

SYMPHONY OF SURVIVAL

written by
Daniel Persitz

Based on a true story



JULY 20, 1942: Russian composer Dmitri Shostakovich becomes known around the world for writing an epic symphony during the deadly World War II siege of Leningrad.

FADE IN:

EXT. AIRFIELD - NIGHT

The moon illuminates a makeshift airstrip built into a field.

FIGURES dart in the shadows, operating in darkness amidst the imposing shapes of WARPLANES.

A SOVIET PILOT hurries to the tarmac, clutching a leather satchel like his life depends on it.

He rushes to a YAK-1 MONOPLANE, a Soviet red star branded onto the side. He quickly climbs into the COCKPIT...

The Pilot secures himself, double checks the leather satchel, then fires up the plane, making sure to keep the lights off.

The plane pulls onto the pitch black tarmac, accelerates and takes off into the night...

INT. WARPLANE - NIGHT

The pilot clenches the stick, ascending into the inky sky. He peers out to the dark Earth below, scanning the rows of pines for movement. The vast countryside seems to be still...

KABOOM! A flak round explodes to his side, shrapnel barely missing the wings.

The pilot grips the stick, climbing as fast as possible, narrowly avoiding more flak that DETONATES around him.

DOWN BELOW

An 8.8 cm Flak 18 ANTIAIRCRAFT GUN aims high at the sky and fires off another round - KACHUNK!

The flak thunders into the air and EXPLODES, just missing the Soviet plane.

More rounds are loaded by a SOLDIER bearing an infamous red, white and black armband: the NAZI SWASTIKA.

SUPER: KUYBYSHEV, SOVIET UNION - APRIL 1942

CUT TO:

EXT. AIRBASE - TEHRAN - MORNING

A military airfield surrounded by endless, scorching desert.

SUPER: TEHRAN, IRAN

The Soviet Yak-1, scuffed up but intact, lands and parks.

The Pilot jumps out and is met by a BRITISH OFFICER. Shaking hands, the Pilot carefully hands over the leather satchel.

The Brit checks the contents, revealing TWO TIN BOXES. He salutes the Soviet, then hurries to a TRUCK bearing the UK UNION JACK. With a REV of the engine, the truck peels out.

CUT TO:

EXT. MILITARY BASE - CAIRO, EGYPT - DAY

More desert, but now with the Giza Pyramids in the distance.

The now dusty Truck parks in a buzzing Allied base. The British Officer jumps out and is met by an AMERICAN PILOT.

The Officer reaches into the satchel, takes one of the tin boxes for himself, hands the satchel with the other box to the Pilot. They salute each other and head separate ways.

The Pilot rushes to board a massive DOUGLAS C-54 SKYMASTER. The 4 giant propellers spin to life...

CUT TO:

EXT. BOLLING MILITARY BASE, WASHINGTON DC - DAY

A busy, bustling base along the POTOMAC RIVER.

The American Pilot rushes past planes, clutching the satchel as he hurries towards a parked BLACK CADILLAC, marked with the seal of the US STATE DEPARTMENT.

Shined shoes step out of the car, revealing a SPECIAL AGENT.

SPECIAL AGENT

So this is what all the fuss is
about.

AMERICAN PILOT

From the other side of the world,
sir.

The Agent quickly opens the satchel, removes the tin box and pops the top, revealing:

A ROLL OF MICROFILM

He carefully lifts a section of film, examining it in the sunlight. One might expect secret plans. Or coded messages.

But no, it's MUSIC. Thousands of notes on hundreds of pages of score, photographed meticulously onto 100 feet of microfilm. It's vast and it's marked SYMPHONY #7...

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. MOSKVA HOTEL ROOM, MOSCOW - SEVERAL YEARS EARLIER - DAY

A hand scribbles notes onto music manuscript paper. Another huge score with a myriad of notes, only this one is labeled SYMPHONY #4. The composer's name written in the corner:

DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH

The man himself sits at the desk, notes pouring out onto the page. Wearing a suit over his wiry frame, he peers through round glasses, his 29-year-old face intense yet boyish and kind. An ever-present cowlick atop his head.

As he composes, his body jerks, in a universe of its own. He confidently uses a fountain pen - never a pencil. With his free hand, his fingers dance, playing an invisible piano.

He peers out the window of his ornate, Soviet hotel room and admires the wintry view of Red Square: iconic onion domes of St. Basil's Cathedral, imposing fortress wall of the Kremlin.

SUPER: MOSCOW, JANUARY 1936

Dmitri looks out a window on the opposite side of the room, at a row of new buildings constructed in the Stalinist style.

Studying the cold, monolithic architecture, he hears INDUSTRIAL THEMES, drums and cymbals crashing with the sounds of a gigantic orchestra.

He scribbles the music onto the paper, then grabs his coat.

INT. MOSKVA HOTEL LOBBY - EVENING

A dressed Dmitri steps down the stairs to the lobby, where he's swarmed by a crowd of REPORTERS and FANS.

REPORTER

Shostakovich! Such acclaim at home
and abroad - surely you are the
composer of this generation?

DMITRI
I will let the generation decide.

He signs a CONCERT PROGRAM for an enthusiastic fan.

REPORTER
Here you are on a recital tour
while your opera *Lady Macbeth* is
playing at the Bolshoi. How do you
balance it all?

DMITRI
Quite simply. At this point, the
opera plays itself!

The enamored crowd LAUGHS. Dmitri is on top of the world.

REPORTER
There have been differing reports
about what your music represents.
Have you considered how the party
may perceive your work?

DMITRI
I merely write what I see and feel.
Should not be any conflict there.

He's pulled aside by ISAAC GLIKMAN (25), his secretary and friend. A sophisticated intellectual who usually exudes warmth, at the moment Glikman fidgets with anxiety.

GLIKMAN
Dmitri Dmitriyevich!

DMITRI
Thank you for saving me, dear
friend. What news? I hope our
mighty Zenit did not lose the
football match?

GLIKMAN
Heaven forbid...

He pauses, stalling. Then notices Dmitri's briefcase.

GLIKMAN (CONT'D)
Ah how is your new symphony coming?
"The Muse appeared, the weather of
mind got clarity new-found. Now
free, I once more weave together
emotion, thought and magic sound."

DMITRI
Reciting Pushkin? Now you have me
worried. Is Nina alright?

Glikman pauses. Time to spill it.

GLIKMAN
You must cancel your recital.

DMITRI
Tonight? After coming all this way?

GLIKMAN
Your opera at the Bolshoi... A
special guest will be attending.
You must be there.

DMITRI
What kind of special guest...

INT. BOLSHOI OPERA THEATER - LOBBY - NIGHT

The glorious Bolshoi Opera Theater, bathed in red and gold.

Dressed in fine dresses and tuxes, Moscow ELITE flood through
a grand, chandelier-filled lobby. They receive programs:

LADY MACBETH OF MTSENSK - OPERA BY DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH

The patrons smile and nod graciously as they pass Dmitri, who
paces back and forth, smoking the hell out of a cigarette.

RICH PATRON
Ah dear Dmitri, I cannot wait to
experience your operatic
masterpiece!

Dmitri nods politely and smokes some more. A CHIME signals
it's time to be seated. Dmitri puts out the tiny remains of
his cigarette, looking like he's headed for execution.

INT. BOLSHOI OPERA THEATER - STALLS - MOMENTS LATER

Dmitri navigates a row on the ground floor, tripping over
OPERAGOERS, his gaze fixated on:

An OPERA BOX on the mezzanine of the theater, unlike any
other: buzzing with GUARDS and plated with steel for bullet
protection. A grand velvety chair awaits, still vacant.

Dmitri sits next to Glikman, his eyes glued to the box.

DMITRI

Do you think the rumors are true?
About the party going after
artists?

GLIKMAN

They consider new ideas a threat to
their authority. But do not worry.
Surely he will like it.

DMITRI

Which part? It is a story about
violence, sexual passion and a
government oppressing its citizens.
And let us not forget the Siberian
labor camp scene.

GLIKMAN

But the people love it.

DMITRI

It is not the people I am worried
about.

The lights dim, everyone turns their gaze to the front as the
CONDUCTOR walks through the ORCHESTRA PIT.

APPLAUSE. Dmitri watches the box like a hawk. Finally, in a
buzz of activity, the special guest arrives:

A short but imposing MAN strides in wearing a long, grand
white coat. A manicured bushy mustache crests his thick lips.
He sits in the velvet chair, revealing none other than the
Soviet leader himself: JOSEPH STALIN (late 50s).

He's offered Georgian red wine and a basket of ripe plums. He
bites into a plum, the red juice splattering his mouth.

He's accompanied by the bespectacled LAVRENTIY BERIA, a loyal
subordinate and director of the secret police. A dangerous
man who will smile at you while slitting your throat.

The Conductor turns to Stalin's box and bows. With a wave of
the baton, he launches the orchestra into the OVERTURE.

The Conductor works too hard, whipping the baton, the
orchestra responding with obnoxiously loud accents. Dmitri
notices Stalin wincing at all the overdone musical outbursts.

The tragic heroine of the opera, KATERINA, steps onto the
stage and belts an ARIA, also trying too hard. Up in his box,
Stalin shakes his head with disdain.

LATER

Dmitri has sunk in his seat - the night isn't going well.

SINGERS duet on stage, bellowing obnoxiously. Stalin has had enough - he storms out, Beria and his entourage following.

Before Beria walks off, he looks directly at Dmitri. His eyes piercing Dmitri's very soul. And then he's gone.

DMITRI (CONT'D)
(to Glikman)
I have a feeling this year will be
bad for me.

INT. MOSKVA HOTEL LOBBY - NEXT MORNING

Dmitri checks out at the busy FRONT DESK.

A BELLHOP helps Dmitri with his suitcase.

DMITRI
Thank you, Anton. How are your
cello lessons?

BELLHOP
Stopped for now. Too much work.

DMITRI
Say hello to your teacher for me.

Dmitri gives him an extra generous tip.

BELLHOP
Thank you, sir. Until next time.

Dmitri notices the Rich Patron from the previous night sitting in the lobby, reading the newspaper PRAVDA.

DMITRI
So how did you like my opera?

The Rich Patron drops the paper and hurries away, avoiding Dmitri like the plague.

Strange. Dmitri picks up the paper. He quickly finds an article that makes his face blanch:

MUDDLE INSTEAD OF MUSIC

Dmitri's eyes flick to different parts of the article:

"The opera *Lady Macbeth* is course, primitive and vulgar..."

"Shostakovich's eccentric and cheap Leftist confusion..."

"The danger of this trend to Soviet music is clear..."

He reads in silence.

EXT. GLAVNY TRAIN STATION, LENINGRAD - DAY

Dmitri steps off the train from Moscow, passing a sign marked LENINGRAD as he makes his way through a bustling station.

He's met by his wife NINA (late 20s), a brilliant, athletically-built astrophysicist who is 5 months pregnant. She holds up a Pravda, as well as several other newspapers.

NINA

Mitya, you are more famous than ever.

DMITRI

News spreads quickly. Especially the bad kind.

NINA

Do not worry, I will not divorce you again. At least not yet.

She drapes her arm in his. As they exit the station, LENINGRADERS recognize Dmitri, then purposely steer clear.

INT. SHOSTAKOVICH APARTMENT, LENINGRAD - DAY

A modest one bedroom-apartment, sparsely but tastefully decorated. An upright PIANO tucked into the corner.

Dmitri drops his suitcase, lights a cigarette and pages through the various newspapers.

DMITRI

"The music quacks, grunts and suffocates itself." "The composer never considered what the Soviet audience expects."

NINA

The article has no author.

DMITRI

We all know who wrote it. He wants to control everything.

NINA

These are dangerous times. What will you do?

DMITRI

What can I do? Even if they cut off
both my hands and I have to hold
the pen in my teeth, I shall go on
writing music.

He takes out his work-in-progress Symphony #4 and sets it on
the table, ready to jump back into composing.

The door bursts open and Dmitri jumps, expecting to be
arrested. It's only his mother SOFIA SHOSTAKOVICH (late 50s),
energetic, properly dressed. She smothers him in a firm hug.

SOFIA

My darling son! I am moving in with
you at once.

DMITRI

We tried that before, mama. I am
not putting Nina through that
again.

Sofia and Nina exchange a combative glance.

SOFIA

You must be careful. Artists are
disappearing left and right.
Remember Irina's son Lev? The poet?
He was taken a few nights ago.

DMITRI

I will be fine, do not worry.

SOFIA

But people are talking. My friend
Sveta even cancelled our weekly
game of Durak. Can you believe it?

NINA

People always talk, Sofia
Vasilievna.

SOFIA

Nina, perhaps you have some cosmic
rays to study?

NINA

In fact, the institute is sending
me on a trip to Armenia soon to do
precisely that.

SOFIA

I cannot wait.

NINA
The feeling is mutual.

Dmitri doesn't dare step between them, retreating to his composition. As he studies the blank ledger lines, the INDUSTRIAL THEMES flood the soundscape...

SERIES OF SHOTS OVER MUSIC - DMITRI COMPOSES SYMPHONY #4:

EXT. STREETS OF LENINGRAD - DAY

Dmitri walks through Leningrad, a stunning city with colorful Baroque and Neoclassical architecture and numerous canals.

He gazes at new FACTORIES, smokestacks towering high above.

INT. SHOSTAKOVICH APARTMENT - DAY

Dmitri adds a series of FACTORY SOUNDS to his symphony, from percussive MECHANICAL RHYTHMS to WHISTLE BLOWS.

LATER: Dmitri sits at the piano and plays the first movement for Glikman, who nods enthusiastically. The music SWELLS...

EXT. NEVA RIVER - DAY

Dmitri crosses a bridge spanning Leningrad's main river, the glorious Neva.

Spotting some FRIENDS headed his way, Dmitri tips his hat. They cross the street to avoid him.

EXT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

A NURSE pushes a tired Nina outside on a wheelchair. She holds her newborn daughter GALINA.

They exit the hospital and are swarmed by family that wasn't allowed inside during birth: Dmitri, his older sister MARIA (early 30s), her husband VSEVOLOD and their son DIMA (8).

Dmitri is about to take his new daughter when Sofia swoops in, eager to hold her grandchild.

INT. SHOSTAKOVICH APARTMENT - DAY

Little Galina rests in a bassinet near the piano.

Dmitri plays through his symphony for her, using a pen to make slight adjustments.

And with one final edit, Symphony #4 is FINISHED.

INT. LENINGRAD PHILHARMONIC GRAND HALL - DAY

Towering white columns. Opulent, sparkling chandeliers. This is the home of the Leningrad Philharmonic.

The ORCHESTRA is on stage, rehearsing Symphony #4 under the baton of Viennese conductor FRITZ STIEDRY. The symphony sounds huge, dissonant and filled with ferocity.

Shostakovich as a person may seem shy and frail but his music is powerful, brash and dynamic.

Dmitri sits in the first row of the empty hall, following along with his score. Glikman sits behind him, loving every bar of this symphony.

Stiedry stops the orchestra and turns to Dmitri.

STIEDRY

Dmitri Dmitriyevich, rehearsal 84.
It is a lovely violin theme but
perhaps the forte lingers too long?

DMITRI

Yes yes, wonderful idea. Let us
make it more of an accent, no more
than a mezzo-forte.

STIEDRY

Very good.

As he turns back to the orchestra, Dmitri notices MUSICIANS staring at him, some whispering and casting judgmental looks.

Their gossip is short-lived as Stiedry raises the baton and resumes the rehearsal. A few measures go by...

A door CLUNKS. Dmitri turns to the back of the hall. Stalin's henchman Beria marches in, followed by a terrified PHILHARMONIC DIRECTOR.

Beria trains his hawkish gaze on Dmitri.

EXT. NEVSKY PROSPECT - DAY

Dmitri and Glikman walk in silence down Leningrad's main avenue, an artery that connects the entire city.

Dmitri's face is a mask of troubled feelings. Glikman stays quiet, giving him space.

DMITRI

No rescheduling, nothing. They are scrapping the entire premiere.

GLIKMAN

I am so sorry, Dmitri Dmitriyevich.

DMITRI

They want me to make a public statement.

GLIKMAN

What?

DMITRI

I am to say the symphony is outdated and no longer represents my creative convictions. How is that for silencing myself?

The walk along without another word.

Their silence is interrupted by a CROWD ROAR.

Up ahead in PALACE SQUARE, a massive MILITARY PARADE is underway. Citizens wave USSR hammer and sickle flags.

A military procession passes through, complete with tanks, missile launching trucks and soldiers brandishing rifles.

Placards read: "Comrades, life is getting better! Life is getting merrier!"

Dmitri fixates on a giant portrait of STALIN, mocking him from afar. He hears a MILITARY MARCH THEME, percussion and brass overly bombastic to an absurd degree.

INT. MARIA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

A RADIO plays a lush passage from a Tchaikovsky symphony.

Dmitri and Nina crowd around a dinner table with his sister's family: Maria, Vsevolod and little Dima. Galina naps in a baby carriage near her grandma Sofia.

