping.

Nadia
(through her tears)
THEY'RE GOING TO KILL THEM ALL!

Katia
LISTEN TO ME CAREFULLY, YOU PERFECT LITTLE GIRL! WHAT DO YOU EXPECT? SHOULD I HAND MYSELF OVER? DO YOU WANT THEM TO SHOOT ME BECAUSE I SAVED YOU? AT LEAST, I'VE DONE TWO JERRIES IN! THEM THERE, WHAT HAVE THEY DONE? ME, THREE OF THEM HAD ME, DO YOU HEAR! THREE! THEY CAUGHT ME AND RAPED ME, UNDER THEIR VERY EYES! THEY ALL HID LIKE RATS. WHEN YOU WERE BANGING ON THEIR DOORS, DID THEY LET YOU IN? WHEN YOU WERE SCREAMING DID THEY OPEN THEIR DOORS? DID THEY HELP YOU?

Nadia looks at Katia and doesn't say anything.

Katia
WHAT? WHAT'S THE MATTER, WHY ARE YOU LOOKING AT ME LIKE THAT? YOU FEEL SORRY FOR THEM? THEY'RE TAKING THE RAP FOR NOTHING, IS THAT IT? THEY'RE TAKING THE RAP BECAUSE OF ME? WELL THEN WATCH CAREFULLY!

Katia gets up with a determined air and goes towards the barn. Nadia jumps to her feet and runs after her. She grabs her from behind and pulls her down.

Katia
LET ME GO! LET ME GO! THAT'S WHAT YOU WANT! IMBECILE! YOU POOR FOOL!

Nadia lets Katia go. They are both crying. Through her tears, Nadia sees the Germans securely closing the big doors behind the last of the villagers before sloshing petrol all over

the barn walls. The villagers bang on the walls. Heart-rendering screams escape from the barn. The Germans set the four corners alight. The dry wood goes up like lightning.

Nadia

WAIT! STOP!

Nadia gets up and runs towards the barn.

Katia

(setting off after her)

ARE YOU MAD?

The barn is burning like an immense torch. Katia brings Nadia down, they roll in the high grass.

Nadia

(fighting)

I'M GOING! LET ME GO!...

Katia

WHERE ARE YOU GOING? LOOK! IT'S ALREADY ALL OVER!

Katia releases Nadia. Nadia sees the roof of the barn cave in. The Germans climb back into their combat cars, get on their motorbikes and move off again. The barn finishes burning, crackling and sending up sparks. Nadia watches the horror, wide-eyed.

Nadia

(in tears)

NEVER! I'LL NEVER FORGIVE MYSELF!

Nadia takes Katia by the shoulders and shakes her.

Nadia

(she shouts)

HOW AM I GOING TO LIVE WITH THAT? EH?! HOW?!

Katia pushes Nadia away.

Katia

YOU ARE GOING TO LIVE NORMALLY, MY LITTLE PIONEER! JUST LIKE THEY WOULD HAVE CARRIED ON LIVING AFTER SEEING ME BEING RAPED!... OR YOU...

Nadia falls face down on the ground. She sobs, her shoulders shake. Katia puts her hand on Nadia's head.

Katia

COME ON, THAT'S ENOUGH... THAT'S ENOUGH... HERE, TAKE THIS CROSS. DO YOU BELIEVE IN GOD?

Nadia

(without lifting her head)

I DON'T KNOW...

Katia

IF YOU BELIEVE IN HIM EVEN JUST A LITTLE BIT, LEAVE IT TO HIM... I THINK IF HE'D HADN'T WANTED IT WE WOULDN'T BE HERE TALKING NOW... SO HE DOESN'T WANT US TO DIE. HE'S SAVING US FOR SOMETHING...

Nadia turns on to her back. She looks at the clear sky.

Nadia

I KNOW WHY HE'S KEEPING ME SAFE...SO I CAN FIND MY FATHER...

105. INT. THE VILLAGE SOVIET BUILDING – LOUNINE'S OFFICE – DAY

Lounine is still sitting behind the table. Mitia walks into the office chewing his lips.

Lounine

IN ACTUAL FACT, I KNEW WHO HE WAS AND I KNEW THE NUMBER OF THE ARTICLE IN THE CODE HE'D BEEN SENTENCED UNDER...

Caption: "MAY 1943. THE LIBERATED TERRITORIES. THE HQ OF THE SPECIAL INFILTRATION DETACHMENT, "DEATH TO SPIES""

Mitia

(stopping and staring at Lounine)

HERE!

Lounine

ACCORDING TO YOU: GENERAL KOTOV, HERO OF THE CIVIL WAR, MEMBER OF THE ORDER OF THE RED FLAG... I KNEW ... COMMON LAW PRISONER INSTEAD OF ARTICLE 58... *(He shrugs his shoulders.)* WHICH MEANS THAT SOMEONE IS INTERESTED IN WHAT BECOMES OF HIM...SOMEONE HIGH UP, IN YOUR GOVERNMENT...