It's a spread fit for a banquet: Olivier potato salad, vat of Shchi cabbage soup, black bread, red caviar, pickles, veal pelmeni, beef piroshki and an ice cold bottle of vodka.

Even the family dog - an Airedale Terrier named GLINKA - feasts at a bowl packed with delicious meat and potatoes.

Dmitri barely picks at his packed plate.

SOFIA
Mitya, please eat.

DMITRI
I am not hungry.

SOFIA
But you love your sister's cooking.
Almost as much as mine.

MARIA
Let him be, mama.

NINA
Marusya, it is all so delicious.

SOFIA
You know what this is like? The pogroms, all over again! Only now the victims are artists.

VSEVOLOD
Us scientists too. One of our lab physicists disappeared a week ago.

Dmitri pours Vsevolod and himself a shot of vodka.

DMITRI
Apparently we are all dangerous to the great leader. All we can do is drink. As I always say...

VSEVOLOD
...There are two types of vodka.
Good and very good.

DMITRI
Na zdorovye (to our health).

They clink glasses and drink.

SOFIA
You know, back during that awful time, our family sheltered Jews.

DMITRI
Yes but who will shelter me now? My commissions have dried up. Everyone is too afraid to work with me.

SOFIA

We must know somebody who can help.
What about Tukhachevsky?

DMITRI

I am sure the marshal has enough on
his plate.

MARIA

You could write music for the
movies again.

DIMA

Yes uncle Dmitri, the movies!

NINA

That is a wonderful idea.

SOFIA

Or teach at the Conservatory. You
were their prized student. They
should beg to have you.

DMITRI

No one is begging me for anything
right now.

SOFIA

I will make some calls.

Dmitri retreats to an upright PIANO against the wall,
tinkering away at the keys.

EXT. LENINGRAD CONSERVATORY OF MUSIC - DAY

Dmitri approaches the palatial building of the world class
Leningrad Conservatory.

He gets an uneasy feeling and looks over his shoulder - is
someone following him?

As he hurries into the Conservatory, we see his tail: a
secret police NKVD AGENT in a long coat.

INT. LENINGRAD CONSERVATORY OF MUSIC - DAY

Dmitri follows an ASSISTANT through the hallowed halls,
glancing up at portraits of Russian music legends like
Tchaikovsky, Rimsky-Korsakov and Glazunov.

INT. CONSERVATORY OF MUSIC - DMITRI'S OFFICE - DAY

Dmitri is led into a small closet of an office. It's cramped and dusty but at least it has a tiny window.

DMITRI

Thank you.

The Assistant leaves him.

Dmitri sets up his office, placing notation paper and books on his desk by a metronome. He dusts off an old piano.

SCREECH - out the window, a black ZIS-101 limo pulls up. A vehicle used to transport Soviet government officials. The CHAUFFEUR steps out and opens the rear door...

Dmitri paces his office, unsure what to do. Surely they're coming for him now. He hears VOICES, FOOTSTEPS in the hall...

A bear of a man barges into the room, his grey eyes matching a grey military coat of the highest rank, packed with stars and medals. This is Marshal MIKHAIL TUKHACHEVSKY.

TUKHACHEVSKY

My dear Shostakovich! I was told I would find you here. A fitting home.

DMITRI

Oh thank god - Tikhachevsky.

The two men embrace, the skinny Dmitri dwarfed by this military giant.

DMITRI (CONT'D)

I am afraid you have the wrong office. Violin lessons are next door.

TUKHACHEVSKY

All the practicing in the world and I would still get thrown out of here.

DMITRI

Yet your sense of discipline would be the envy of all the students.

TUKHACHEVSKY

The military has its perks.

DMITRI

What is the latest on that front?

TUKHACHEVSKY

Not good, I am afraid. Stalin is ignoring my concerns about Germany. Hitler cannot be trusted.

DMITRI

Do you think he is dangerous?

TUKHACHEVSKY

Terribly. We are grossly unprepared. If another great war happens, we need tanks, a real air force. Horses and cavalry will not save us this time around.

DMITRI

I am sure you are right, as always.

TUKHACHEVSKY

It is all falling on deaf ears. Stalin admires Hitler - reminds him of himself. But I am going on and on. Tell me, how are you faring? I was very sorry to hear about your symphony.

DMITRI

I am working on a new one. Perhaps one that can land more favorably with a certain audience.

TUKHACHEVSKY

Just do not forget to say what you have to say.

DMITRI

It is a dangerous time to have a voice.

TUKHACHEVSKY

Yes. The NKVD will start following you. If they have not already.

Tukhachevsky picks up the office phone and listens for a beat. Hearing a slight STATIC HUM, he promptly hangs up.

TUKHACHEVSKY (CONT'D)

They move quickly. Assume your home line is not safe either.

Dmitri's face drains of color.

TUKHACHEVSKY (CONT'D)
Let me speak with Stalin. See what
I can do for you.

DMITRI
Thank you, dear friend.

INT. SHOSTAKOVICH APARTMENT - NIGHT

The apartment is dark and quiet - it's late at night.

Under a solitary lamp, Shostakovich sits at the piano with a stack of student compositions, quietly touching the keys, marking and grading the assignments as he goes.

Car headlights flash. Glancing outside, Dmitri spots a dark sedan pulling up to a neighboring complex. It's a GAZ-M1 aka BLACK MARIA: the vehicle of the secret police.

NKVD AGENTS spill out of the Maria and storm the neighboring building, out to arrest unaware, likely innocent victims.

KNOCK KNOCK. Dmitri spins to the door, his heart racing. He slowly answers it, revealing death himself: Beria.

BERIA
Dmitri Dmitriyevich.

DMITRI
Comrade Beria...

Beria lets himself in.

BERIA
Lovely home. Do you know Mikhail
Tukhachevsky?

DMITRI
I do...

Beria helps himself to a chair. Removes his gloves. Dmitri sits down too, doing his best to quiet his thumping heart.

BERIA
How do you know him?

DMITRI
He often comes to my concerts. We
have played duets - he is a decent
violinist.

BERIA
What did you discuss?

DMITRI

Music.

BERIA

What else?

DMITRI

Very little. He has always been an avid supporter of the arts and my compositions.

BERIA

Art can be a dangerous thing. It must be managed properly.

FOOTSTEPS. They both spin that direction - Nina approaches from the hall, wearing a robe.

DMITRI

Do not worry, Ninochka. Go back to bed.

He nods at her, doing his best to stay brave. Beria gives Nina the once over, not bothering to hide his lecherous nature. Nina retreats to the bedroom.

BERIA

I understand you and Tukhachevsky met recently. You discuss politics?

DMITRI

No.

BERIA

Perhaps you forgot. Try to remember. Did you discuss Comrade Stalin? A plot to assassinate him?

DMITRI

No. Of course not.

BERIA

Think harder. Others recall hearing such a discussion.

DMITRI

What others? We never spoke of such things. What is this about - is the Marshal alright?

BERIA

He is no longer a Marshal. He has been arrested.

Dmitri stares in stunned silence.

BERIA (CONT'D)

Today is Saturday. Take the weekend to search your memory. On Monday, report to the Big House. Prepare to recall every detail Tukhachevsky shared with you about the plot against Stalin. Do it for your lovely wife. And for your little daughter.

Beria leaves.

Dmitri is so stunned he can't even get up to close the door.

INT. SHOSTAKOVICH APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NEXT DAY

Nina helps Dmitri pack a suitcase with his clothes.

DMITRI

You can always stay with Marusya.

NINA

We will be fine here.

DMITRI

Mama can cook for you and Galina.

NINA

I would sooner be dead.

DMITRI

We must destroy all our papers, letters. Even a hint of something can be used as evidence.

NINA

Already done.

DMITRI

What am I to do? Either they arrest me despite my knowing nothing or I lie and doom my friend - who is surely innocent.

NINA

You will find a way.

Dmitri approaches Galina's bassinet. He gently lowers his finger and his baby daughter grips it, COOING happily.

DMITRI
Tell Galina how much I loved her.

NINA
Do not be dramatic. Take some paper
and work on your music. In case
they make you wait.

DMITRI
Good idea.

NINA
And take some extra underwear. In
case they keep you overnight.

INT. NKVD BIG HOUSE - MONDAY MORNING

A bustling operation of AGENTS and BUREAUCRATS.

Dmitri enters wearing a suit and lugging his packed suitcase.
Unsure where to go, he takes a seat and waits quietly.

Agents bring in ARRESTED CITIZENS, snapping their photos,
taking fingerprints, interrogating.

Dmitri sees Beria in his office, pacing in front of a MAN
bound to a chair. The Man's face is bloody and bruised.

Dmitri shrinks in his seat so Beria doesn't see him.
Struggling to calm himself, he places his hands on his legs
and pretends to play the piano, his fingers going crazy.

A few moments pass. A SECRETARY finally notices him.

SECRETARY
What is your business?

DMITRI
Dmitri. Dmitri Shostakovich... I
was told to report here?

SECRETARY
Ah. Your presence is no longer
required.

Dmitri stares, unsure what this means.

The Secretary hands him that day's Pravda. The front page has
a photo of Tukhachevsky: TRAITOR OF THE PEOPLE EXECUTED.

A shocked Dmitri gets the hell out of there.

EXT. NKVD BIG HOUSE - AFTERNOON

Dmitri hurries outside of the cold, blocky NKVD headquarters. He moves aside as Black Marias drive into the parking lot.

Glikman sits on a bench, patiently waiting for him.

DMITRI

You could have been waiting a very long time.

GLIKMAN

Where else did I have to be?

(quoting Pushkin)

"In this, our age of infamy, man's choice is but to be a tyrant, traitor or prisoner. No other choice has he."

DMITRI

Nothing changes.

Glikman notices the newspaper in Dmitri's hand.

GLIKMAN

I am very sorry about the news.

DMITRI

He was a great man.

GLIKMAN

They went after his wife and brothers too. And the officers serving as judges in his court martial. All shared the same fate.

DMITRI

Horrible. What about his sisters?

GLIKMAN

Sent to the Gulag. Artists, scientists, now the military...

DMITRI

Anyone that poses a threat to the authority. Whether real or not.

GLIKMAN

No one is safe from this purge.

DMITRI

It will be the downfall of our country and culture.

INT. SHOSTAKOVICH APARTMENT - EVENING

Dmitri returns home to a RINGING phone. He answers.

DMITRI

Yes?

His expression drops.

INT. MARIA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Dmitri hurries through the open door to find a mess: half-eaten dinner plates, dropped silverware, overturned chairs.

Sofia sits on the couch, her face red with grief. She has her arm around little Dima, holding him tightly. Glinka the Terrier huddles by them, shaking. No one else is there.

SOFIA

Dimochka, everything is ok.
Babushka is here. Right here.

DIMA

Where did they take mama and papa?

SOFIA

They will be ok. They will be ok.

She meets eyes with Dmitri. Heartbroken.

INT. SHOSTAKOVICH APARTMENT - LATER

Dmitri storms back and forth as Nina tries to calm him down.

DMITRI

Are they trying to send me a
message? Can you believe it - a
labor camp in Kazakhstan!

NINA

Please, Mitya. It is not just us,
this is happening to everyone.

DMITRI

That does not make it ok! These are
innocent people!

He shoves his still-packed suitcase by the door.

NINA

What are you doing?

DMITRI

In case they come for me in the middle of the night. I do not want to wake you or Galina.

He hurries to his piano. Grabs pages of newly composed music and carries them to the wood burning stove.

NINA

Stop!

DMITRI

Why? It is all pointless. Every page is a death sentence.

NINA

We cannot let them win.

DMITRI

If I cannot be free to write what is in my heart, what am I to do? Create the kind of nonsense they hope to hear?

NINA

That is not you, Mitya. There must be a way to mask your feelings. Without eliminating them entirely.

Dmitri looks at her, settling down. An idea forming.

He sits down at the piano and tries creating new material.

OVER MUSIC from Dmitri's SYMPHONIES #5 and #6...

INT. SHOSTAKOVICH APARTMENT - MAY 1938 - DAY

Dmitri and Nina return home with a baby carriage wheeling their newborn son MAXIM. Galina, nearly 2 now, stares with wonder at the new arrival.

The MUSIC morphs into a dark, brooding gloom...

INT. KREMLIN, MOSCOW - AUGUST 1939 - DAY

A posse of NAZIS are led up a velvet staircase into a lavish room, where they are greeted by Stalin and his entourage, including Beria.

The German Foreign Minister JOACHIM VON RIBBENTROP shakes Stalin's hand, Germany and the Soviet Union agreeing to their infamous non-aggression pact. Cameras FLASH.

The MUSIC explodes into a relentless, militaristic gallop...

EXT. LENINGRAD NEWSPAPER STANDS - VARIOUS

Citizens grab Pravda, Izvestia and other newspapers, headlines spreading the news of war:

- September 1, 1939: Germany invades Poland
- Sep 3, 1939: Britain and France declare war against Germany
- June 22, 1940: France surrenders to Hitler

The explosive music finale comes to a bombastic end.

EXT. NEVSKY PROSPECT - DAY

Wearing a newsboy cap, Dmitri has a spring in his step as he meets up with Glikman.

DMITRI

The sun is beaming, the sky bluer
than the Gulf of Finland. A
beautiful day for a double header,
is it not Isaac Davidovich?

GLIKMAN

Indeed it is.

DMITRI

One hundred and eighty minutes of
Zenit and Dynamo glory!

GLIKMAN

If there is no extra time...

DMITRI

Our players better not let us down!

They hurry down the busy avenue, energized.

Suddenly, city loudspeakers CRACKLE to life. Dmitri, Glikman and CITIZENS stop in their tracks as they hear the voice of VYACHESLAV MOLOTOV, the Commissar of Foreign Affairs.

MOLOTOV (V.O.)

(through loudspeaker)

Citizens of the Soviet Union! At 4
this morning, German troops entered
our country, attacked our borders
and bombed our cities including
Sevastopol, Kaunas and Kiev.

(MORE)

MOLOTOV (V.O.) (CONT'D)

This attack was launched despite the non-aggression treaty between our countries. A treacherous, unprovoked act, without any declaration of war.

Dmitri and Glikman exchange a concerned look.

MOLOTOV (V.O.)

The government calls on you, our citizens, to rally around our triumphant Bolshevik party and our great leader, comrade Stalin! Our cause is just, the enemy shall be defeated. Victory will be ours!

The broadcast ends. Dmitri takes off his newsboy cap.

DMITRI

There go our football matches.

SUPER: JUNE 22, 1941.

Dmitri and Glikman watch as CHAOS erupts in the streets.

People cram into stores, scrambling to buy food and supplies.

Mobs rush into banks, desperate to withdraw money.

INT. RECRUITMENT CENTER - DAY

Dmitri enters a building packed with eager VOLUNTEERS, ready to enlist in the People's Volunteer Corps.

He steps in a long line that snakes through hallways, rooms, even floors.

Propaganda posters read: "Everything for the front, everything for victory!"

VOLUNTEER 1

Did you hear? The Nazis destroyed most of our tank force - in a matter of days!

VOLUNTEER 2

The air force too.

VOLUNTEER 3

They are advancing rapidly. How long before they arrive at our doorstep?

A man who is already balding in his early 30s recognizes Dmitri. This is conductor KARL ELIASBERG.

ELIASBERG
Dmitri Dmitriyevich?

DMITRI
Eliasberg! Nice to see you here,
along with the rest of Leningrad.

ELIASBERG
War can unify in remarkable ways.
You are enlisting?

DMITRI
Anything to help the motherland.

ELIASBERG
I can think of better ways for a
musical genius to aid the cause.

DMITRI
I could say the same about a
certain conductor I know.

ELIASBERG
Eh, I just stand up there flapping
my arms like a bird.

DMITRI
Yet you do it with such grace. How
is your Radio Symphony?

ELIASBERG
More important than ever now. I
would love for us to play some of
your music over the airwaves. Help
boost morale in these dark times.

DMITRI
The government seems to have a
different opinion of my music.

RECRUITER (O.S.)
Next!

ELIASBERG
Good luck.

Dmitri approaches the desk of a no-nonsense RECRUITER.

RECRUITER
Name?

DMITRI
Dmitri Shostakovich.

The Recruiter looks up.

RECRUITER
The composer?

DMITRI
Yes.

The Recruiter glances at Dmitri's application. He stamps it:
REJECTED.

RECRUITER
You are not needed at the moment.

DMITRI
Why not? I must do something for
our country. Until now I have only
known peaceful work. But I am ready
to take up arms.

The Recruiter gives him a once-over, points to his glasses.

RECRUITER
Your eyesight... It is too poor.
Find another way to contribute.

He waves over the next applicant.

As Dmitri steps back, he glances around. Plenty of other
applicants with glasses are getting approved.

INT. CONSERVATORY OF MUSIC - DMITRI'S OFFICE - DAY

Dmitri sits at his desk, working on shorter COMPOSITIONS.

A KNOCK and Glikman enters.

GLIKMAN
Were you able to reach Nina and the
children?

DMITRI
They are on the first train back
from the Gulf tomorrow. Not too
happy returning to muggy Leningrad.

He hands Glikman two short compositions: "Oath to the
People's Commissar" and "Songs of a Guard's Division."

DMITRI (CONT'D)
Two more, hot off the presses.

GLIKMAN
I will get these to our front lines immediately. It is an immense help to our troops.

DMITRI
The Nazis are barbarians hell bent on destroying our Slavic culture. We must make sure they do not succeed.

GLIKMAN
So far we are failing. Minsk has fallen, they are advancing on multiple fronts. Troops are being diverted to protect Moscow.

DMITRI
What about our city?

GLIKMAN
The council just ordered all able-bodied men and women for duty.

DMITRI
I am ready to defend our country. But they denied my enlisting request - twice.

GLIKMAN
It is a different order this time...

EXT. LENINGRAD OUTSKIRTS - DAY

A massive operation of DITCH DIGGING outside the city walls.

Dmitri, Glikman and their Conservatory COLLEAGUES shovel dirt and mud, helping form trenches.

These musicians are a pathetic bunch - overdressed in suits, too skinny for hard labor, taking frequent breaks.

Dmitri and Glikman dig away, contributing as best they can.

GLIKMAN
(quoting Pushkin)
"Up, Russia!
(MORE)

GLIKMAN (CONT'D)

Queen of hundred battles, remember
now thine ancient right. Blaze,
Moscow! Far shall shine thy light."

DMITRI

You have certainly found your true
calling, Glikman. As I have found
mine.

Dmitri puts all his energy into the job, sweating profusely.

Between shoveling, a PIANO TEACHER obsessively cleans the
dirt off his fingernails.

PIANO TEACHER

So does this make us official
members of the Red Army?

MUSIC HISTORIAN

The real question is why we have
not heard from Comrade Stalin.

COMPOSER

They say he stopped answering his
phone. He is nowhere to be found.

MUSIC HISTORIAN

Where does that leave us?

PIANO TEACHER

Ruining our precious fingers.

Dmitri inspects the surroundings:

Nearby, elderly BABUSHKAS wearing head scarves also dig,
faster and more effectively than these Musicians.

SET DESIGNERS from the Mariinsky Theater build DUMMY TANKS
out of wood and cardboard. To give the appearance of a
sizable tank force.

DMITRI

Tukhachevsky was right. We are
grossly unprepared.

SERGEANT (O.S.)

Shostakovich! You are being
reassigned.

EXT. CONSERVATORY OF MUSIC - ROOFTOP - DAY

Dmitri paces back and forth on the rooftop of the music conservatory, wearing a FIRE BRIGADE UNIFORM complete with metal helmet and large oven mitts.

SNAP! A PHOTOGRAPHER captures Dmitri in his uncomfortable outfit. A seemingly heroic photo of the composer helping the wartime effort.

DMITRI

I do not understand why we are doing this.

PHOTOGRAPHER

The people need to see our artists contributing to the cause!

DMITRI

How am I contributing? I am supposed to monitor the skies and protect the building from fire.

PHOTOGRAPHER

Yes, a noble cause indeed.

DMITRI

Do you see any planes? Bombs? How about Germans?

PHOTOGRAPHER

Fair point.

DMITRI

We are not yet under attack. Being up here is the work of a fool.

As he gazes over the city, at the tall cathedrals and government buildings, he sees Citizens hard at work:

Painting golden church spires dull colors so they disappear into their surroundings.

Digging bomb shelters beneath city streets.

Dmitri feels left out. He needs to do something.

INT. SHOSTAKOVICH APARTMENT - EVENING

Still wearing his fire brigade uniform, a sweaty Dmitri returns home. He finds Nina unpacking with the children. Galina is now 5 and Maxim is 3.

GALINA/MAXIM

Papa!

Dmitri grabs both children, embracing them dearly.

DMITRI

Who are these monsters invading my home?

MAXIM

Rawwwwr!

NINA

That is a lovely hat.

She puts on Dmitri's ridiculous fire brigade helmet.

DMITRI

Looks far better on you. You are welcome to take my post.

INT. SHOSTAKOVICH APARTMENT - NIGHT

Later that night, the place is quiet, the children asleep.

Dmitri sits at the piano, softly noodling on the keys.

He tries different note combinations, various melodies. But nothing sticks quite yet.

EXT. CONSERVATORY OF MUSIC - ROOFTOP - DAY

Dmitri sits on the roof, the fingers of one hand air piano playing while the other scribbles into notation paper. Sketching out musical ideas.

He looks out over the edge, the city readying for invasion:

- At the HERMITAGE MUSEUM, MOVERS load priceless works of art onto trucks, ready to take them out of the city.

- Outside St. Isaac's Cathedral, sandbags and planks are placed over the Bronze Horseman, protecting this grand monument to Peter the Great.

- WORKERS disassemble heavy machinery and load the parts onto trains, shipping out entire factories.

Inspired, Dmitri hears a lone SNARE DRUM. A militaristic beat, its repetitive rhythm echoing far in the distance.

INT. SHOSTAKOVICH APARTMENT, LENINGRAD - NIGHT

Sofia and Dima have dinner with Dmitri, Nina, Galina and Maxim. Several family members still noticeably absent.

A KNOCK at the door and everyone tenses up.

Dmitri hesitantly answers and is stunned to see Maria. Finally returning home from exile, looking thin and dirty but alive. She stumbles in alone, without Vsevolod.

The entire family swarms her, especially little Dima.

DMITRI

Thank god...

MARIA

Thank the Germans. Most of us were sent home for the war effort.

INT. SHOSTAKOVICH APARTMENT - BEDROOM - MORNING

630am. Dmitri and Nina sleep soundly when they're awoken by a blaring SOVIET ANTHEM.

Dmitri slowly rises and cracks open the window, searching for the sound source. Other citizens peer outside too.

On the street below, a radio broadcast CRACKLES from a city loudspeaker. The anthem ends, making way for a booming voice with a thick Republic of Georgia accent:

STALIN (V.O.)

Comrades, citizens! Brothers and sisters! In spite of the heroic resistance of the Red Army, the enemy continues to push forward. This is a grave danger to our country, as the enemy is cruel and implacable. He is out to seize our lands, to destroy national culture.

This last point especially lands with Dmitri.

STALIN (V.O.)

Thus the issue is one of life or death for the people of the USSR. I call upon all of you to rally around our heroic Red Army and glorious Red Navy. All forces of the people, for the demolition of the enemy. Forward, to victory!

The broadcast ends. People look at each other from their windows, visibly moved.

DMITRI

The man of steel himself.

NINA

Your biggest fan, what an honor.
You know what someone on the train
said about him?

DMITRI

Something that could get a person
shot?

NINA

They found him at his country
house. In bed, drunk and depressed.
He could not believe Hitler had
betrayed him.

DMITRI

For one so paranoid, that is quite
the blindspot.

EXT. STREETS OF LENINGRAD - DAY

Dmitri and Nina step out of their apartment complex.

The city has transformed: buildings have been boarded up,
wood planks and tape covering windows.

Dmitri heads to the Conservatory, briefcase in hand. Nina
heads the opposite direction with a grocery bag.

She passes a LONG LINE of people snaking around a corner.

NINA

What is everyone waiting for?

CITIZEN

Ration cards.

Nina immediately joins the line.

VROOOOM!

All eyes turn to the sky as a plane buzzes above the city.

It flies low enough for all to see a black cross with white
edges on the wing bottoms - the Balkenkreuz symbol of the
German Luftwaffe.

SEVERAL BLOCKS AWAY

Dmitri and others jump into doorways, seeking shelter. But the plane just flies on - a reconnaissance mission.

Dmitri hears that SNARE DRUM again only now it sounds closer. War slowly approaching.

INT. MARIA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Dmitri is pleasantly surprised as he flips on the RADIO: Eliasberg's radio orchestra performs the playful second movement from Dmitri's Symphony #5.

The entire family sits around the dinner table. The spread is more sparse and simple than last time. Bread, butter, borscht soup and stuffed cabbage Golubtsi.

Glinka the Terrier has a sad dinner too - just a few scraps.

SOFIA

I do not understand these ration cards. We have bread, we have butter. Stores still carry much of what we need.

DMITRI

It is preparation. For later.

MARIA

They have started to announce evacuations. For women and children.

SOFIA

This is my city. I refuse to go anywhere.

GALINA

Mama, we are not going to leave, are we?

NINA

No, Galechka. We are staying right here with your papa.

DIMA

Us too, right? We cannot leave before papa comes home.

MARIA

Yes, Dimochka. You sweet boy.

She exchanges a heartbroken glance with the other adults, the truth too awful to speak.

Dmitri picks up a newspaper and pages through.

DMITRI

The papers are far more optimistic.
You would think we were on the
verge of victory.

NINA

As we know so well, Pravda always
speaks the truth.

SOFIA

These days, you are better off
finding truth in the hallways and
streets.

EXT. CONSERVATORY OF MUSIC - ROOFTOP - DAY

Dmitri gazes over Leningrad, the city preparing for war:

- ARTILLERYMEN position ANTI-AIRCRAFT GUNS on bridges.
- SOLDIERS float steel cabled BARRAGE BALLOONS into the
skies, an effective measure against low-flying aircraft.

Dmitri hears that snare drum again but now it's accompanied
by a 5-note MELODY. Extremely simple but catchy. The
beginnings of a MILITARY MARCH.

Dmitri quickly sketches a musical theme onto paper.

INT. SHOSTAKOVICH APARTMENT - EVENING

Dmitri's fingers dance across the piano, playing that 5-note
melody in different registers, a call and an answer.
Rhythmic, militaristic.

He's on the brink of something new. Something important.

NINA

Mitya...

DMITRI

(stops playing)
Yes, Ninochka.

NINA

They are evacuating children.
Saying it is mandatory.

DMITRI
Without parents?

NINA
Yes.

DMITRI
But where? And how will they
reunite?

NINA
I do not know.

DMITRI
Galina and Maxim are too young.
This is our home. They should be
here, with us.

NINA
Yes. But if we have an opportunity
to leave together, we must take it.

Dmitri nods quietly, neither agreeing nor disagreeing.

INT. CONSERVATORY - DMITRI'S OFFICE - ONE WEEK LATER - DAY

An intense Dmitri sits at the piano, playing a section of his
new composition for a riveted Glikman.

They both have lost weight, the hunger of the times starting
to show. Dmitri is skinnier and more elongated than before.

Dmitri pounds on the keys, the MILITARY MARCH building from
nothing, growing in intensity like an approaching army, then
swallowing everything in its path. Menacing and deafening.

DMITRI
It is only a small section but it
is giving me purpose. It is all I
can think about.

Glikman leaps out of his seat.

GLIKMAN
Brilliant! You have managed to
capture the sound of a Fascist
invasion.

DMITRI
Or perhaps an oppressive government
marching after its own people...

GLIKMAN

Hush now. The walls are listening.

DMITRI

I do not know what the fate of this piece will be. But it is starting to feel like the first part of a larger work.

GLIKMAN

A symphony?

DMITRI

Perhaps. My most ambitious yet.

GLIKMAN

You must finish it, at all costs. This could be your redemption.

His words resonate with Dmitri.

GLIKMAN (CONT'D)

Now on to other serious matters. The enemy is closing in, swallowing up our rail lines.

DMITRI

I have heard. Bombing that train with children... simply vile.

GLIKMAN

They announced evacuations for the Conservatory. I will be leaving for Tashkent later today.

DMITRI

I am staying.

GLIKMAN

Perhaps you should discuss with Nina.

DMITRI

She is with me. I must remain in my native city as long as possible.

GLIKMAN

You are not hearing me, Mitya. It is time to go.

Dmitri pauses, unused to Glikman addressing him this way.

DMITRI

I appreciate your concern, dear friend. But it is my duty to stay here for the moment. I have much work to do.

Glikman sees he cannot change Dmitri's mind.

GLIKMAN

Very well. Then best of luck to you. "I gaze forward without fear."

DMITRI

Until we meet again, dear poet. Please send letters.

GLIKMAN

You too.

The two friends embrace.

INT. SHOSTAKOVICH APARTMENT - EVENING

Dmitri returns home and makes a beeline for his workspace.

NINA

I hear the Conservatory is evacuating?

DMITRI

Yes.

NINA

I will start packing.

DMITRI

Not yet. This composition - it is going to be my seventh symphony.

NINA

Yes... And you can finish it elsewhere.

DMITRI

I do not want to interrupt my work. It is too important.

NINA

What about your family?

DMITRI

We are not in danger yet. We will leave when the time is right.

He takes out his work-in-progress symphony, ending the conversation.

He flips to the first page and adds a "I" at the top - the first movement. He also adds a title to that movement: "WAR."

He jumps into composing, writing with feverish intensity.

INT. SHOSTAKOVICH APARTMENT - MORNING

Still wearing pajamas, Dmitri walks out of the bedroom and finds two open suitcases. Nina paces back and forth, packing remaining items as Maxim and Galina get dressed.

DMITRI

Nina, what is this?

NINA

We are leaving. Immediately.

DMITRI

But our home is here.

NINA

Mitya! Think about your children.
Their safety must come first!

DMITRI

Do you feel unsafe?

NINA

I am not waiting until it is too late. This is not a joke.

DMITRI

I agree. No one is laughing.

NINA

The children are almost dressed. I suggest you hurry. Unless you want to stay here by yourself.

She is dead serious.

DMITRI

Ok ok. Give me a few minutes.

EXT. GLAVNY TRAIN STATION, LENINGRAD - DAY

The Shostakoviches push their way through a crowded train station, Leningraders desperate to escape the doomed city.

Dmitri struggles with the two suitcases while Galina grips onto his arm. Nina carries a worried Maxim.

They arrive at an empty train platform. No trains in sight.

Dmitri flags down a TRAIN CONDUCTOR.

DMITRI

Where is the train to Moscow? We
are supposed to be boarding soon.

TRAIN CONDUCTOR

The lines have been overtaken.

DMITRI

All of them?

TRAIN CONDUCTOR

Every single one. The last train
made it out in the night.

DMITRI

What does that mean for us?

TRAIN CONDUCTOR

Best to return home.

Dmitri slowly turns towards Nina, unable to make eye contact.

DMITRI

This is all my fault. I have doomed
us.

NINA

Next time, you will know to listen
to your wife.

DMITRI

I hope there is a next time.

EXT. BADAYEV WAREHOUSES - DAY

A collection of wooden warehouses that store Leningrad's
reserves of flour, sugar, meat and butter.

Nina waits in a long line to get food rations.

As she reaches the front of the line, she pulls out her
family's four ration cards.

The GOVERNMENT RATIONER quickly examines them.

GOVERNMENT RATIONER
2 workers, 2 dependents under 12...
That will be 1400 grams.

NINA
Is it not 500 grams per person?

GOVERNMENT RATIONER
Supplies are shrinking. It is now
400 for workers and 300 for
dependents.

NINA
But I have two growing children...

GOVERNMENT RATIONER
Then I suggest you hurry home and
give them their daily bread.

Nina resignedly takes the small rations of bread, butter and meat.

INT. SHOSTAKOVICH APARTMENT - SEPTEMBER 4, 1941 - DAY

Dmitri furiously works on his symphony, adding last touches as he brings the first movement to a close with a double bar.

He drops the pen: the first movement is complete.

He walks into the kitchen and grabs a bottle of VODKA. Inspects it: only a tiny amount of liquid left inside. He pours himself a small shot.

DMITRI
Three movements to go.

He drinks. A small celebratory moment shared with nobody but himself, the warm vodka flooding his veins.

A LETTER slides under the door, delivered by a mail carrier.

It is addressed to Dmitri. He quickly rips it open and reads:

"Arrived in Tashkent, still in one piece. Glikman." The rest of the page is a long quote, "Pushkin" written at the bottom.

Dmitri smiles to himself and sits, writing a response letter.

GALINA
Papa, what are those men doing?

Galina points out the window. An ominous low mist hangs over the city, far distances shrouded in grey.

SNIPERS set up on neighboring rooftops, aiming their rifles towards the outskirts of the city.

DMITRI

Galina, get away from the window...

He quickly grabs Galina as they hear a CRESCENDOING WHIR...

KABOOM! A German ARTILLERY SHELL explodes in the distance.

Nina runs into the room, clutching Maxim.

NINA

Mitya!

DMITRI

Downstairs. Now!

As they hurry to the door, Dmitri grabs his work-in-progress symphony, bringing it with them.

The sound of more shells EXPLODING throughout the city.

The deadliest siege in human history has begun.

INT. APARTMENT STAIRWELL - DAY

The Shostakoviches run down the stairs as other NEIGHBORS pour out of their apartments, everyone rushing for shelter.

The building SHAKES from exploding artillery shells, the Germans initiating their assault on Leningrad.

At the bottom of the stairs, they reach a recently installed heavy door. The metal hinges SQUEAL as they enter:

INT. BASEMENT BOMB SHELTER - DAY

A cramped bomb shelter, built hastily in the basement. Damp with unfinished walls but far safer than their apartment.

The Shostakoviches cram in with other families. Confused children CRY, Neighbors MURMUR in panic-stricken voices.

NEIGHBORS

They have surrounded the city... We
are never getting out...

They hear and feel MORE EXPLOSIONS, deadly 240mm siege shells raining down on the streets and buildings of Leningrad.