Mitia stares at Lounine. Lounine holds his look and smiles at Mitia. Mitia's lips slowly stretch into a smile as an answer.

Lounine

I UNDERSTAND, COMRADE ARSENTIEV: ITS NONE OF MY BUSINESS... *(he rummages in his briefcase on the table.)* SOMETIME IN 41, I AGAIN SUGGESTED TRANSFERRING KOTOV TO THE TROOP CORPS... AND THEN... *(Lounine gets a piece of paper out of his briefcase and looks at it.)* IN SPRING 42, DURING A RECONNAISSANCE MISSION, KOTOV AND SEVERAL OTHER SOLDIERS IN THE DISCIPLINARY BATTALION TOOK A SENIOR OFFICE PRISONER... DEMONSTRATING COURAGE, TENACITY AND ALL THE

REST... IT MEANT I HAD TO SEND A REQUEST TO THE TOP TO ANNUL HIS SENTENCE, TRANSFER HIM TO THE TROOP CORPS AND PUT HIM FORWARD FOR A MEDAL. AND WHEN HE REFUSED AGAIN, I WAS OBLIGED TO DEMAND A WRITTEN EXPLANATION FROM HIM. *(He hands the sheet of paper to Mitia.)* HERE IS THE DOCUMENT, SIR.

Mitia takes the piece of paper.

Mitia

He reads)

“FOR THE ATTENTION OF THE SENIOR OFFICER OF THE SPECIAL SECTION OF THE DIVISION, CAPTAIN LOUNINE, FROM A SOLDIER IN THE DISCIPLINARY BATTALION SERGUEÏ PETROVITCH KOTOV. EXPLANATION. I THE UNDERSIGNED, KOTOV, ASK THAT IVAN SMOLOKOUR, A SOLDIER IN THE DISCIPLINARY BATTALION, BE TRANSFERRED IN MY PLACE, AS HE HAS A MOTHER AND A FIANCÉE. IVAN SMOLOKOUR HAS DEMONSTRATED COURAGE AND DESERVES TO BE REHABILITATED AND I ASK TO STAY IN THIS BATTALION, AS I KNOW FOR A FACT THAT I HAVE NO FAMILY LEFT IN THIS WORLD AND THAT NO-ONE IS WAITING FOR ME...”

106. FLASH-BACK. EXT. A ROAD – DAY

A car speeds along the asphalt.

Caption: “JUNE 1941”

107. FLASH-BACK. INT. INSIDE THE CAR ON THE ROAD – DAY

Riabov is at the wheel. Mitia and Maroussia are sitting in the back. Mitia, his index finger just in front of Maroussia’s face, which is petrified with fear, looks at her furiously.

Mitia

REMEMBER MY DEAR! AND REMEMBER IT WELL! YOU AND YOUR DAUGHTER ARE ONLY STILL ALIVE BECAUSE OF ME! AND YOU CAN ONLY CARRY ON LIVING IF AS FEW PEOPLE AS POSSIBLE KNOW OF YOUR EXISTENCE! EVERYONE BELIEVES THAT MARIA AND NADEJDA KOTOV ARE DEAD! EXTERMINATED IN A CAMP!

Maroussia

MY GOD, MITIA, WHAT ARE YOU SAYING!

Mitia

(he shouts)

THE TRUTH, GOOD GOD, THE SIMPLE TRUTH!

108. INT. THE VILLAGE SOVIET BUILDING. LOUNINE'S OFFICE – DAY

Lounine examines Mitia's set expression. He is looking at the piece of paper.

Lounine

I THINK IT WAS JUST AN EXCUSE. IT ISN'T TRUE...

Mitia

WHAT DO YOU MEAN? DO YOU HAVE ANY INFORMATION ABOUT KOTOV'S FAMILY?

Lounine

NO, I'M NOT TALKING ABOUT HIS FAMILY, I'M TALKING ABOUT THE REASONS HE STAYED IN THE DISCIPLINARY BATTALION... YOU UNDERSTAND, A GENERAL, WITH A MEDAL WHAT'S MORE, WHO FINDS HIMSELF AS AN ORDINARY SOLDIER!... *(He shakes his head.)* NO, HE COULDN'T HAVE STOOD THE HUMILIATION. THE DISCIPLINARY BATTALION IS SOMETHING ELSE - A SORT OF PSYCHOLOGICAL BUFFER AGAINST THE SANCTION... DO YOU SEE WHAT I MEAN?

Mitia

AND THE OTHER ONE, HERE... *(he reads the sheet of paper.)* IVAN SMOLOKOUR, WAS HE REHABILITATED?