Maxim clutches his ears, Nina rocks him steadily. Dmitri strokes Galina's hair, trying to comfort her.

He checks his symphony: it's all still there. He flips to a blank page and marks it "II." Beginning the second movement.

NINA

Is this really the right time,
Mitya?

DMITRI

What else are we doing? It will not
write itself.

As Dmitri gets to work on the new movement, he hears the opening, a sneaky LITTLE THEME. Like footsteps sneaking through a building...

INT. APARTMENT STAIRWELL - NIGHT

With a CREAK of the basement door, Dmitri peers out.

He listens: the shelling seems to have stopped. Out in the streets he hears the CRACKLE of fire, people YELLING.

He looks up: their apartment complex appears intact.

He waves to his family - the coast is clear.

INT. SHOSTAKOVICH APARTMENT - CHILDRENS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

Dmitri and Nina tuck their children into bed. Wedging their stuffed animals tightly at their sides.

Out the window, fires glow red in the distance. Dmitri closes the shades.

Kisses on foreheads, the parents leave their children to try to sleep.

INT. SHOSTAKOVICH APARTMENT - SEPTEMBER 6, 1941 - MORNING

Faint beams of early sunlight hit a clock: 6AM.

Dmitri is already at work, fully dressed and immersed in his composition. Tirelessly working on the symphony.

Suddenly, he hears a LOW HUM. Unlike any war sound thus far.

As the hum crescendoes, the windows RATTLE. Dmitri sees dark shapes in the distance. Rocketing through the sky in a precise formation.

A squadron of LUFTWAFFE JU88 BOMBERS descend upon Leningrad.

DMITRI
(grabbing his symphony)
Nina!

INT. APARTMENT STAIRWELL - MOMENTS LATER

Dmitri and Nina rush with the children downstairs as a nightmare of sounds erupts outside:

SIRENS

WARNING SCREAMS over city loudspeakers

BOMBS falling from German planes and EXPLODING

The building jolts violently, chunks of plaster crashing from the walls.

Galina and Maxim SCREAM as their parents hurry them into:

INT. BASEMENT BOMB SHELTER - MOMENTS LATER

Neighbors move aside, giving the Shostakoviches room to sit.

BOOM BOOM - the bunker shakes with concussive blasts.

NINA
That sounds so close... Have they
broken into the city?

DMITRI
Those must be ours. Anti-aircraft.

Dmitri has laid out more pages of his symphony. The second movement now has a title: "REMINISCENCE."

Even as the building shakes, Dmitri keeps calm, his focus on the page, using every precious moment to compose.

GALINA
Papa, how can you work?

DMITRI
There are different ways to be
brave, Galechka.
(MORE)

DMITRI (CONT'D)

For me, it is work - the enemy
cannot defeat me if I keep writing
my symphony. How about we be brave
together?

GALINA

Ok.

Dmitri puts one arm around his daughter while continuing to write with his free hand.

A NOSY NEIGHBOR watches Dmitri work - this could be useful.

INT. BASEMENT BOMB SHELTER - LATER

Dmitri is the only one awake as everyone huddles closely, sleeping in the shelter.

He listens. Nina and the children breathe soundly. Neighbors too. The outside world quiet. For a brief moment, peace.

He slowly wriggles out of Galina's grip...

EXT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

CREAK - Dmitri peers outside their complex:

The air is heavy with smoke. The city is bathed in the red glow of fires, buildings burning in all directions. The aftermath of a single day of incendiary bombing.

FIREFIGHTERS frantically rush carts of water through the streets, trying to save as many buildings as possible.

Abandoned DOGS and CATS wander the streets, jumpy and scared.

Dmitri quietly retreats back inside.

EXT. STREETS OF LENINGRAD - DAY

Nina hurries down the street, clutching empty grocery bags.

The city has changed dramatically. Some buildings have blown open walls, some are entirely collapsed while others are fully intact. The chaotic lottery of bombing raids.

Nina nervously watches the blue skies. But it's calm. Quiet.

Seeing the Badayev warehouses in the distance, she picks up the pace, eager to collect rations.

Suddenly, an air raid siren BLARES.

Nina's eyes shoot upwards, looking for signs of movement. A lone bird flies by. Then BUZZING: she spots a coordinated formation of JU88 BOMBERS...

Nina hurries into an entryway, seeking shelter.

She crouches as the Bombers fly low, arrogantly, their exacting formation never shifting.

Nina braces, expecting the end but the Bombers SCREAM past her, targeting a different location...

KABOOOOOOM!

The earth quakes as a cascade of EXPLOSIONS detonate in the distance. One bomb after the next in quick succession, a violent assault against a specific target.

And then quiet. The buzz of the Bombers receding.

Nina slowly steps outside. Inspects. Her expression drops...

Smoke rises from the Badayev warehouses. First black, then white, then red as the precious food supplies burn. Tons of flour, sugar, meat and oil, igniting with violent flame.

Nina turns and runs back home.

The hunger situation is about to get a whole lot worse.

INT. MARIA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Sofia throws on a sweater and closes her suitcase, tucking it by the blanket-covered couch - she's recently moved in.

Dmitri flips on the radio. No more orchestral music - just a solo piano playing a moody RACHMANINOV PRELUDE. He turns it off and joins the family around the dinner table.

They're all looking thinner. Gaunter. Paler.

Each one has a small bowl of simple watery soup along with a small piece of bread.

The dog bowl is empty. Glinka the Terrier noticeably absent.

GALINA
(finishing her portion)
I am still hungry.

SOFIA

One must eat slowly, Galechka. Let
your stomach take its time.

She rips a piece of her own bread for Galina, who eagerly
grabs it, then notices all eyes on her. She chews the piece
slowly, doing her best to control her hunger.

Little Dima rips a piece of his bread and hands it to Sofia.

DIMA

Grandma.

SOFIA

You sweet boy. It is ok - grandma
has had enough. You eat it so you
can get big and strong and help
your mama.

Dima finishes his bread.

SOFIA (CONT'D)

What do these Germans want with us?

DMITRI

To erase Leningrad and all of
Soviet culture from the face of the
Earth.

MARIA

At least the air raids have
stopped.

DMITRI

They are saving their bombs. The
city is surrounded, we are entirely
blockaded. Anyone that tries to
escape has to get past bullets and
land mines.

NINA

They are starving us out...

INT. SHOSTAKOVICH APARTMENT - NIGHT

Dmitri is up late again, working on his symphony.

Nina throws on a coat to go out.

NINA

Your sister was able to get rations
at Petrogradskaya. I will be back
soon.

DMITRI

Be safe.

Nina heads out. Dmitri buries himself in his work.

KNOCK KNOCK.

DMITRI (CONT'D)

Forget your keys?

He swings open the door, revealing a tired GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL.

GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL

Comrade Shostakovich. May I come in?

Dmitri turns pale, thinks his time is up.

DMITRI

No, no. I need to pack. My wife is not even home to take care of the children...

GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL

There is nothing to be concerned about. Comrade Beria sent me.

DMITRI

That concerns me even more.

GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL

We understand you are working on a new symphony.

DMITRI

Yes but... How do you know that?

GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL

Our eyes and ears are everywhere. You must report to the radio station tomorrow.

DMITRI

I do not understand.

GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL

You will address the Soviet people. Tell them about your work, about your life continuing in our city.

DMITRI

But the symphony is not finished.

GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL
Do not worry yourself over such
trivial details.

The Official stands to leave.

DMITRI
Can this help get my family out of
the city?

GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL
Just be at the station tomorrow.

EXT. STREETS OF LENINGRAD - SEPTEMBER 17, 1941 - DAY

Dmitri treks through the streets of his city, careful to
avoid gaping potholes, debris from pulverized buildings and
dangling electrical wires.

The few Citizens out and about look hopeless, walking slowly.

Dmitri takes a bridge across the Neva, the stunning city view
obstructed by strategically placed anti-aircraft guns.

He avoids a collapsed apartment before finally reaching a
yellow and brown building that takes up an entire city block.

A sign reads: HOUSE OF RADIO

INT. HOUSE OF RADIO, LENINGRAD - DAY

Dmitri enters into a nest of chaos. Sleeping bags and pillows
tucked into corners, WORKERS wearing whatever clothes they
have left, living at the station.

An eager, tireless RADIO HOST grabs him.

RADIO HOST
Comrade Shostakovich! This way
please.

They pass a large studio - behind soundproof glass, a half
sized RADIO ORCHESTRA rehearses under the baton of Karl
Eliasberg. Many chairs sit empty.

The Host leads Dmitri into the BROADCAST BOOTH. Sets him down
in front of the microphone, drapes headphones over his head.

RADIO HOST (CONT'D)
Wait for the red light. When it
goes on, it is time to speak.

DMITRI

Already? One moment. Do you have a piece of paper?

The Radio Host reaches into a pile of used papers, hands one to Dmitri.

Dmitri quickly scans what is already written on the page:

PLANS FOR NEXT BROADCASTS

1. HOW TO CONSTRUCT BARRICADES
2. FIGHTING WITH MOLOTOV COCKTAILS
3. HOME DEFENSE

Dmitri flips the page and scribbles notes for himself.

DMITRI (CONT'D)

Ok, I am ready. Do I press anything?

RADIO HOST

No, just wait for the red light.

The Host leaves Dmitri. Patiently waiting in front of the microphone, staring at the light.

He clutches the paper - he's never done this before.

The light turns red. Dmitri CLEARS his throat.

DMITRI

One hour ago, I finished composing the second movement of a large symphonic work...

He meets eyes with the Host, who nods in approval.

INT. SHOSTAKOVICH APARTMENT - DAY

Nina, Galina and Maxim crowd around the radio, listening to Dmitri's voice over the broadcast.

DMITRI (V.O.)

If I succeed in writing well and am able to finish the third and fourth movements, this work will be called my seventh symphony.

INT. MARIA'S APARTMENT - SAME

Sofia, Maria and Dima are equally glued to the radio.

EXT. STREETS OF LENINGRAD - SAME

Citizens stare at city loudspeakers as Dmitri's voice echoes throughout Leningrad.

DMITRI (V.O.)

Why am I mentioning this? So that those of you listening know that life goes on in our city normally. Our beautiful Leningrad, the city I grew up in, with its wide avenues, monumental squares and glistening canals. We are all now doing our duty.

Citizens nod along, hanging on every one of his words.

EXT. LENINGRAD OUTSKIRTS - SAME

It's a completely different world outside the city walls. Trenches, barbed wire, land mines... A death zone.

Radio loudspeakers have been purposely set up to blare outside the city, the sound carrying across no man's land.

Dmitri's broadcast reaches the ears of NAZI SOLDIERS, who listen by their tanks, artillery and war machines.

DMITRI (V.O.)

Soviet musicians, brothers-in-arms, dear friends... Our art and culture are now in great danger. Let us work honestly and selflessly, defending our music and our city!

As the broadcast ends, a NAZI TRANSLATOR reports to his COMMANDER, translating Dmitri's words. The Commander's expression sours, his wheels turning.

EXT. STREETS OF LENINGRAD - DAY

Dmitri strides home, his steps more confident.

Citizens recognize him, their eyes filled with a glimmer of hope. Their spirits temporarily lifted. They nod at Dmitri with great respect and appreciation.

As Dmitri crosses the river, an AIR RAID siren rings out. The unmistakable BUZZ of German Bombers...

Dmitri ducks into an ALLEY, shuts his eyes and covers his ears, praying to be spared.

But no explosions. The Bombers pass, the buzzing fading away.

When the sirens stop, Dmitri opens his eyes. LEAFLETS rain down from the sky. Blanketing buildings and streets.

A leaflet flutters down. He grabs and reads it: YOU ARE SURROUNDED, THROW AWAY YOUR WEAPONS. SURRENDER OR DIE!

As Dmitri watches more Nazi intimidation leaflets fall, he can't help but smirk. Did he just get into the enemy's head?

INT. SHOSTAKOVICH APARTMENT - NIGHT

The flickering light of a candle - the electricity is out.

If Dmitri was passionate about composing before, now he's consumed. Music cascades onto the page as he tirelessly works on the THIRD MOVEMENT.

The phone RINGS. He's confused - this late? He picks up.

DMITRI

Yes?

OPERATOR (V.O.)

One moment for Deputy Premier
Beria.

Dmitri tenses up.

BERIA (V.O.)

(filtered, over phone)

Pack your things - we are getting
you out.

DMITRI

What? That is tremendous news!

BERIA (V.O.)

You will be flown to Moscow. Be at
the central airport at midnight
with your wife and children.

DMITRI

Yes, absolutely, but... I also have
my mother, sister and nephew. What
about them?

BERIA (V.O.)
There is only room for four. Do not
be late.

CLICK.

DMITRI
Nina!

EXT. SMOLNOYE AIRPORT - OCTOBER 1, 1941 - NIGHT

Just outside Leningrad, a small transport plane awaits.

Dmitri hurries onto the tarmac with Nina, the children and a few suitcases. They've also brought along Sofia.

They're met by COMRADE KALINNIKOVA, a tough as iron, stern woman who is impossible to read.

COMRADE KALINNIKOVA
(gesturing to Sofia)
We do not have room for any more.

DMITRI
We can leave a suitcase... Maxim
can sit on my lap.

SOFIA
Mitya, it is ok.

COMRADE KALINNIKOVA
It is a weight problem. Time to
board.

Nina helps Maxim and Galina onto the plane, which has no seats or other passengers, just crates of cargo. They wedge themselves between crates, sitting on top of their suitcases.

Refusing to leave his mother, Dmitri pushes Sofia forward.

DMITRI
Then take her instead. I will find
another way out.

SOFIA
Mitya, you cannot.

DMITRI
I can keep composing here.

COMRADE KALINNIKOVA
I have my orders. The plane will
not leave without you on board.

DMITRI

But...

SOFIA

Mitya...

DMITRI

Mama.

SOFIA

My son. Listen.

Dmitri finally quiets down.

SOFIA (CONT'D)

This symphony... It is your weapon.
Finish and wield it, not just for
yourself. But for your family, for
our people. For me.

Dmitri is nearly in tears.

COMRADE KALINNIKOVA

We must go now.

DMITRI

What about another time? Can you
get her out later?

COMRADE KALINNIKOVA

It is not up to me.

DMITRI

I need some assurance.

COMRADE KALINNIKOVA

You will need to speak to high
command.

DMITRI

How about we call them right now.

COMRADE KALINNIKOVA

Impossible.

She gestures to the plane.

SOFIA

My son...

DMITRI

Tell Marusya and Dima I am getting
them out too.

SOFIA

I love you with every ounce of my
soul.

Dmitri gives his mother the hug of a lifetime. This might be
goodbye forever. Sofia kisses Dmitri's cheek.

Sofia stays strong until her son boards. As the plane door
closes, she turns away, tears streaming down her face.

INT. TRANSPORT PLANE - NIGHT

Dmitri crams in with his family, awkwardly sitting on top of
a suitcase between crates.

The TRANSPORT PILOT shuts off all the cabin lights and
addresses the family.

TRANSPORT PILOT

We will be taking off momentarily.
If I signal you in the air, be
prepared to flatten yourselves on
the floor.

GALINA

Why the floor, papa?

DMITRI

It is a game, Galechka. A game.

The plane's PROPELLOR fires to life and they taxi.

Dmitri and Nina clutch their children as the plane
accelerates, then takes off into the night sky.

They rise over dark Leningrad, the city blacked out. The only
lights coming from distant burning buildings.

They fly over enemy lines: trenches, bunkers, artillery,
tanks and newly-built roads.

Then devastated countryside, earth scorched by war. Little
lights flicker below.

MAXIM

What are all those lights?

TRANSPORT PILOT

The Germans are firing at us...

NINA

Another game, Maximchik.

She pulls Maxim close and shields his view. Dmitri takes Nina's hand, clutching tightly as the Pilot banks hard, swerving the plane out of harm's way.

EXT. SKIES OVER SOVIET UNION - SAME

As the plane passes enemy lines and ascends into the night sky, it soars over LAKE LADOGA to the east, then over dense forests and fields, nature in all directions.

INT. TRANSPORT PLANE - LATER

Nina and the children are asleep.

Dmitri is glued to the window, studying the dark, still, yet breathtaking landscape. HE HEARS moving string themes, sounds of vast nature, of endless expanses mixed with melancholy.

He quietly reaches for his briefcase, careful not to wake his family. He pulls out his work-in-progress symphony and a pen.

He flips to the first page of the Third Movement, the Adagio. And writes a title below the III: "HOME EXPANSES."

EXT. FIELD RUNWAY - DAWN

The Transport Plane lands on a grassy runway surrounded by forest.

The plane taxis to a stop, the door opens and the Pilot helps Dmitri and his family with their luggage.

A BLACK CAR awaits.

TRANSPORT PILOT
Welcome to Moscow.

INT. MOSKVA HOTEL ROOM, MOSCOW - DAY

The Shostakoviches move into a hotel room, only slightly bigger than the one Dmitri stayed in years ago, during that fateful Stalin performance.

DMITRI
They promised us an apartment.

NINA
It is enough space.

The windows are boarded up for protection. Dmitri peers through a small slit between planks, the view a far cry from the last time he was in this hotel:

Red Square is empty, not a soul in sight. St. Basil's is covered by tarps so it can't be identified from the air.

Dmitri picks up the phone.

DMITRI

Yes, operator. Please patch me through to Leningrad. Maria Frederiks.

Nina unpacks, helping Galina and Maxim change their clothes.

Dmitri clutches the phone as the line RINGS. And RINGS.

DMITRI (CONT'D)

No answer.

NINA

I am sure they are alright - the lines were not working when we left.

Dmitri quietly sets down the phone, unconvinced.

He opens his briefcase, takes out his precious symphony. The one thing he can control. But he just stares at the pages, unable to work.

Instead, he finishes writing a letter. Addressing it to the Leningrad Conservatory in Tashkent.

DMITRI

What do you think the odds are of this reaching Glikman?

NINA

Better than the odds of you getting one back.

GALINA

Mama, I am hungry.

MAXIM

Me too.

NINA

I am not sure they have room service...

DMITRI
One moment. Papa will help.

INT. MOSKVA HOTEL LOBBY - DAY

Dmitri wanders to the empty front desk, the lobby devoid of life.

He glances through several newspapers, including Pravda. Headlines read:

"Brave Russian soldiers push back weak enemy forces."

"Germans retreat from Moscow after Red Army victory."

He hears a CELLO in an adjacent office. Dmitri perks up.

DMITRI
Anton?

The cello stops. The Bellhop hurries to the front desk, embarrassed to see Dmitri waiting for him.

BELLHOP
Very sorry, sir. We do not have many visitors these days.

DMITRI
You play Tchaikovsky beautifully.

BELLHOP
The lessons help.

DMITRI
I cannot think of a better time to lose yourself in music.

BELLHOP
You would know best.

Dmitri holds up the overly optimistic newspapers.

DMITRI
Any of this true?

BELLHOP
Well...

DMITRI
Do not worry, my lips are sealed.

BELLHOP

I hear the enemy is less than 100 kilometers away. The Germans are calling it Operation Typhoon.

DMITRI

From the fire into the flame. Is the mail still working?

BELLHOP

As far as I know.

DMITRI

Very good.

He hands over the letter addressed to Glikman.

DMITRI (CONT'D)

Do you know where can I find groceries?

BELLHOP

Most stores are empty. But I can take you to a little local shop...

INT. MOSKVA HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Maxim and Galina have chocolate smeared on their faces, enjoying the candy brought back by Dmitri.

Nina happily eats a blintz as Dmitri enjoys a glass of vodka. A rare moment of peace and nourishment.

KNOCK KNOCK. Everyone tenses up. Dmitri opens the door to:

BERIA

Good evening. Care for a walk?

INT. MOSKVA HOTEL - HALLWAYS - NIGHT

Dmitri nervously follows Beria as they pace the long, empty corridors of the hotel.

BERIA

When do you anticipate to be finished?

DMITRI

I am working as quickly as I can.

BERIA

It is a matter of national importance.

DMITRI

Understood.

BERIA

And what is the nature of your composition?

DMITRI

The nature?

BERIA

What is the symphony about?

DMITRI

The music speaks for itself. It is why we have notes instead of words.

BERIA

Yes but I must know your intention. Music, film, art... It has its place in our world. To influence. To inspire...

DMITRI

To control...

BERIA

Careful.

Dmitri takes great care in choosing his next words.

DMITRI

Rest assured, Comrade Beria. You of all people will be most pleased with the final result.

BERIA

I hope for your sake that you are correct.

DMITRI

Now there is still the matter of my family in Leningrad...

BERIA

You are in no position to make demands, Shostakovich. Be thankful you have anyone with you at all. Galina, Maxim... They are precious, are they not?

Dmitri nods quietly.

INT. MOSKVA HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

A pale Dmitri returns to his family. Nina instantly hugs him.

NINA
Thank god.

DMITRI
Our dear leader knows about the
symphony.

NINA
Good. You are useful again.

DMITRI
Not useful enough. No promises
about the others.

NINA
Give them time.

An air raid siren BLARES.

DMITRI
Here we go again.

He calmly collects his symphony before following Nina and the children out.

INT. MOSKVA HOTEL ROOM - ANOTHER NIGHT

Dmitri composes as the children run in circles in the small space, bored out of their minds.

Antiaircraft guns BOOM in the distance, the walls trembling with every shot. But no one reacts, accustomed to the noise.

Nina peers out the window slit. Red Square is shrouded in darkness but in the flashes of gunfire, she sees WORKERS. Rigging the walls of the Kremlin with DYNAMITE.

NINA
Mitya, something is not right...

DMITRI
Things have not been right in a
long time.

NINA
Come look at this.

DMITRI

Let me just finish this phrase...

A CITY SIREN goes off. Different from the usual air raids.

Dmitri sets down his pen.

Everyone jumps as the phone RINGS. Dmitri picks up.

DMITRI (CONT'D)

Yes.

(listening, eyes widening)

The enemy is where? Yes, yes. Of course.

He slams the phone.

DMITRI (CONT'D)

It appears we are popular - the Germans are following us.

EXT. STREETS OF MOSCOW - NIGHT

The Shostakoviches weave through packed streets, struggling to make their way through a sea of people. It's difficult to see as all the city lights are out.

NINA

Hold tight, children.

She carries a suitcase while clutching Galina's hand. Dmitri clutches Maxim's, both children holding on for dear life.

With his other arm, Dmitri awkwardly carries a suitcase with his briefcase wedged under his arm.

The streets swarm with people trying to escape the city, some taking advantage of the situation:

- LOOTERS break into grocery stores, taking any last rations.
- GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS throw papers into barrels and light them on fire, burning records.
- REFUGEES cry out, unsure where to go.

NINA (CONT'D)

Mitya, a little slower please.

DMITRI

We are not missing the train this time.

EXT. KAZANSKY RAIL STATION, MOSCOW - NIGHT

The Shostakoviches wedge onto a platform with other cultural workers: BALLERINAS, PAINTERS and COMPOSERS.

A TRAIN awaits on the tracks.

A VIOLINIST carrying his instrument case recognizes Dmitri.

VIOLINIST

Ah, we are in esteemed company.

DMITRI

I have seen you before. Was it the opera?

VIOLINIST

Indeed. I played in Lady MacBeth.

DMITRI

I am sorry.

VIOLINIST

I do not care what was said. It is a brilliant work.

DMITRI

If only a certain someone had agreed.

VIOLINIST

You are the least of his worries now. He is too busy hiding underground.

DMITRI

Underground?

VIOLINIST

The enemy is only 20 kilometers away. Our leader was supposed to evacuate but refused. He and central command are in the metro tunnels now, dictating from below.

DMITRI

A noble effort - for a change.

The doors open and the CONDUCTOR steps out.

CONDUCTOR

Train to Kuybyshev!

Everyone elbows inside.

Dmitri and Nina set down the suitcases and help the children onto the train, struggling against the flood of passengers.

With his wife and children aboard, Dmitri turns to grab the suitcases. They're GONE.

He panics, looking every direction but no luck in the chaos.

Realizing he still has the briefcase, he boards the train.

INT. TRAIN CAR - CONTINUOUS

The car is crammed at double capacity: half the people stand, half sit. In darkness with no lights on.

Several PASSENGERS recognize Dmitri and nod respectfully. Dmitri stands, allowing Nina to sit with Maxim and Galina.

Noticing the frightened eyes of his children, he reaches into his pocket and pulls out a bar of chocolate. Maxim and Galina eagerly take the treat and share, calming down.

KSHHHH the train lurches to life. Departing the dark city.

Dmitri leans on a wall, exhaling a big breath. Then closes his eyes...

INT. TRAIN CAR - SEVERAL MORNINGS LATER

Vast Russian countryside passes by as rain falls outside open windows, a cool breeze helping the hot and sweaty car.

Passengers have shifted. Those that started out standing are now seated and vice-versa.

Except Dmitri: he leans on the wall, asleep in an impossible position. His hair unkempt, stubble growing on his face.

The train pulls onto a passing track and SQUEALS to a stop. Dmitri's eyes crack open. He slowly remembers where he is.

Passengers look out the windows, unsure why they stopped.

Suddenly, on the main track, a MILITARY TRAIN thunders the opposite direction. Carrying soldiers, artillery, even entire tanks back towards Moscow.

When the Military Train passes, their train creaks to life, moving back onto the main track and continuing its journey.

Fully awake now, Dmitri glances at his children, who are still sound asleep.

He feels for his briefcase, coming up empty handed. He scans his surroundings - nothing but crammed passengers.

DMITRI
Ninotchka, where is my briefcase?

NINA
I do not know...

DMITRI
My score...
(yelling to crowd)
Has anyone seen my briefcase?
(passengers shake heads)
No no no...

Now Dmitri is in a full-blown panic. He shoves past crowded people, wedging himself through the narrow space in search of his most prized possession.

NINA
Was it with the suitcases?

DMITRI
No no. I brought it on board - I am certain.

NINA
Then it must be here. Unless you ever left this car?

DMITRI
To go where? Stroll through our luxurious train?

NINA
Be nice, Mitya.

DMITRI
Wait...

INT. TRAIN BATHROOM - MORNING

Dmitri bursts into the bathroom, which hasn't been cleaned in days.

He splashes over puddles - dirty water and worse.

And there in the corner is the briefcase, floating in filth.

Without hesitation, Dmitri grabs it.

INT. TRAIN CAR - MOMENTS LATER

Dmitri runs in, trying not to touch anyone with the dirty briefcase. He searches for a napkin, paper...

Other passengers help, offering up an extra sock, ripping off a shirt sleeve, even a towel. All their hope wrapped up in Dmitri's work.

DMITRI

Thank you...

Dmitri meticulously wipes off the briefcase like it's the holy grail.

Once dry, he pops open the latches. Everyone looks on expectantly. He reaches inside...

Miraculously, the score is perfectly intact and dry. He sighs in relief.

INT. TRAIN CAR - LATER

As the train continues its long journey, Dmitri stands with the Violinist and a COMPOSER. They page through his work-in-progress score, slowly digesting the music.

COMPOSER

Monumental... I have never seen anything like it.

VIOLINIST

You will need quite the orchestra for a performance.

DMITRI

Yes, it is shaping up to be my biggest and longest symphony yet.

COMPOSER

Have you come up with a theme for the finale?

DMITRI

Not yet. We know it begins with war. More difficult to imagine how the whole thing ends.

VIOLINIST

What are you calling it?

DMITRI

The symphony? Number seven, I suppose.

VIOLINIST

A work of this importance demands a name.

COMPOSER

He is absolutely right. Something the people can rally behind.

DMITRI

Hmmm. I had not considered it.

As Dmitri retreats into his thoughts, their train pulls aside once again, letting another one pass the opposite direction.

It's a HOSPITAL TRAIN with a red cross painted on the side.

INT. TRAIN CAR - DAYS LATER

The train RATTLES over a steel bridge, flying high above the crystalline waters of the vast VOLGA RIVER.

The train slows as it approaches a city on the opposite bank.

DMITRI

What is this stop?

VIOLINIST

Kuybyshev.

DMITRI

Ninotchka, let us gather our things.

NINA

What things?

DMITRI

Excellent observation.

NINA

Why not go all the way to Tashkent? Glikman is there with the Conservatory.

DMITRI

The national government is moving here. If it is good enough for them, it is good enough for us.

NINA

Since when do we follow the government?

DMITRI

I desperately need to get back to work. Would you prefer to stay on this train for several more weeks?

Nina checks their cramped, smelly surroundings. Their dirty, unwashed clothes.

NINA

Children, time to go.

EXT. KUYBYSHEV - DAY

The Shostakoviches make their way through the streets of Kuybyshev, a much more rural city than Leningrad or Moscow.

With unpaved, dirt-covered streets and horses outnumbering cars, the city is a throwback to a different era.

It's a chaotic mess of refugees, incoming passengers and government officials setting up shop.

SEPARATED FAMILY MEMBERS hang posters looking for loved ones.

INT. SCHOOL CLASSROOM - DAY

The Shostakoviches are brought into a classroom that will be their temporary home - shared with a dozen BOLSHOI DANCERS.

The residents have created little makeshift rooms for themselves, sleeping on blankets and clothes, separating their space with clipped up sheets.

NINA

Galechka, what side would you like?

GALINA

How about... That one.

She points to the one remaining open spot along a wall. Nina and Dmitri take off their jackets and sit on them. The parents take off their shoes to keep the area clean.

DMITRI

What do you think?

GALINA

It is like camp!

MAXIM

I have never been to camp. Do we eat here?

NINA

Yes. And sleep.

GALINA

Look at all the ballerinas! Think they can teach me?

NINA

Of course, Galechka.

DMITRI

I need to call home.

NINA

Go. We will find something to eat.

INT. SCHOOL OFFICE - DAY

Dmitri has found the one phone in the building - in the office. He listens expectantly, the line RINGING.

After several more rings, CLICK. The line disconnects.

He hangs up the phone, disheartened.

INT. SCHOOL CLASSROOM - DAY

Galina and Maxim chow down on sandwiches, a luxurious lunch complete with butter, cheese and meat.

MAXIM

This is the best thing I have ever eaten!

GALINA

Wait until we have the candy!

MAXIM

Candy candy!

NINA

Take your time, not too quickly. Our bodies need to get used to these rich foods again.

Dmitri barely eats his sandwich, his appetite gone. He stares off into space.

NINA (CONT'D)

Mitya, you need your strength.
After lunch, I will take the
children for a walk so you can
work.

DMITRI

How am I supposed to compose at a
time like this...

NINA

No news does not necessarily mean
bad news.

DMITRI

So many are suffering and dying.

NINA

Yes - so write for them. Do not
forget, you have something the
government needs.

INT. GOVERNMENT OUTPOST, KUYBYSHEV - DAY

An old warehouse has been turned into a makeshift government
office. Desks and phone wires chaotically litter the space,
APPARATCHIKS scuttling about.

Dmitri scans the space to see if he knows anyone. Setting up
an office for himself is none other than Beria, who looks
like he hasn't slept in days.

DMITRI

Our fates continue to intertwine.

BERIA

Yes. You should be working.

DMITRI

I am writing as fast as I can. Is
there anything we can do to fly out
my family now?

BERIA

Work faster.

DMITRI

The finale will take some time.

BERIA

No doubt. Hopefully your efforts
are fast enough for their survival.

Dmitri tries to ignore the terrifying thought.

DMITRI

I have tried calling - no answer.
Can I send a telegram?

BERIA

(laughs)
To Leningrad? Telegrams have not
worked there in months.

DMITRI

How about sending a letter?

BERIA

I see no one stopping you.

DMITRI

Except perhaps the Germans.

BERIA

Careful.

DMITRI

Apologies.

BERIA

The tide is turning. The Americans
are joining our side of the war.

DMITRI

They are?

BERIA

Shortly. Their island in the
Pacific - the one with the peculiar
name. It was attacked by the
Japanese. A vile act of war.

DMITRI

Like Operation Barbarossa.

BERIA

Yes. So the Americans now need to
ally with the British and with us.

DMITRI

That is great news. But does that
help the chances of the letter
reaching my family?

BERIA

You will not give this up, will you? In another time, I would have you shot.

Dmitri bites his lip.

BERIA (CONT'D)

Leave the letter here. Lake Ladoga is starting to freeze over. We will soon be trying to send supplies in that way.

Dmitri takes out a letter, tucking it into an envelope with CASH.

BERIA (CONT'D)

Save your money. It is no good in Leningrad these days.

DMITRI

I must do everything I can. Thank you.

We FOLLOW THE LETTER as Beria drops it in a CRATE piled with other similar letters. People desperate to reach their loved ones in Leningrad.

The crate is picked up by a DRIVER who places it in a truck bed, alongside weapons and ammunition.

EXT. TRAIN STATION, KUYBYSHEV - LATER

The truck pulls up to a MILITARY TRAIN.

The crate with letters is loaded onto the train, sandwiched between armaments and SOLDIERS.

EXT. RUSSIAN COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

The military train thunders over vast plains and tundras, the scenery growing progressively colder and snowier.

EXT. KOBONA - NIGHT

The train arrives at Kobona, a village on the southeastern edge of Lake Ladoga. Blanketed in a sheet of fresh snow.

The village is a busy military operation. But a quiet one, everyone trying to move silently in the darkness.

The crate is unloaded from the train and placed on a SLEIGH connected to MUSCULAR HORSES. The crate sits alongside weapons and precious food supplies.

The horses pull the sleigh next to a pair of SUPPLY TRUCKS at the edge of the lake, its surface frozen solid from a harsh incoming Russian winter.

A CAPTAIN peers through binoculars, looking across the still lake. The opposite edge too far to see at night.

He turns to the southern edge of the lake, where ominous lights flash back and forth: German forces.

CAPTAIN

Now.

The sleigh COACHMAN flicks the reins and the horses take off. The TRUCK DRIVERS rev their engines and floor it.

They embark on a dangerous, 27 kilometer mad dash across the frozen lake. What will be known as the ROAD OF LIFE.