Lounine

NO, THEY WERE PRISONERS TOGETHER... I TRIED TO TALK TO HIM ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF TRANSFERRING HIM, BUT SMOLOKOUR CATEGORICALLY REFUSED! AND I MEAN, CATEGORICALLY! APPARENTLY, HE CONSIDERED KOTOV TO BE HIS PROTECTOR... IN SHORT HE WAS CONVINCED THAT AS SOON AS THEY WERE NO LONGER TOGETHER HE WOULD IMMEDIATELY GET KILLED. AND ALSO IT'S HARDLY A GAME, "KEEP ME AND LET THE OTHER ONE GO", IT'S ABOUT THE LAW!

Mitia re-reads the sheet of paper carefully.

Mitia

BUT IT'S HIS SIGNATURE! ONLY THE DATE IS UNREADABLE NOW...

Lounine

I DON'T REMEMBER EXACTLY, BUT IT WAS WRITTEN IN THE SPRING OF 42... THE PRISONER THEY TOOK WASN'T JUST ANYONE...

109. EXT. A MARSH – MORNING

Day is breaking over the marsh. The mist is gradually lifting. Gradually the gun turret of a burned out tank peeping out of the marsh, a wheel of a toppled over gun carriage and the roof of a lorry cab appear. Only the sounds of the morning can be heard.

Caption: "SPRING" 1942"

The air is full of life. Teal, wild duck and diving ducks streak through mist. Only cries, quacking and whistling can be heard. Four helmets float between two lumps of earth. Kotov, Vania, Iourka and Nikolaï are under the helmets, faces covered in clay.

Iourka

(whispering)

WHAT CAN WE HEAR?

Kotov

(whispering)

A KITE...

Iourka

(whispering)

WHAT'S A KITE?

Kotov

A BIRD... THAT EATS MICE...

Iourka

(whispering)

OH!

A duck passes under their noses, followed by a shoveler.

Iourka

(whispering delightedly)

LOOK AT THAT! HE DIVES LIKE A PLANE! HAVE YOU SEEN THAT BASTARD DIVE? AND THE OTHER ONE, THERE! HAVE YOU SEEN HOW PLEASED SHE IS?! EH MY BOY, ARE YOU ONLY HAVING ONE, IS THAT ALL?

Kotov

(whispering)

HE'S GOING TO FIND HIMSELF ANOTHER ONE...

Around the four of them, life is in full swing.

Iourka

(enthusiastically, whispering)

WHAT BEAUTY! ITS SPRING! WHAT HORROR! IT ALL ADDS UP!... I WOULD BAN WAR IN THE SPRING... WE COULD FIGHT WARS IN THE WINTER AND IN SPRING SCREW THE GIRLS! THAT'D BE GOOD! YEH...

The female duck swims closer to them, quacking; the shoveler is preening himself alongside. Two other shovelers begin circling the two ducks.

Iourka

(whispering)

LOOK AT HER, THAT ONE, LOOK HOW PLEASED SHE IS! SHE GOT WHAT SHE WANTED WITHOUT ANY TROUBLE AND SHE TOLD HIM “RIGHT MY BOY, YOU CAN GO NOW”

Nikolai

(whispering)

IF ONLY IT WAS THE SAME WITH HUMANS!... NOTHING DOING! FIRST SHE TAKES HER CLAWS TO YOU, THEN SHE ASKS WHERE YOU WERE! I WAS AT MY MOTHER’S!...

The other three look at Nikolai.

Nikolai

(whispering)

IT’S TRUE! I WAS AT MY MOTHER’S!

Kotov takes his hands out of the water and lifts them to his mouth putting his hands together in a special way. He blows into them “Quack, quack, quack!”, imitating nearly to perfection the call of the duck. Two shovelers pass above the soldiers’ helmets attracted by the imitation calls of one of their kind. “Quack, quack, quack!”, go the shovelers. Kotov answers the same, interrupting them. Taken aback the shovelers stay still above the soldiers.

Iourka

(whispering, strangling with laughter)

BLIMEY, THEY WANT TO FUCK US!

We hear two shots close together. The shovelers fall into the water. The shot touches the helmets. Kotov, closely followed by his three comrades, hides in the reeds. We hear a sort of lapping. A rubber boat appears between two layers of mist. A German officer is sitting in it, a hunting rifle in his hands. He rows up to the floating shovelers, lifts them out of the water and throws them into the bottom of the boat, then takes up his oars again and disappears into the reeds. The four helmets reappear. They move in the water towards the place where the boat disappeared. The helmets fade into the mist. There is a little cry. The boat reappears: on board there is only the rifle and the two dead shovelers.

110. EXT. A ROAD IN A FIELD – DAY

Kotov is walking heavily along a road that winds through a field of cornflowers. In front of him the German officer taken prisoner in the marsh advances under the pressure of a submachine gun held by Kotov. He is hot. His uniform is unbuttoned. His belt is hanging from his neck. At the edge of the field, a church dome sparkles in the sunshine. The forest begins just afterwards. Kotov’s eyes close as much because of the heat as because of tiredness. The German turns. He looks at Kotov.