EXT. LAKE LADOGA - NIGHT

Hooves THUNDER over cracking ice, the sleigh gliding along the snowy surface of the frozen lake.

The trucks ROAR to either side, staggering their positions.

The Coachman strains his eyes, struggling to see in the moonlight. He swerves, narrowly avoiding a fissure in the ice.

The trucks maneuver deftly, avoiding snow drifts and other deadly obstacles.

BOOM! A flash explodes far to their left, coming from the German-occupied southern edge of the lake.

CRASH! A mortar hits the lake to their right, showering ice and water into the air.

The spooked horses zigzag, the Coachman straining to control them. The trucks quickly maneuver to give the horses space.

More FLASHES - the Germans unleash a volley of mortars, dead set on taking them out.

KABOOM! One truck explodes as a mortar makes contact, its fiery remains sinking beneath the deadly ice. The doomed driver going down with it.

The remaining truck accelerates, creating distance between himself and the sleigh.

His wheel hits a hole in the ice, bumping the truck into the air and spiderwebbing ice in all directions. The truck lands and continues on, the wheel wobbly but still somehow working.

The Coachman crosses himself as the horses thunder ahead, disappearing into the frozen darkness.

EXT. KOKKOREVO - NIGHT

Another military operation, only on the opposite side of the frozen lake.

A COMMANDER stares through binoculars, looking for any signs of life on the dark lake. Nothing but snow and ice.

But then he hears RUMBLING. The unmistakable sound of HOOVES pounding on ice. Then the REV of a motor.

SOLDIERS run to help the incoming sleigh and truck - one of the sleigh's runners is broken and the truck has a flat tire.

They made it - barely.

As the Coachman and Truck Driver are helped out of their vehicles, the supplies are unloaded. Including the crate with letters, which is quickly placed onto a train...

EXT. FINLAND STATION, LENINGRAD - NIGHT

The train pulls into a desolate, icy station. Eerily quiet.

WORKERS unload the letter crate and other supplies, ignoring the FROZEN DEAD BODIES that litter the station.

INT. MARIA'S APARTMENT LANDING - DAY

A MAIL CARRIER slowly ascends the stairs, his steps sluggish from malnutrition. His breath steaming in the frozen air.

He drops letters on doorsteps. Some have a growing pile of mail that'll never be read.

As his steps ECHO on the landing, a door CREAKS open.

Maria steps out, waiting expectantly. She looks far thinner than before, her cheekbones swollen.

MARIA

Any news?

MAIL CARRIER

Today you are in luck, Maria
Dmitriyevna.

He hands her the letter from Dmitri. She eagerly takes it.

MARIA

Luck is all we need now. May peace
be with you.

MAIL CARRIER

And with you.

INT. MARIA'S APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Maria quietly closes the door.

She passes a wood-burning stove: a TABLE LEG sticks out of
the fire, providing heat necessary to survive.

An emaciated Dima sits at the piano, slowly tinkering away at
notes while huddling under a quilt. The strings of the
instrument out of tune from the cold.

Maria and Dima's beds have been moved into the living room,
everyone staying in close quartets to maximize warmth.

On the couch, a skeletal Sofia rests under a blanket, barely
moving.

MARIA

Mama, we have news from Mitya.

Sofia slowly sits up, Maria's words breathing new life into
her.

SOFIA

Well go on. What does he say?

Maria rips open the letter. Cash falls out.

SOFIA (CONT'D)

My sweet son...

MARIA

Perhaps we can buy you a better
coat now, Dimochka.

Maria scans the letter.

MARIA (CONT'D)
They evacuated from Moscow. They
are now in Kuybyshev.

SOFIA
God be with them.

MARIA
I think we need God more...

SOFIA
And what of the symphony?

MARIA
He has one movement left.

SOFIA
We must write to him.

MARIA
You write and I will send it.

Sofia immediately grabs a pen and paper and begins to write.
Her hand trembling, the writing slow. But she is determined.

MARIA (CONT'D)
Dima, how about we read some Korney
Chukovsky.

DIMA
Mama, I am tired.

MARIA
As long as the mind keeps working,
the body will too. That is why we
read and play the piano. Here...

She reaches for a stack of children's books.

MARIA (CONT'D)
You pick. Krokodil, Moydodyr or
Doctor Aybolit?

DIMA
Aybolit...

MARIA
Lovely. Can you read to me?

As Dima slowly reads OUT LOUD, Maria checks the stove,
stirring a pot of SOUP. It's water mixed with a few potatoes
and strips of wallpaper, a desperate measure for nourishment.

Maria glances back at Dmitri's letter and notices a piano melody scribbled on one side. She sets it on the piano and gently plays. It's a melody from Symphony #7: a melody of hope.

Sofia and Dima listen. In that one brief musical moment, there's no war. No blockade. No starvation. Their spirits temporarily lifted.

Sofia scribbles away at her letter...

EXT. STREETS OF LENINGRAD - DAY

Bundled up from head to toe, Maria carries the LETTER TO DMITRI through snow, her feet pressing into powdery white.

The city has an eerie silence to it, completely transformed since we saw it last:

Many buildings are missing walls or have blown open holes.

Struggling CITIZENS trudge along, their bodies swollen with starvation, their gums recessed.

Some pull DEAD BODIES on sleighs, dragging them to cemeteries. Others simply deposit the bodies in the streets, leaving the corpses to freeze.

ICED OVER TRAMS stand immobilized, trapped in snowdrifts.

Maria notices a frozen body seated on a bench. Not thinking twice, she checks the pockets and takes a ration card.

She passes a city loudspeaker broadcasting from the radio station. All that comes through is the STEADY TICK OF A METRONOME. Constant. Rhythmic. Unsettling.

COAT SELLER (O.S.)
Warm winter coats for sale!

Maria approaches the COAT SELLER, a woman who is comfortably bundled in thick furs. Maria pulls out the cash.

MARIA
Do you have anything for children?
It is for my son. I... I only have
money, nothing to trade.

COAT SELLER
Money will do. You are in luck - I
have several small coats, they are
at my apartment nearby. Please
follow me.

MARIA

Thank you.

The Coat Seller takes Maria through an ALLEYWAY into:

INT. APARTMENT COMPLEX - DAY

Maria follows the Coat Seller up a flight of stairs. It's unnervingly quiet.

MARIA

Any neighbors left?

COAT SELLER

Sadly, no. I have not seen a soul in days.

MARIA

How did you come by all these coats in these difficult times?

COAT SELLER

Oh you know... One can collect such things. This way.

She JINGLES her keys loudly before inserting a key into a lock. Quite eager to lead Maria inside.

Maria studies the Coat Seller. Noticing her surprisingly healthy skin, her cheeks a warm red.

Maria pauses - something doesn't seem right.

COAT SELLER (CONT'D)

Please come in.

Maria looks into the apartment. Hears a CREAK.

MARIA

Is someone there?

COAT SELLER

My husband might be back...

MARIA

I thought you had not seen a soul in days...

As she peers in a little further, she sees BODIES. Hanging from hooks with severed limbs. This is the home of CANNIBALS.

Maria dashes back down the stairs! The Coat Seller tries to grab her but isn't fast enough.

COAT SELLER
Vladimir!

Her HUSBAND leaps out of the apartment, trying to catch Maria. He looks extremely healthy, his body a normal weight, his skin smooth and well nourished.

He grabs Maria's shoulder but she elbows him in the face. She reaches the bottom of the stairs, scrambling to the door...

EXT. STREETS OF LENINGRAD - DAY

Maria bursts outside and spots a SOLDIER loading bodies into a collection truck.

MARIA
Cannibals! Help me!

The Soldier lowers his rifle and runs for the building. The emerging Husband quickly turns and runs back inside...

Maria watches them both disappear into the darkness...

BLAM BLAM! Then silence.

EXT. LENINGRAD POST OFFICE - DAY

Maria catches her breath as she reaches the POST OFFICE.

She drops the letter to Dmitri into a bin.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. SCHOOL CLASSROOM, KUYBYSHEV - DAY

The letter from Sofia is now in Dmitri's hands, having miraculously survived a 1700 kilometer journey.

Dmitri paces, nervously turning the envelope in his hands.

DMITRI
What do you think it says?

NINA
We could try reading it...

DMITRI
You do it.

He hands Nina the letter. She tears it open.

NINA

(reading)

*My dearest son and grandchildren...
Hmmm, no mention of daughter-in-law. Your mother must be feeling fine.*

DMITRI

Please, go on.

NINA

We are still together in Marusya's apartment. It is very cold outside but we have enough furniture for the fire. Hopefully it will not come to the piano.

DMITRI

Can you imagine...

NINA

Food is very limited. There are no cats or dogs left in the city. But we are making do with our rations.

DMITRI

I should have sent more money...

NINA

We spend our days reading and playing music, especially that wonderful melody you sent. We await news about your symphony and dream of hearing it soon. Please finish it quickly. If you do not hear from us for some time, please do not worry. We love you very much.

Nina lowers the letter. That's it.

Dmitri shuffles through his symphony. The last movement is still blank - all he has is a title page marked "IV."

He throws on a coat.

NINA (CONT'D)

Where are you going?

DMITRI

The only hope of getting them out is if I finish this damn thing.

EXT. STREETS OF KUYBYSHEV - DAY

Dmitri strolls through Kuybyshev, observing the bustle in the streets:

Families arriving by train wander into the city, unsure where to go.

Government Officials study maps, arguing over supply lines.

Lost children study the faces of strangers, trying to find their parents.

Dmitri hears a QUIET, SEARCHING MELODY, one that originates in the strings. Sounding bleak and lost, unsure of what the future holds.

But then he notices WORKERS. Quickly, efficiently rebuilding factories shipped from evacuating cities. Bolt by bolt, piece by piece. Ready to manufacture armaments and war supplies.

He then sees SOLDIERS organizing. Boarding trains bound for the front. Their faces steely, filled with resolve.

The war effort is real and the people are determined.

Inspired, Dmitri hears a repetitive PHRASE in the high strings accompanied by a BOOMING BRASS. Strained yet powerful. A tremendous struggle, over and over again, that churns towards a hard-earned victory.

Dmitri rushes back to the school...

INT. SCHOOL CLASSROOM - DAY

Dmitri huddles over his score, the notes flowing onto the blank page.

It's an odd scene - Dmitri composing, separated from other residents by a sheet. On the other side, Ballerinas practice pirouettes and demi-pliés. Galina tries to imitate them.

But Dmitri is in the zone. He rapidly churns out measure after measure of the last movement. He knows what he needs to write and only needs his pen to translate it onto the page.

He flips back to the opening of the last movement and stares at the space below the IV. Thinking of a title. Finally it hits him and he writes "VICTORY."

He drops his pen, finished. Nina rubs his shoulders.

NINA
How do you feel?

DMITRI
Like I can breathe again.

INT. GOVERNMENT OUTPOST, KUYBYSHEV - DAY

Dmitri rushes up to Beria's desk and drops a huge stack of paper in front of him.

BERIA
Is this what I think it is...

Beria flips through the stack, awestruck by the pages and pages of handwritten score. The symphony is complete.

BERIA (CONT'D)
Very good, Shostakovich. Stalin
will be pleased.

DMITRI
It is ready for our people to hear.

BERIA
Perhaps the world too.

DMITRI
I thought the Americans were not
fully on our side.

BERIA
Yet. Perhaps this can inspire them.
While boosting morale at home.

DMITRI
So you have what you need. Now I
need something in return.

BERIA
Do not push your luck. What is it?

DMITRI
The rest of my family.

BERIA
I will inquire but do not get your
hopes up. You work on making copies
- we will need quite a few. Enlist
whatever help you need.

DMITRI
May I use your phone?

BERIA
Leningrad is still unreachable.

DMITRI
I am not calling Leningrad.

CUT TO:

INT. LIBRARY, TASHKENT - EVENING

An old library, illuminated by CANDLELIGHT.

Deep in the stacks, a phone RINGS.

A LIBRARIAN studies the ringing phone, confused. Unaccustomed to getting calls, especially in these times.

LIBRARIAN
(answering phone)
Yes?
(listening, nodding)
I believe so. One moment.

He sets down the receiver and hurries into the library.

He passes MUSIC STUDENTS, hunched over candle-lit desks, working on compositions and theory analyses.

These are evacuated students from the Leningrad Conservatory. 3000 kilometers from home but their education carries on.

The Librarian finally finds who he is looking for:

Isaac Glikman. Huddled in a corner, evaluating student music assignments.

LIBRARIAN (CONT'D)
Sir, you have a call.

MOMENTS LATER

Isaac takes the phone. INTERCUT:

GLIKMAN
Yes?

DMITRI
(quoting Pushkin)
"Upon the brink of the wild stream,
he stood and dreamt a mighty
dream."

GLIKMAN

(beaming)

Dmitri Dmitryevich! How long have you been preparing that?

DMITRI

Since we parted.

GLIKMAN

A highly worthwhile exercise. Where on Earth are you?

DMITRI

Kuybyshev. Where sadly there is no football. Listen old friend, I need your help.

GLIKMAN

Of course. Anything.

DMITRI

How quickly can you get here?

GLIKMAN

I could leave at once. But taking the train requires special permission these days.

DMITRI

Let me handle that part. Safe travels.

EXT. TRAIN STATION, TASHKENT - DAY

An even more rural outpost than Kuybyshev, Tashkent is deep into Soviet Russia in present day Uzbekistan.

A bundled up Glikman hurries to the train station, where a lone train car attached to a locomotive awaits.

He's greeted by a TASHKENT OFFICIAL.

TASHKENT OFFICIAL

Yes yes, Glikman, hello. Here are your papers.

GLIKMAN

Thank you. This is quite the greeting.

TASHKENT OFFICIAL

You are a distinguished passenger!

GLIKMAN
You must have me mistaken.

TASHKENT OFFICIAL
No other passengers on board. Where
would you like your pies?

GLIKMAN
Pies?

The Tashkent Official gestures to a stack of 20 boxes, steam
spilling out the sides.

TASHKENT OFFICIAL
20 of them. This is urgent
government business. No stops. We
need to make sure you are fed
properly.

Glikman lifts the lid of one box, revealing a MEAT PIE, still
piping hot from the bakery.

GLIKMAN
They look delicious. But why so
many?

TASHKENT OFFICIAL
Actually, this was a matter of
great debate.

GLIKMAN
Amongst who?

TASHKENT OFFICIAL
The mission panel.

GLIKMAN
Naturally...

TASHKENT OFFICIAL
Some argued that for 10 days, 10
pies would suffice. But what if
there are delays? Weather,
equipment failure, the Germans...
Any number of things could go
wrong. We cannot starve our
important guest!

GLIKMAN
There you are absolutely right.
Well, I best get started. I do not
want these pies to go to waste!

EXT. TRAIN STATION, KUYBYSHEV - DAYS LATER

As Glikman steps off his private train, he's met by Dmitri. The two old friends embrace.

DMITRI
Dear friend! How was your journey?

GLIKMAN
Please. No more pies.

DMITRI
Sorry?

GLIKMAN
Anything but pies.

INT. GOVERNMENT OUTPOST, KUYBYSHEV - DAY

Dmitri and Glikman march through the bustling office.

When Glikman sees Beria, he slows down, fearful.

GLIKMAN
Perhaps we should consider a
different plan...

DMITRI
He needs me. Even though he hates
me for it.

Dmitri steps up to Beria's desk.

DMITRI (CONT'D)
I need an apartment.

BERIA
As does everybody else.

DMITRI
Do you want copies of the symphony
or not?

BERIA
Remember who you are speaking to.

Beria stands, revealing a Korovin pistol at his side. Other OFFICIALS look on. Dmitri instantly settles down.

DMITRI
We... we need more space. To do our
work.

BERIA

I will see what is possible.

GLIKMAN

If the pies are any indication, we will have a palatial suite...

BERIA

Who the hell are you?

GLIKMAN

Nobody, sir.

INT. KUYBYSHEV APARTMENT - DAY

Wheels CREAK as a piano is rolled inside an apartment - the new residence for Dmitri and his family. It's cramped but far more spacious than the shared classroom.

Nina tidies up the apartment, arranging furniture, making it feel like home. She sets up a couch with a pillow and blanket for Glikman - his bed for the next few weeks.

Galina and Maxim explore their new shared bedroom.

Glikman stacks blank paper as Dmitri lays out the movements:

I. Allegretto - WAR

II. Moderato (poco allegretto) - REMINISCENCE

III. Adagio - HOME EXPANSES

IV. Allegro non troppo - VICTORY

Studying the movements, Dmitri shakes his head. Grabs a pen and crosses out each title, only leaving the roman numerals and tempo markings.

He fixates on the first page. Where it says SYMPHONY #7. He takes the pen and titles the entire symphony "LENINGRAD."

Glikman nods in approval, flipping through the movements.

GLIKMAN

Very good. You know, some of these themes... I remember a few from the pre-war days. Which Leningrad did you write this for?

DMITRI

The one that Stalin destroyed and Hitler merely finished off.

GLIKMAN

The war is not over yet.

DMITRI
That is my hope too.