Kotov

FORWARD! KRAUT! FORWARD!

The German walks more quickly. Kotov sleeps as he is walking. He weaves from side to side as if he were drunk. He shakes his head.

Kotov

BLOODY HELL! TALK ABOUT A GUARD! I'M NOT AS YOUNG AS I WAS!

The German turns and smiles at Kotov.

Kotov

FORWARD!

The German gently breaks into song that is not unlike a lullaby. Kotov moves forward, stumbling at nearly every step. His eyes close. He fights sleep. He opens his eyes again. They close again. Kotov stops and drops the submachine gun. The cartridge rolls into a rut and stops in the sand. Kotov stares wide-eyed. The German continues a brisk pace.

Kotov

STOP!

The German starts running. Kotov picks up the submachine gun and the cartridge. It is full of sand and will not go into the slot anymore.

Kotov

STOP! HALT! STOP, WILL YOU, YOU BASTARD!

The German accelerates without turning round. Kotov stops struggling with the cartridge and sets off in pursuit.

Kotov

STOP, YOU SWINE!

The German throws off his tunic without stopping and accelerates again. Kotov runs behind him. The German runs even faster. Kotov bellows as he too takes off his jacket without stopping and also accelerates. The German glances round behind him and accelerates.

Kotov

(in a hoarse voice)

I'M NOT GOING TO MISS YOU!

Kotov runs as fast as he can. It is like a nightmare. Kotov throws all his strength into the chase.

Kotov and the German are running incredibly fast. Kotov does not manage to catch the German. The church and the forest are rapidly getting closer. The German pushes towards the forest, which is his only hope of safety - he can hide and get lost in there. Kotov sees what the German intends to do. He grits his teeth and starts breathing rhythmically, concentrating on the chase and his ultimate goal of the German. Kotov makes an incredible effort. The field of cornflowers is crossed at the speed of light. The distance separating Kotov and the German is very slowly getting less. Realising that he will not reach the forest, the German runs as far as the church and disappears inside. Kotov follows him.

111. INT. THE CHURCH – DAY

Kotov runs into the church. He just misses the terrible blow with the wrought iron latch of the church door that rains down on him. The German misses him. The plaster of the door frame explodes under the force of the blow and breaks into thousands of pieces. The German throws down the latch. Kotov and the German are face to face. They are both dripping with sweat and can barely stand. They don't even have the strength to say anything... There is a wall fresco representing the Virgin of Kazan in the background behind them. Her distressed face looks over the two men who are exhausted by the chase. A sort of droning comes from above.

112. EXT. IN THE SKY – DAY

A German bomber plane is flying well above the clouds.

113. INT. THE COCKPIT OF THE PLANE – DAY

Armed with a crowbar, the bombardier is working on the trap doors in which an enormous bomb is caught. The pilot without letting go of the joystick, turns to him.

The pilot

(in German)

WE CAN'T LAND WITH THAT THING THERE!

The bombardier

(in German)

I'M DOING EVERYTHING I CAN, SIR!

The pilot

(in German)

HURRY UP! WE'RE ALMOST OUT OF FUEL!

114. INT. THE CHURCH – DAY

The German and Kotov are lying on the floor of the church. Kotov is lying right on top of the German and is trying to grab his hands. The German pushes his hand in Kotov's face, trying to put his fingers in his adversary's eyes. They are both groaning with the effort.

115. THE COCKPIT OF THE PLANE – DAY

The bombardier is struggling even harder with the trap doors that won't give.

The commandant

(in German to the navigator)

WHERE ARE WE? WHAT'S DOWN THERE?

The navigator

(in German)

CLOUDS, SIR! THERE MUST BE THREE OR FOUR MINUTES FLYING BEFORE WE GET OVER OUR TROOP POSITIONS!

The pilot

(in German, to the bombardier)

GET ON WITH IT! GET RID OF IT BEFORE WE ARE ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE FRONT!
GO ON!

The bombardier leans with all his strength on the crowbar that he has pushed into the trap doors. His face is distorted with the effort: drops of sweat pearl on his nose and forehead. The trap doors finally begin to open slowly. The bomb, now freed, falls. The bombardier pushes himself back. He half closes his eyes and breathes deeply.

The bombardier

DONE IT! IT'S OK, SIR! IT'S OK ...

116. EXT. IN THE SKY – DAY

The plane continues its flight. The bomb released from the machine falls quietly towards the ground without a sound. It plunges into the cloud layer, passes through it to arrive above the field of cornflowers and races towards the church dome.

117. INT. THE CHURCH – DAY

Kotov succeeds in turning the German over and pushing his arm up his back. The German resists desperately. We suddenly hear an enormous din over their heads. Kotov, surprised, lets go of the German. They both lift their heads. Debris from the dome falls on them. They throw themselves on the floor protecting their heads...

118. EXT. THE BOMBED CHURCH – DAY

Kotov is the first to extract himself from the debris closely followed by the German. Right at the top the cupola has disappeared leaving a gaping hole through which the sky is visible. In the middle of the hole, the bomb is suspended above their heads. Suddenly it gives way and falls. Its fall is interrupted five metres off the ground. It is held by the iron framework of the cupola in which its stabiliser has been miraculously caught. Kotov and the German carefully extract themselves from the debris without taking their eyes off the bomb. The framework

slips under the weight of the bomb, taking some plaster with it. It comes down gently and suddenly stops on the side. It is only held by a single stabiliser. Without taking any further precautions, Kotov and the German rush for the door.

119. EXT. NEAR THE CHURCH – DAY

Kotov and the German bolt out of the church at the same time. They run into the field of cornflowers with the last of their strength and simultaneously throw themselves on their stomachs. They are both lying on the ground. The church is plunged into total silence, but like a bad dream, it suddenly explodes: the deafening roar of the explosion reaches their ears later. In among the thousands of pieces of debris complete sections fly over their heads. Kotov and the German disappear in a cloud of smoke and lime dust.

FADE TO:

120. EXT. NEAR THE CHURCH – DAY

The dust settles slowly. Kotov and the German are flat on their stomachs in the field of cornflowers, which is now covered in white dust. They look like plaster statues. They lift their heads at the same time and turn. There is nothing left of the church except the section of wall with the Virgin of Kazan fresco. She is looking at them. Her face, marked with a deep sadness, is lost in the distance. The German and Kotov climb to their knees. They both look at the ruins in amazement. The German grabs Kotov by the arm. He stuffs the piece of amber he wears round his neck and which is pierced in the middle by the “devil’s finger” under Kotov’s nose.

The German

(speaking very fast in German)

DO YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT’S HAPPENED TO US?! IT’S A MIRACLE! A MIRACLE COMRADE! IT’S MY LUCKY CHARM!... LOOK AT IT! CAN YOU SEE? ITS EXCEPTIONAL AMBER! DO YOU SEE THIS HOLE? IT’S MY GRANDMOTHER...

Kotov gets up and takes the German by the arm.

Kotov

GET UP!

With an enthusiastic air, the German gets up without taking his eyes off Kotov and stuffs the lucky charm under his nose.

The German

(in German)

WAIT! YOU DON’T UNDERSTAND! LOOK AT THAT! LOOK! I FOUND THAT IN KÖNIGSBERG WITH MY GRANDMOTHER!... I WAS JUST A KID! MY GRANDMOTHER... MY GRANDMOTHER ELISA KNOWS ABOUT THAT SORT OF STUFF! OF COURSE, I

DIDN'T BELIEVE IT! BUT SHE TOLD ME: "IT'S A MAGIC STONE GÜNTER! NEVER TAKE IT OFF, GÜNTER!" MY GOD, I ONLY KEPT IT ON OUT OF HABIT!

Kotov
LET'S GO!

Kotov gives the German a little push in the back. He moves backwards on to the road without taking his eyes off Kotov.

The German
(in German)

BUT IT'S A REAL MIRACLE, COMRADE! AND TO THINK I NEARLY LOST IT!... ONE MORNING IN POLAND, I WOKE UP AND FELT FOR IT: IT WASN'T THERE ANY MORE! I'D FORGOTTEN ALL ABOUT IT! THEN I FOUND IT AGAIN: I'D PUT IT IN THE POCKET OF MY TUNIC! *(He bursts out laughing.)* IT'S INCREDIBLE!... NO! NO! IT'S CRAZY ISN'T IT?! MY LUCKY CHARM SAVED US... YOU AND ME! OH COMRADE!...

Kotov
GO ON, GET MOVING!

The German
(in German)
YES, YES! NOW NOTHING CAN HAPPEN!

The German turns and walks in front of Kotov. They go up the road leaving the church behind. Suddenly, Kotov freezes as if he had felt something behind him.

Kotov
(to the German)
STOP!

The German stops and turns to Kotov who doesn't move. Fear is written on his face.

The German
(in German)
EH, WHAT'S THE MATTER COMRADE?

Kotov swallows with difficulty.

Kotov
(whispering)
NADIA...

Kotov turns suddenly. Nadia is not behind him. Only the Virgin of Kazan with her sad eyes looks at him from the still standing wall. She and Kotov stare at one another...

121. EXT. THE BATTLEFIELD – DAY

The immense battlefield that, under the snow, stretches from one end of the horizon to the other is scattered with craters, trenches, bodies and burnt out vehicles. Shots can still be heard in the distance. Mines continue to go off here and there. Bullets whistle. Bursts of submachine gun fire can be heard. Thick smoke from the burning fuel of the damaged vehicles leaking on to the snow spreads above the battlefield.