GLIKMAN
One can feel that in your finale.

DMITRI
It is the victory of light over
darkness. Of humanity over
barbarism. At home and abroad.

GLIKMAN
Then we best get started.

INT. KUYBYSHEV APARTMENT - NEXT DAY

The apartment swarms with an army of COPYISTS. Some busy copying the score, others transcribing parts for all the different orchestra instruments.

Glikman manages the group, organizing this laborious process.

GLIKMAN
No no, we need three copies of the
score, not two! Stack them here
alongside the parts.

Paper and ink fly everywhere as stacks of music get copied.

Dmitri circles the room, double checking various copies and parts, correcting mistakes.

He leans over a Copyist with a pen and makes an adjustment.

DMITRI
Should be an E flat here.

As day shifts to night, the Copyists leave. Glikman takes his shoes off and collapses on the couch - his bed.

GLIKMAN
Not a bad first day.

DMITRI
Too many mistakes.

GLIKMAN
Thanks to your messy handwriting.

Dmitri pages through copies, editing mistakes. Glikman passes out, exhausted.

Nina enters, carrying a stack of mail.

NINA
 (hesitant)
 Mitya...

Dmitri takes the mail and flips through: it's a stack of RETURNED LETTERS addressed to Sofia in Leningrad. He struggles to hold in his pain.

DMITRI
 We must work faster.

THE NEXT DAY

The same thing all over again. A laborious process.

Glikman collects pages from the copyists, completing different stacks of copied scores and parts.

GLIKMAN
 We are still missing woodwind parts
 for the third movement!

Dmitri fixes more mistakes, then inspects the stacks. Each one accompanied by a thick envelope marked KUYBYSHEV, MOSCOW and TASHKENT.

DMITRI
 Tashkent?

GLIKMAN
 For our Conservatory. The new
 generation should perform this too.
 It was written by one of their most
 famous alumni.

DMITRI
 Very well. But we are going to need
 one more.

INT. GOVERNMENT OUTPOST, KUYBYSHEV - DAY

Dmitri sets a full score and parts on Beria's desk.

BERIA
 Make yourself at home.

DMITRI
 What about Leningrad?

BERIA
 What about it.

DMITRI

This ought to be performed in the city for which it is named.

Beria LAUGHS.

BERIA

You want a giant symphony played in a blockaded city where over half the population has frozen or starved to death?

DMITRI

Yes.

BERIA

You are out of your mind. Who is going to attend?

DMITRI

The people. Everyone will hear about it. I imagine it can only help the party.

This gets Beria's wheels turning.

BERIA

I suppose it might. Let me make some inquiries.

DMITRI

Coordinating this will not be easy. I need to be able to call into the city.

BERIA

Impossible.

DMITRI

Would you prefer I go myself?

BERIA

You tell me who you need to reach and we will find them.

Dmitri reaches into his coat and drops a LIST OF NAMES on the desk.

BERIA (CONT'D)

What is this?

DMITRI

Leningrad conductors. Hopefully somebody is left.

BERIA

You certainly are an eager one.

DMITRI

There is still the matter of my family.

BERIA

And relentless. Like the Germans.

DMITRI

They are much easier to stop.

BERIA

Alright, Shostakovich. Give me a few days to get some answers. You focus on the premiere here and getting a copy to Moscow.

INT. KUYBYSHEV APARTMENT - DAY

Glikman adds the last pages to the stacks.

GLIKMAN

And there we are.

The four copies are ready, each complete with score and instrumental parts, labeled accordingly:

MOSCOW, TASHKENT, KUYBYSHEV and LENINGRAD.

EXT. TRAIN STATION, KUYBYSHEV - NIGHT

With briefcase in hand, Dmitri finds Beria waiting by the train tracks.

DMITRI

As promised.

He pulls two thick envelopes from the briefcase, each marked for its destination: MOSCOW and TASHKENT.

These symphony copies are about to travel in opposite directions: one northwest, the other southeast.

BERIA

Excellent. More good news: Stalin loved my idea of a Leningrad performance.

DMITRI

Your idea...

BERIA

Indeed. The morale boost to our people is a top priority.

DMITRI

Glad someone is listening.

BERIA

I need the score immediately. We are going to fly it in.

Dmitri withdraws another packed enveloped.

DMITRI

A score like this?

BERIA

Perhaps we can be comrades after all. There is one issue. We checked your list. Most of your conductors evacuated, are dead or both.

DMITRI

Most but not all?

BERIA

There is one possibility. But I do not know that he is going to make it...

CUT TO:

INT. HOUSE OF RADIO, LENINGRAD - DAY

The radio station is empty. The air ghostly still in the frozen cold.

The studio that once housed the Radio Orchestra sits vacant. A lone metronome TICKS AWAY by a broadcasting microphone.

Suddenly, a shaky hand grips the wall. The skin withered, bones jutting out.

Karl Eliasberg has survived - barely. Although bundled up, he's a skeletal version of his former self, his body wasted away from starvation.

He hobbles into the cold, empty studio, every step an effort.

THUMP, he drops the Seventh Symphony score onto his conductor's stand.

He leans on the stand for support, resisting the urge to sit in a chair - he may never get back up.

He studies the empty studio. The empty seats. There's work to be done.

EXT. STREETS OF LENINGRAD - DAY

An icy silence grips the haunted city. Frozen bodies litter the sidewalks.

There's not a soul in sight. Most citizens are dying or already dead in their apartments.

CRUNCH: Eliasberg moves slowly through the snow, nailing handwritten signs to posts: "Leningrad musicians - please report to the Radio Orchestra."

Every nail saps Eliasberg's strength. He sits down. Needing a rest. Then quickly gets up - with rest comes death.

He continues on, his slow steps leaving a trail in the unforgiving snow.

INT. LENINGRAD - SERIES OF APARTMENTS - DAY

KNOCK KNOCK

Eliasberg bangs on numerous apartment doors:

- Many doors go unanswered.

- At others, a MOURNING PARENT, SIBLING or SPOUSE answers, shaking their heads.

- Eliasberg lucks upon a starving TRUMPET PLAYER. She's horribly emaciated, barely alive from malnutrition and the cold of her dark, electricity-less apartment.

As he explains the situation, she nods, reaches into her closet and pulls out a dusty trumpet case. Unused in months.

- Seeing piled up mail on a doorstep, Eliasberg doesn't even bother knocking.

- Eliasberg finds a few others, including a gaunt CELLIST and a skeletal PERCUSSIONIST.

INT. LENINGRAD HOUSE OF RADIO STUDIO - MARCH 30, 1942 - DAY

Eliasberg has gathered an orchestra of 15 MUSICIANS. A half-dozen strings, a lone percussionist, several woodwinds and brass. A far cry from the 100 needed to play the symphony.

Bundled up in heavy coats and hats, these haggard, withering musicians rub their hands together, their breath visible in the cold studio.

Eliasberg hobbles onto the podium, leaning on his stand for support.

ELIASBERG

Dear friends, thank you all for coming.

COUGHS from the shivering musicians.

ELIASBERG (CONT'D)

I know we are weak and have not played together in many months. But our country needs us now and we must force ourselves to work.

The Trumpet Player slowly pages through her thick music part.

TRUMPET PLAYER

This is impossible. We cannot play this.

ELIASBERG

We must reach deep within us.

CELLIST

I cannot reach any more.

ELIASBERG

I believe you can. Let us try.

He picks up a baton. Raises his hands, which shake from cold and malnutrition. The strings slowly raise their instruments - they're the ones that open the first movement.

And with a wave of the baton, Eliasberg starts the symphony. Barely anybody comes in. He stops.

ELIASBERG (CONT'D)

Let us try again.

The Cellist nearly passes out in his seat.

CELLIST

I do not have the strength.

ELIASBERG

Yes you do, Igor.

He raises the baton and starts the symphony once again. The strings all come in this time but they sound terrible. Weak and out of practice.

Eliasberg points to the Trumpet Player and Percussionist, who are supposed to come in together. They miss the entrance. Eliasberg stops.

ELIASBERG (CONT'D)

Once again.

TRUMPET PLAYER

I cannot. I can barely fill my lungs, let alone a trumpet.

ELIASBERG

You were meant to play this great symphony, Yevgenia. We must, even if it is our last performance in this life.

He starts the symphony again. It's a sad sounding effort but a few more musicians come in this time. But their energy fades quickly, forcing Eliasberg to stop.

ELIASBERG (CONT'D)

I suppose that is enough for today. Please take your parts home and practice before our next rehearsal.

The rehearsal lasted all of 15 minutes.

INT. SMOLNY PALACE, LENINGRAD - DAY

A grand palace hurriedly turned into Red Army headquarters. It's a bustling operation of exhausted SOLDIERS.

Eliasberg stumbles in, putting all his energy into this effort. He flags down a PRIVATE who looks far too young to be in the military.

ELIASBERG

I need to speak to General Govrov.

PRIVATE

The General is a busy man these days.

ELIASBERG

Not busy enough for what I have to say.

INT. GENERAL GOVROV'S OFFICE - DAY

Eliasberg is led into a room lined with maps, heavily marked with various army positions.

PRIVATE

He will be with you shortly.

Eliasberg collapses into a seat, his body desperate to rest.

His sunken eyes land on a HUNK OF BREAD sitting on the General's desk. He leans forward then back, fighting every cell in his body that needs nourishment.

GENERAL GOVROV

Maestro, welcome.

GENERAL LEONID GOVROV wears enough medals on his uniform to weigh down an ordinary mortal. His light, wolf-like eyes pierce Eliasberg's very soul.

Eliasberg tries to shake his hand but struggles to get up.

GENERAL GOVROV (CONT'D)

Please, sit. Hungry?

ELIASBERG

Yes... Thank you.

Govrov hands Eliasberg the bread. Eliasberg instantly chows down, unable to restrain himself.

GENERAL GOVROV

Slowly now. We do not want your stomach bursting - or worse. So you are the one leading our little morale effort?

ELIASBERG

Trying. We need more musicians.

GENERAL GOVROV

We need more everything.

ELIASBERG

Many more... I could use some help with recruitment.

GENERAL GOVROV
Signs, posters - you will have them.

ELIASBERG
I was thinking more about your military bands.

GENERAL GOVROV
They serve the front.

ELIASBERG
So will this performance.

GENERAL GOVROV
Not if the city falls. The army musicians fight alongside the rest of the ranks.

ELIASBERG
What if I only borrow them? They can return to duty after every rehearsal.

The General considers this.

GENERAL GOVROV
I do not know where they will find the strength but I suppose that is a problem for everyone these days. Very well.

ELIASBERG
I cannot thank you enough, general.

GENERAL GOVROV
We are both generals in our own way.

Eliasberg struggles to stand. The General offers him a hand but Eliasberg insists on standing up by himself.

ELIASBERG
I am alright. Please let Dmitri Dmitriyevich know we are working on his masterpiece.

CUT TO:

INT. ACADEMIC OPERA AND BALLET THEATER, KUYBYSHEV - DAY

The BOLSHOI THEATER ORCHESTRA sits on stage, rehearsing under the baton of the mustached maestro SAMUIL SAMOSUD.

They're practicing the INVASION THEME from the Seventh Symphony. 100+ musicians playing their hearts out, moved by this powerful work.

Samosud stops the orchestra, tries a section again, working on this very difficult symphony.

Shostakovich sits in the empty hall, listening carefully. His original score rests on the seat next to him but he doesn't need it - the music is all in his head.

MAESTRO SAMOSUD
15 minutes. Not a second more.

As the Musicians go on break, Samosud joins Dmitri.

MAESTRO SAMOSUD (CONT'D)
This is quite the undertaking,
Dmitri Dmitryevich. We certainly
have our work cut out for us.

DMITRI
We are all here to work. I am at
your disposal.

MAESTRO SAMOSUD
Thank you. How was the balance?

DMITRI
The woodwinds could cut through
more. Really pierce with those
shrill passages.

MAESTRO SAMOSUD
Consider it done.

SNAP. Dmitri notices a GOVERNMENT PHOTOGRAPHER on stage, snapping photos of the conductor's score. He wields a large device that looks like a hybrid photo/film camera.

DMITRI
Excuse me, what are you doing?

GOVERNMENT PHOTOGRAPHER
My job.

DMITRI
Yes I see. But what business do you
have photographing the score?

GOVERNMENT PHOTOGRAPHER
Government business.

DMITRI

You are taking photos of my music.
So it is also my business.

GOVERNMENT PHOTOGRAPHER

Talk to the boss.

INT. GOVERNMENT OUTPOST, KUYBYSHEV - DAY

Dmitri is already waiting for Beria as he returns from lunch.

BERIA

They really ought to stop letting
you in.

DMITRI

Why the photos?

BERIA

Your little symphony seems to have
sparked some interest abroad.

DMITRI

How so?

BERIA

Conductors are clamoring to be the
first to perform it. This could be
very good for us.

DMITRI

Depends on who is conducting. Do
you know the names?

BERIA

That is your department, not mine.
But this is precisely what our
motherland needs. The Americans
have sent some supplies for our war
effort but not nearly enough. The
symphony could help boost relations
between our countries.

DMITRI

How do you intend to get those
photos to them?

BERIA

Let us worry about that part. You
worry about the first performance.

INT. KUYBYSHEV APARTMENT - DAY

SNAP! The Photographer flips through the symphony score, taking pictures of every page with his MICROFILM CAMERA.

A second PHOTOGRAPHER stands alongside doing the same thing, making a second photographic copy.

INT. DARK ROOM - DAY

The Photographer carefully dips the two ROLLS OF MICROFILM into a long bath, developing them. He holds a section up to the red light, revealing pages of Shostakovich's symphony.

The two developed microfilms are rolled and placed in separate tin boxes. One marked for ENGLAND. The other for THE UNITED STATES...

EXT. AIRFIELD, KUYBYSHEV - NIGHT

The two tin boxes are handed to a Soviet Pilot, who carefully tucks them into a leather satchel.

He hurries onto the moonlit tarmac and boards a Yak-1 monoplane.

INT. ACADEMIC OPERA AND BALLET THEATER, KUYBYSHEV - DAY

Another rehearsal. Samosud works on the second movement.

Beria joins Dmitri in the hall.

DMITRI

Visiting my domain? What an honor.

BERIA

Do not get used to it. You must see something.

He pulls out a worn WORLD MAP.

BERIA (CONT'D)

As of this moment, your symphony is on a grand voyage around the globe.

He traces a finger from Kuybyshev to Tehran to Cairo. Then uses both hands, one going to London, the other across the Atlantic to Washington DC.

BERIA (CONT'D)

Through deserts, across continents
and oceans, into the hands of our
Allies.

DMITRI

Do I detect a hint of excitement?

BERIA

Mind your own business. We even
sent them your photo.

DMITRI

What? Which one?

Dmitri's self-conscious reaction gets a chuckle out of Beria.

BERIA

Such a worrier, Shostakovich! Think
of yourself like that man up there.
A conductor, waving your arms. Each
performance around the world one of
your violins. Or trombones. Or
whatever.

DMITRI

You are quite the poet.

Beria is not amused.

DMITRI (CONT'D)

There is still the issue of
Leningrad.

BERIA

Yes yes, your family. It is being
discussed.

DMITRI

Please discuss as fast as you can.
And how are the musicians faring?

BERIA

From what I have heard, not well.

DMITRI

Give them extra rations.

BERIA

Any other demands? Shall I relay
your concerns to Stalin himself?

DMITRI

Please do, he knows me quite well.
Playing music takes incredible
energy. You want this symphony
performed in Leningrad? The
musicians need to be fed.

CUT TO:

INT. LENINGRAD HOUSE OF RADIO STUDIO - DAY

A near empty pot of soup, with a few beans floating in water.
The remaining soup is ladled into a soup bowl and set aside.

Musicians stand nearby, finishing their soup servings.
Licking their bowls clean.

ELIASBERG

Please take your seats. We must
continue.

The orchestra musicians sit, ready to resume the rehearsal.

ARMY VOLUNTEERS have joined the group, playing instruments
while dressed in uniform. It's still a far cry from a full
orchestra but they're moving in the right direction.

A TROMBONIST hurries into the studio, clutching his case.

ELIASBERG (CONT'D)

Boris, you are late.

TROMBONIST

I was burying my wife...

ELIASBERG

May she finally find peace. Please
take a seat. You will have your
soup later.

As he raises his hands, about to resume the rehearsal, he
notices an empty chair beside an army Lieutenant VIOLIST.

ELIASBERG (CONT'D)

Sergei, where is your stand
partner?

TROMBONIST

He did not return from the front
last night.

ELIASBERG

May God be with him.

He then waves the baton, restarting the rehearsal. As he turns the page of his score...

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. THEATER GREEN ROOM, KUYBYSHEV - DAY

Another copy of the score: a hand flips through.

Maestro Samosud, dressed in a tuxedo, pages through the score, examining it one last time.

INT. ACADEMIC OPERA AND BALLET THEATER, KUYBYSHEV - DAY

BACK STAGE: Dmitri paces back and forth, a nervous mess. He peers out past the curtain. The orchestra is dressed and ready on stage. The theater is FULL - the audience buzzing with excitement for this momentous concert.