Caption: "FEBRUARY 1942"

Nadia, in trousers and a padded jacket with epaulettes, a fur lined cap on her head and heavy boots on her feet, is crawling along in the snow, a first aid kit slung over her shoulder. Then she deliberately slips into a shell hole.

Nadia

(getting her breath back)

ARE THERE ANY WOUNDED?

Nadia, pushing up her cap, which had fallen over her eyes, looks around. There are two dead bodies in this crater: a fairly old Red Army soldier, wearing a heavy jacket and puttees as well as a lieutenant in a three quarter length jacket, his hand clutching his pistol. The lieutenant's forehead has been pierced by a bullet. Nadia examines the bodies, takes the lieutenant's papers, takes the dog tags from around the soldier's neck and leaves the crater. Her boot slips on the clay and she tramples on the lieutenant's face, leaving the mark of her shoe. She starts crawling over the battlefield again, shouting from time to time.

Nadia

ANY WOUNDED? ARE THERE ANY WOUNDED?

A weak voice can be heard.

The voice

NURSE! NURSE! HELP ME!

Nadia stops and cocks an ear, trying to work out where the voice is coming from

The voice

NURSE! HELP ME!

Having worked out where it is, hiding behind bodies Nadia crawls right into the middle of the burnt out vehicles. Her legs slip, her bag falls off her shoulder, sweat runs into her eyes, but Nadia carries on crawling in the direction of the very weak shouts of the wounded man. A tank driver, more dead than alive, lies not far from his tank, which is on fire. His face is badly burnt. On his shoulder his waterproof boiler suit is covered with blood. It seems as if something is boiling emitting a raucous sound in his body every time he takes a breath.

Nadia

(digging in her bag)

THERE, THERE, IT'LL BE ALRIGHT SIR. I'M GOING TO BANDAGE YOU...

Tank driver

(half opening his eyes with difficulty)

SIR? IDIOT! I'M ONLY JUST 19.

Nadia

(quickly cutting his boiler suit)

YOU'RE LUCKY YOU'RE ONLY 19, YOU'LL GET BETTER MORE QUICKLY. YOUR BODY IS STILL YOUNG.

Nadia tears off a piece of bandage with her teeth and prepares to bandage the tank driver's forearm.

Tank driver

(his face contorted with the terrible pain)

AAH! I'M GOING TO DIE! OH! IT HURTS! MUM!

He bites his lip until it bleeds.

Nadia

(securely bandaging the wound)

DON'T SHOUT! THE GERMANS'LL HEAR YOU!

The tank driver

(between two howls)

WHY ME? WHAT HAVE I DONE?

Nadia

WHY ARE YOU HOWLING? YOU'RE ALIVE AND THERE ARE ONLY DEAD BODIES ALL ROUND YOU! I'M GOING TO GIVE YOU AN INJECTION AND YOU'LL FEEL BETTER!

Nadia finishes the bandage. She takes a syringe from her bag, unbuttons her padded jacket and pulls a vial out of an inside pocket. As she does so, the little silver cross slips out of her jacket.

Nadia

(breaking the end of the vial and sucking the analgesic to the syringe)

I KEEP THE VIALS IN MY INSIDE POCKET ON PURPOSE SO THEY DON'T FREEZE. LIKE THAT IT WON'T HURT YOU AS MUCH: IT'S NICE AND WARM.

Nadia injects the soldier just above his wound. The effect of the painkiller can be seen on the soldier's face. His eyes roll and he ends up looking at her. He sees the cross on Nadia's chest.

The tank driver

ARE YOU A BELIEVER, NURSE?

Nadia

(putting the syringe away in her bag and buttoning up her jacket again)

BE QUIET, YOU SHOULDN'T TALK!

The tank driver

DO YOU KNOW ANY PRAYERS? BECAUSE I DON'T KNOW ANY...

Nadia

YES. ENSURE MY WILL DOES NOT PREVAIL OVER YOURS.

The tank driver

MINE?

Nadia

NO, NOT YOURS, HIS. IT MEANS THAT EVEN IF YOU WANT TO DIE AND HE DOESN'T WANT YOU TO, YOU WON'T DIE.

The tank driver

AND IF I DON'T WANT TO DIE?

Nadia

THERE'S EVEN LESS POSSIBILITY OF YOU DYING IF HE DOESN'T WANT YOU TO EITHER. *(She puts her bag on her shoulder and measures herself against the soldier to judge his height.)* HOW AM I GOING TO BE ABLE TO MOVE YOU?

Nadia tries to move the soldier, but in doing so she visibly aggravates his wound as his face immediately becomes covered with sweat: he goes white, his eyes turn up and his breathing becomes jerky. Nadia immediately stops her attempts and bends over the soldier's face.

Nadia

OH YOU POOR THING, PLEASE DON'T GO! LOOK AT ME! PLEASE! SAY SOMETHING TO ME! WHERE ARE YOU FROM?

The tank driver

(getting his breath back with difficulty)

FROM OUGLITCH, ON THE VOLGA...

Nadia

AND WHAT'S YOUR NAME?

The tank driver

DORMI...

Nadia

WHAT? AREN'T YOU RUSSIAN?

The tank driver

(His face contorted with pain)

IDIOT... WHAT DO YOU MEAN NOT RUSSIAN?... MY NAME IS DORMIDONT... I WAS GIVEN MY GRANDFATHER'S NAME... IT WAS MY GRANDMOTHER'S IDEA... THE OLD FOOL...

Nadia notices blood under the soldier's leg, just where he was before she moved him.

Nadia

WAIT, I'M GOING TO BANDAGE YOUR LEG TOO...

Nadia crawls to his leg and uncovers the wound.

Scarlet blood is flowing freely from a damaged artery. Nadia presses her hand against the wound and with the other takes a tourniquet out of her bag.

Nadia

(involuntarily crying out)

OH, MY GOD!

The tank driver

WHAT?! WHAT'S THE MATTER?! IS IT AS BAD AS THAT?!

Nadia

(getting control of herself)

NO. YOU'VE GOT ANOTHER LITTLE WOUND, HERE. I'M GOING TO BANDAGE IT...

(She tries to change the topic of conversation.) YOU MUST HAVE A FIANCÉE WAITING FOR YOU...

The tank driver

A FIANCÉE?! I'VE NEVER EVEN KISSED A GIRL!

Nadia

(tightening the tourniquet)

NEVER!

The tank driver

YES... AT DANCES NO-ONE EVER PAID ANY ATTENTION TO ME...

Nadia

WELL NOW YOU'RE GOING TO GO BACK FROM THE WAR A HERO AND ALL THE GIRLS WILL BE RUNNING AFTER YOU.

The soldier keeps his eyes on Nadia's half open jacket and the little cross hanging between her breasts. The soldier, suddenly determined, looks imploringly at her.

The tank driver

NURSE...

Nadia

DOES IT HURT? I'LL BE FINISHED IN A SECOND...

The tank driver

NURSE... SHOW ME...

Nadia

(doing her bandage)

WHAT?

The tank driver

(imploringly)

YOUR BREASTS, SHOW ME...I'VE NEVER SEEN ANY... I'M GOING TO DIE WITHOUT EVER HAVING SEEN THEM...SHOW ME BEFORE I DIE... PLEASE ...

Nadia reddens, not knowing what to say.

Nadia

(she looks at the soldier and meets his imploring eyes)

BUT... THEY'RE... THEY AREN'T LIKE WITH... LIKE WOMEN'S... THEY HAVEN'T FINISHED GROWING YET...

The tank driver

SHOW ME ANYWAY...

Nadia makes a decision: she gets up, undoes her belt, takes off her padded jacket and her tunic. Only her blouse is left. The soldier looks at her. A deafening silence surrounds them. Only a vehicle running out of petrol is still making a few creaks.

Nadia

CLOSE YOUR EYES.

The soldier closes his eyes. Nadia slowly takes off her blouse.

Nadia

THERE YOU ARE.

The soldier opens his eyes. Nadia trembles with emotion and cold. The silver cross shines between her two young girl's breasts.

The tank driver

LEAN OVER.

Nadia leans over. The soldier puts out a hand full of grease coming out of his burnt sleeve and tenderly caresses Nadia's breasts.

The tank driver

(sincere, his eyes turned to the sky)

MY GOD! LET ME SURVIVE! I PROMISE YOU I'LL NEVER INSULT MY MOTHER AGAIN! NEVER RAISE MY HAND TO LITTLE VOLODIA! I SWEAR IT! BUT LET ME GET OUT OF HERE! MY GOD!

The soldier's helmet falls off, uncovering his light brown hair. He cries and sniffs like a child. Nadia takes his head against her chest and caresses his hair.

Nadia

(whispering tenderly)

COME ON, OF COURSE YOU'RE GOING TO SURVIVE! OBVIOUSLY!

They stay lying together in the middle of the lurking death and flames. It is a strange, quite striking, union between the young girl's bare, fragile and milky white torso pressed against the tank driver who has been consumed by battle, fire and blood and blackened by oil.

Nothing else as far as the eye can see is living, apart from these two beings. There are only corpses, faces and bodies that the snow slowly covers. Suddenly, out of goodness knows where, a tit comes to rest on the barrel of a burnt out tank near Nadia and the soldier: it spreads its wings and begins to sing. They open their eyes and look at the young bird. A small smile comes on to the dry lips of the tank driver, who is living his last moments.

122. INT. THE VILLAGE SOVIET BUILDING. LOUNINE'S OFFICE – DAY

Lounine is still sitting behind the table. Mitia is standing near the window, a cigarette of dark rough cut tobacco in his hand. The window looks out over the inner courtyard where men in civilian dress are sitting on the ground, exhausted by the midday sun, under the supervision of submachine guns. Mitia observes the tired and sweating faces on which he reads incomprehension.