A COMPERE opens the curtain for Dmitri.

Dmitri walks out onto the stage to tremendous APPLAUSE. He fixates on his steps, trying not to trip over any Musicians, who all nod at him with reverence.

Dmitri steps up to a microphone, clearing his throat.

DMITRI

Welcome...

RADIO OPERATOR (O.S.)

One moment!

Dmitri stops. The microphone is wired to a RADIO SETUP broadcasting across the country. The RADIO OPERATOR fiddles with a knob, then points to Dmitri, giving him the go ahead.

DMITRI

Welcome, comrades. We find
ourselves fighting for the greatest
human ideals. A battle for our art,
for culture, for everything we have
built and created.

He looks through the audience and meets eyes with his family. Nina is there with Galina and Maxim, who wriggles with excitement - this is his first concert ever.

Beria sits in the back, arms crossed and serious as always.

DMITRI (CONT'D)

This seventh symphony is my weapon.
And I dedicate it to this struggle
with the enemy, to our coming
victory and to my dear city of
Leningrad.

More APPLAUSE. Dmitri hurries off stage and sits down with his family. He can't stop fidgeting. Nina takes his hand.

An eager Glikman sits just behind them.

APPLAUSE as Maestro Samosud takes the stage. The audience quiets to silence, eager with anticipation.

And with a wave of baton, the Bolshoi Theater Orchestra begins the world premiere of Shostakovich's Symphony #7.

SUPER: MARCH 5, 1942.

From the very measure, the Audience listens carefully, riveted and moved by this powerful work.

Maestro Samosud conducts in confidence, treating every measure and instrument entrance with the greatest of care.

The Musicians perform like never before, this musical moment the greatest of their careers.

Then the snare drum comes in. Softly at first, introducing that infamous little march and invasion theme. An incessant, unrelenting military beat drumming into everyone's brains.

Over the growing DRUMBEAT...

INT. AM-RUS MUSIC CORPORATION, NEW YORK - DAY

The Special Agent from the State Department delivers the precious tin box to an eager group of MUSIC AGENTS.

They carefully unspool the microfilm.

Then get to work with an army of ASSISTANTS, transferring each page of symphony from the negative onto paper...

INT. NBC STUDIO 8H, NEW YORK - DAY

The copied out parts are set onto dozens of music stands.

The NBC RADIO ORCHESTRA gathers for a rehearsal. As they wait to start, a MUSICIAN passes around:

TIME MAGAZINE, JULY 1942: on the cover, a heroic drawing of Dmitri in his firefighter uniform. Inspired by his photo on the roof of the music conservatory, helping the war effort.

The Musicians buzz with excitement - Dmitri is now an international celebrity.

The invasion theme INTENSIFIES...

INT. BBC RADIO STUDIO, LONDON - DAY

Across the Atlantic, the LONDON PHILHARMONIC performs Symphony #7 under the gargantuan baton of maestro HENRY WOOD.

Microphones throughout the BBC studio broadcast this London premiere into homes throughout England.

SUPER: JUNE 22, 1942

Their sound MELTS with that of the Kuybyshev premiere, playing the invasion theme together. The theme grows LOUDER.

INT. ACADEMIC OPERA AND BALLET THEATER, KUYBYSHEV - DAY

The Bolshoi Orchestra performs as one, a hundred musicians playing as a unified instrument.

Little Maxim waves his hands, conducting along. Foreshadowing his future as a renown international conductor.

Dmitri studies the audience. People are enraptured, this symphony evoking their intense feelings about the war. As well as the difficult time that preceded it.

INT. NBC STUDIO 8H, NEW YORK - DAY

The NBC Radio Orchestra performs under maestro ARTURO TOSCANINI. An intimidating, powerful conductor with tremendous poise and fury.

The orchestra also plays the invasion theme along with the sound of the Kuybyshev and London premieres. The growing, menacing theme reaching deafening proportions.

SUPER: JULY 19, 1942.

Here too, microphones connect to a radio switchboard...

ACROSS THE UNITED STATES

AMERICANS gather around radios, listening to this symphony being broadcast into millions of homes. Everyone is riveted by its power.

US NEWSPAPER COVERS spread the word of Dmitri the courageous composer. Creating a powerful, gripping piece of music while his country and city are at war with the Nazis.

Pro-Soviet propaganda posters pop up in New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Boston. Depicting heroic Russian Soldiers:

- HE'S FIGHTING FOR US TOO. LET'S HELP HIM FINISH THE JOB!

- DONATE TO OUR SOVIET BROTHERS IN ARMS!

NEWS REELS show PRESIDENT FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT signing the LEND-LEASE ACT. Then US ships delivering millions of tons of war goods to the Soviet Union: food, jeeps, tanks, warplanes.

Somehow, the symphony is helping to rally the Allies.

INT. ACADEMIC OPERA AND BALLET THEATER, KUYBYSHEV - DAY

Maestro Samosud brings the symphony to its explosive, thrilling conclusion.

And as the last note rings out into the hall, the people are on their feet. Screaming. Applauding their hands raw.

Intellectuals, officials and regular citizens alike, all moved by this powerful piece of art.

Even Beria, a man who has never shown vulnerability in his life, has tears streaming down his face. He wipes his eyes, trying to fight it, unable to stop the feeling in his throat.

Dmitri is stunned by the reaction until Glikman taps him and gestures to the stage, where Samosud waves him forward.

Dmitri awkwardly steps down the aisle, past the sea of admirers.

As he's welcomed onto the stage, his long lanky body takes an uncomfortable bow. Unsure how to handle this amount of praise. He quickly exits.

BACK STAGE

As Dmitri exits behind the curtain, Beria is already there waiting for him. Looking ecstatic and wrapping Dmitri in a giant hug. This monster has come a long way.

BERIA
Bravo, dear Shostakovich!

DMITRI
You are too kind...

BERIA
That really was something! Who would have thought that you, a little man scribbling on paper and always bothering me with annoying demands would possess such musical prowess!

DMITRI
I... thank you?

BERIA
Stalin will not be disappointed. And I have good news: we are evacuating the rest of your family.

DMITRI
Bless you! When?

BERIA
As soon as possible.

DMITRI
And how? By plane?

BERIA
No, too risky. The Road of Life.

Dmitri's expression drops.

DMITRI
You mean the Road of Death...

CUT TO:

EXT. KOKKOREVO - EVENING

A train pulls up to a dark station, barely visible in a furious blizzard.

The heavy car doors SQUEAL open, packed citizens spill out.

Amongst them are Sofia, Maria and Dima. Gaunt skeletons, starved specters of their former selves. Their heavy winter coats sagging over protruding bones.

They struggle through the YELLING MOB, fighting to get to trucks waiting at the edge of the frozen lake.

Dima COUGHS. Maria quickly walks in front of her son so the GUARDS don't see his pale face, sick from dysentery.

MARIA

Remember what we talked about,
Dimochka. Do not let the guards
see.

As they push ahead, Sofia takes out Dmitri's letter - the one with scribbled piano music. She hears that HOPEFUL MELODY...

INT. KUYBYSHEV APARTMENT - SAME

Dmitri sits at the piano, gently playing the same tune. The music the only thing calming his nerves in this scary moment.

EXT. KOKKOREVO - SAME

Sofia clutches Dmitri's letter with all her remaining strength.

As Maria and Dima struggle against the mob of people competing to get on trucks, Sofia elbows her way through, carving a path for her daughter and grandson. Using every ounce of fight she has left.

Sofia reaches a truck first and taps a SOLDIER.

SOFIA

My son is Dmitri Shostakovich!

SOLDIER

Make room!

The Soldier helps the three of them onto a crammed truck, setting them up under a heavy tarp, the only thing protection from the frozen wind whipping across the lake.

Maria, Dima and Sofia huddle together, shivering in the cold. Wedged next to other citizens. All on the verge of death.

Sofia HUMS Dmitri's melody. The music warming their souls as the truck REVS to life and drives onto the lake, disappearing into the dark night and blanketing blizzard.

The howl of the wind is only interrupted by the deadly BOOMS of German artillery...

INT. KUYBYSHEV APARTMENT - NIGHT

A telephone sits in silence. Save for the footsteps of a pacing Dmitri.

NINA

Mitya, please. It is late. You must sleep.

DMITRI

We should have heard something by now.

NINA

You must be patient. There could be any number of reasons we have not heard anything yet.

DMITRI

And many of those reasons are too dreadful to imagine.

He checks the phone to make sure it's plugged in correctly. Then paces more, his footsteps echoing through the apartment.

NINA

Let us go to bed, you will be more comfortable. We will hear if it rings.

Dmitri takes a seat but can't stop fidgeting, his whole body shaking with nervous energy.

DMITRI

What if something terrible happened...

NINA

What would you tell me? Do not give up hope. Not now.

Dmitri buries his head in his hands.

DMITRI

If only I had finished the symphony sooner... We could have gotten them out earlier.

NINA

No no, Mitya. You worked tirelessly. Even when the bombs were falling.

Dmitri breaks down, the tears coming.

DMITRI

A month, a week, a day... Anything
would have made a difference.

NINA

And what a difference you made.
More lives touched than you can
possibly know. And more to come.

She wraps her arms around him.

DMITRI

I would have done anything. Traded
places with them...

NINA

I know I know. You did everything
and more, my sweet Mitya.

She cradles Dmitri, rocking him back and forth.

He slowly calms down. Then remembers the silent telephone.

DMITRI

Please god...

But the phone doesn't ring.

KNOCK KNOCK. Both their heads swivel towards the door. Then
towards each other, nervous about what this could mean.

EXT. TRAIN STATION, KUYBYSHEV - DAY

Dmitri hurries down the tracks, rushing towards the train
that has just pulled into the station. He HITS the doors.

DMITRI

Open them! Please!

The train car door grinds open, revealing:

DMITRI (CONT'D)

Marusya! Dima!

His sister and nephew are thin and sickly but alive.

Dmitri hops on board and helps them outside. He pulls several
pierogies out of his pockets, offering nourishment.

DMITRI (CONT'D)

You must be hungry.

MARIA
Hungry is not the right word.

Dima shoves the pierogi into his mouth but Maria stops him.

MARIA (CONT'D)
Slowly, Dimochka. Let us not get
sick again.

Poor Dima is shivering so Dmitri gives him his coat.

As Dmitri embraces them closely, it finally dawns on him...

DMITRI
Where is she? Where is... Mama!

He hops into the train car, searching frantically and calling for her. The car is empty.

MARIA
Mitya...

DMITRI
No no no...

Dmitri's expression drops, expecting the worst news. Until Maria points to the next car.

SOFIA (O.S.)
My son...

Dmitri's head snaps towards the voice. Workers carry a stretcher out of the next car, a skeletal Sofia straining to see her son.

DMITRI
Mama!

He bounds towards her and wraps his arms around his mother's frail, weakened body.

SOFIA
I am ok I am ok... Please be
gentle...

Dmitri cannot let her go. Nina approaches, hesitant.

NINA
Sofia Vasilievna...

Sofia gives her the once over. Nina braces for insult.

SOFIA
My darling daughter-in-law...

She reaches out her frail hand to Nina, who is as surprised by the gesture and words as Dmitri. Nina takes her hand.

DMITRI

You are the bravest people I have ever known.

SOFIA

It was you. Your music. That little melody, it kept us going.

MARIA

There are many more back home that need to hear it. The entire thing.

SOFIA

Us too. I believe we have earned it.

DMITRI

Yes, hopefully very soon. I am working tirelessly...

FADE TO:

INT. KUYBYSHEV APARTMENT - SEVERAL MONTHS LATER - DAY

Nina, Galina and Maxim sit at the dinner table with Sofia, Maria and Dima, who have regained some of their lost weight.

It's no pre-war feast but still a tasty meal given the times: rye bread, borscht, cheese vareniki and ice cold vodka.

Dmitri sips the vodka while on the PHONE, offering some encouraging words.

DMITRI

It is all in your hands, dear friend. I have no doubt you will lead them magnificently.

He hangs up, turns on the RADIO and joins his family.

RADIO ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

We now take you to Leningrad for the long awaited city premiere...

Over the radio, they hear thunderous APPLAUSE...

CUT TO:

INT. LENINGRAD PHILHARMONIC GRAND HALL - DAY

Eliasberg walks out onto the stage, dressed for a performance of a lifetime.

SUPER: AUGUST 9, 1942

He passes the Musicians of the orchestra - not as many as the Kuybyshev premiere but enough to play the epic symphony.

Although it is now summer, the musicians are still skinny from starvation, the blockade unrelenting. They wear coats over their tuxedos and dresses, the extra layers insulating their fat deprived bodies.

Yet despite their physical state, they sit proudly, ready to use all their strength for this performance.

Eliasberg steps up to a mic and addresses the audience.

ELIASBERG

Comrades, a great occurrence in the
cultural history of our city is
about to take place.

The hall is packed, not a single empty seat. The audience is made up of thin, emaciated Leningraders who barely survived the long winter. Some wear suits, others are still in their military uniforms, showing up from the front.

The elite are there too - party leaders and generals alike.

This performance giving all of them a reason to survive.

ELIASBERG (CONT'D)

In a few minutes, you will hear the
Seventh Symphony of Dmitri
Shostakovich, our outstanding
fellow citizen.

His words broadcast throughout the city:

EXT. STREETS OF LENINGRAD - SAME

Now that the deadly winter is over, the city is slowly returning to life. Bodies have been cleared out and citizens plant vegetables in parks, trying to boost the food supply.

City loudspeakers project Eliasberg's voice for all to hear. Leningraders stop in their tracks, listening.

ELIASBERG (V.O.)
I just got off the phone with him
and he wrote this great composition
in our city...

INT. GENERAL GOVROV'S OFFICE - SAME

Soldiers huddle around a radio.

ELIASBERG (V.O.)
When the enemy was trying to enter
Leningrad...

General Govrov addresses his COMMANDERS.

GENERAL GOVROV
The performance must not be
interrupted. Use whatever artillery
you need on the opposite side of
the city, far away from the hall.

INT. LIBRARY, TASHKENT - SAME

Glikman is back in Tashkent at his teaching post. He and his
Conservatory Students crowd around a radio, listening raptly.

ELIASBERG (V.O.)
When the fascist swine was bombing
and shelling all of Europe. When
the world believed the days of our
great city and motherland were
over.

INT. LENINGRAD PHILHARMONIC GRAND HALL - SAME

The audience sits silently, hanging on every word.

ELIASBERG
This performance is a witness to
our spirit, courage and readiness
to fight. Comrades - listen!

He turns to the orchestra. Raises his hands.

The Musicians lift their instruments. An electrical, nervous
excitement palpable between them.

And with a wave of Eliasberg's baton...

INT. KUYBYSHEV APARTMENT - SAME

The OPENING MELODY of Symphony #7 blasts through the radio.

Dmitri closes his eyes, relishing this moment. He bobs his head along, this music woven into every fiber of his being.

Nina holds his hand. Galina and Maxim listen with wide, proud smiles.

Sofia, Maria and Dima soak in every second of this broadcast, hearing the complete symphony for the first time. Unable to restrain their tears.

SERIES OF SHOTS - RADIOS THROUGHOUT THE SOVIET UNION

The Leningrad premiere broadcasts to Moscow to Kuybyshev and beyond, from the European end of the country across Siberia to the far side in Asia.

From SOLDIERS on the front to FAMILIES in cities to FARMERS in the country, the broadcast reaches every USSR citizen.

Even in the MOSCOW SUBWAY TUNNELS, Soviet high command crowds around radios.

Including the steely leader himself: Stalin listens raptly, sipping Georgian wine, the red staining his mustache.

The MUSIC SWELLS...

EXT. LENINGRAD OUTSKIRTS - SAME

Outside the city walls of Leningrad, the Red Army unleashes a fusillade of artillery at the Germans, keeping them at bay with a volley of explosions and shrapnel.

As the Germans retreat from their positions, through the violent noise they hear the SYMPHONY BROADCAST. Blasting from city loudspeakers pointed right at them.

Their ears cannot escape this epic work of resistance, performed brilliantly by an orchestra that will never quit.

And right then and there, the fight fades from their eyes. All hope of winning the war dying away.

The MUSIC SWELLS AGAIN as Eliasberg pushes the orchestra to the end of the symphony, the sounds of strained victory screaming repeatedly...

OVER BLACK

TITLE 1: While the Siege of Leningrad lasted for another 17 months, Symphony #7 helped unify the Allies and marked a turning point in the Soviet fight against Germany.

ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE: May 1945, the Red Army surrounds Berlin and hoists the Soviet flag over the Reichstag.

TITLE 2: Shostakovich became a hero worldwide and at home, even receiving the prestigious Stalin prize.

TITLE 3: Yet his music would be banned again years later, continuing a lifelong struggle against artistic censorship. He never stopped composing and fighting back in his own way, until his death in 1975.

TITLE 4: Dedicated to all those that fight against tyranny - by any means necessary.

The final chord of Symphony #7 RINGS OUT...

FADE TO BLACK.



AUGUST 9, 1942: Karl Eliasberg conducts the Leningrad premiere of Shostakovich's Symphony #7.