Lounine

... A MONTH AGO, I WAS CALLED BACK AND HAD TO LEAVE THE DIVISION ON THE SPECIAL ORDERS OF HEAD QUARTERS. THAT'S WHY I CAN'T TELL YOU EXACTLY WHERE HE IS NOW AND WHETHER HE'S STILL ALIVE...

Caption: "MAY 1943. LIBERATED TERRITORIES. THE HQ OF THE SPECIAL INFILTRATION DETACHMENT "DEATH TO SPIES""

Lounine

SIR, MAY I ASK YOU A QUESTION?

Mitia

GO ON.

Lounine

WHY ARE YOU LOOKING FOR KOTOV?

Mitia

HIS DOSSIER HAS NOT BEEN CLOSED. THERE ARE CERTAIN DETAILS...

Lounine

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

Mitia

CAPTAIN, YOU'RE GOING TOO FAR. I HAVE AN ORDER FROM THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSIONER. A SECRET ORDER ... *(He looks at Lounine.)* HOWEVER, IT SEEMS YOU HAVE SOME SYMPATHY FOR KOTOV...AM I RIGHT?

Lounine

OF COURSE NOT... SYMPATHY?... NO. ITS JUST THAT THE WAR MAKES YOU SEE EVERYTHING FROM A DIFFERENT ANGLE...

Mitia

EVERYTHING? IS THAT WHAT YOU THINK?

123. FLASH-BACK. EXT. NEAR THE FOOTBALL PITCH, JUST NEXT TO THE SVERBITSKI HOUSE – DAY

Mitia and Kotov are at the edge of the field covered with high grass

Mitia

DON'T SPEAK TO ME LIKE THAT! I RUSHED HERE TO THIS HOUSE! I WAS MADE A PROMISE AND LIKE A FOOL I BELIEVED IT! YOUR MATES MADE PROMISES, THEY SAID "DO IT AND WE'LL LET YOU COME BACK..." EXCEPT THAT AFTER THEY'D LIED TO ME THEY TOOK EVERYTHING! EVERYTHING! MY LIFE, MY WORK, MAROUSSIA'S LOVE, MY HOMELAND, FAITH... EVERYTHING! AND ITS YOU WHO TOOK THAT ALL AWAY FROM ME!

Kotov

AH, THAT'S WHY YOU CAME BACK! TO ENJOY IT! ENJOY YOUR INSULT! MAKING THE MOST OF IT A DROP AT A TIME, SIP AFTER SIP AND THEN "BANG! "YOU ARE UNDER ARREST, CITIZEN KOTOV!"

Mitia

WHAT'S MORE, I FAILED IN MY DUTY AND I WARNED YOU...

Kotov

LIAR! YOU'RE LYING AGAIN! YOU ACT LIKE THE WORST KIND OF WHORE! A BIT HERE A BIT THERE SO THAT I REALISE LATER! YOU KNOW HOW IT WILL ALL END! BECAUSE WHO'S GOING TO TOUCH ME? ME A HERO OF THE REVOLUTION, A LEGENDARY GENERAL? WHO WOULD TOUCH KOTOV?

124. INT. THE VILLAGE SOVIET BUILDING. LOUNINE'S OFFICE – DAY

Mitia stares at Lounine.

Mitia

I MUST HAVE KOTOV, CAPTAIN. WHERE IS HE NOW?

Lounine

I HAVEN'T BEEN IN THE DIVISION FOR NEARLY A MONTH. I'M NOW INVOLVED IN OTHER DOSSIERS. THERE'S NO WAY I CAN KNOW WHERE KOTOV IS NOW ...

Mitia

IN ANY CASE, YOU HAVE TO BE ABLE TO TELL ME WHERE KOTOV WAS A MONTH AGO!

Lounine leans back on his chair and looks at Mitia.

Lounine

THE CITADEL. DO YOU KNOW WHAT IT IS?

125. THE BATTLEFIELD IN FRONT OF THE CITADEL – MORNING

In the rays of the rising sun, the imposing bulk of the citadel begins to stand out, an impregnable block of concrete, bristling with artillery pieces and nests of machine guns. At the foot of the citadel a battlefield strewn with damaged machines and abandoned bodies stretches out.

Lounine

(off camera)

IT WAS A REAL FURNACE! HELL ON EARTH! ABSOLUTE BUTCHERY! A REAL FACTORY OF DEATH... HE WAS THERE A MONTH AGO. BUT THAT'S A WHOLE MONTH. I DOUBT WHETHER HE IS STILL ALIVE...

Mitia

(off camera; sighing)

You could be right, Captain...

126. EXT. FIRST TRENCH – MORNING

Kotov is sitting at the bottom of the trench, leaning with his back against the side. His eyes are closed. Suddenly he opens them very wide. He looks in front of him for a long time.

END OF THE FIRST FILM