

A Birthday in Stalingrad
By Harrison M. Starrett

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CHARACTERS

AVRAM: Soviet soldier, older brother of PASHA, early 20s

PASHA: Soviet soldier, younger brother of AVRAM, turning 18 years old, has a severe stutter that fluctuates from manageable to uncontrollable

FELIKS: Soviet soldier, hometown friend, early 20s

RUSLAN: Soviet soldier, hometown friend, early 20s

RASPUTIN: Soviet soldier, hometown friend, early 20s

LIEUTENANT KAZIMIR: Lieutenant of Soviet platoon, mid-30s

SOVIET SOLDIERS: early 20s

GERMAN SOLDIERS: early 20s

SETTING

The play spans from the evening of one day to the night of the following day. All action occurs in Stalingrad, Soviet Union, in September 1942, in the ruins of a street and the inside of a café on that street. The chaotic destruction of the war on the city of Stalingrad must be kept in major consideration. Specific necessities for the stage action include a door, a few windows, and a couple potted plants. Besides what has been previously stated, the set designer is free to do whatever else they wish... as if they weren't already.

SYMBOLS IN THE TEXT

A slash (/) indicates where the succeeding line begins. If there are two slashes in one line, the first slash indicates where the first succeeding line begins, and the second slash indicates where the second succeeding line begins.

Lines that are parallel are spoken simultaneously.

PASHA'S STUTTERING

Example of part-word repetition: "N-n-n-n-n-no."

Example of prolonged sound: "Nnnnnno."

Example of block or stop in speech: "No – no."

Blackout. The sound of bombing slowly enters. The sounds of buildings getting destroyed, gunfire, and men's voices shouting slowly follow, mostly overpowered by the bombing. Several beats later, the lights fade up to reveal the inside of a café, or what's left of it. Most of the rubble-ridden street can be seen through the windows and walls of the café. There are a couple of dead potted plants by one of these windows. It is late afternoon. Gunfire slowly wares off throughout the scene. Bombing continues to be overpowering and is close by. Lights flash sporadically, resembling nearby explosions from the bombing. German voices shouting become louder. AVRAM enters from stage left and bursts through a door to enter the café. AVRAM is dressed in a dirty Soviet Union infantry uniform. He is carrying a rifle.

AVRAM

Yelling to offstage left.

In here!

PASHA enters from stage left and enters the café through the door. He is carrying a five-round magazine and dressed like AVRAM. He gasps for breath.

FELIKS enters from stage left and jumps through a window to enter the café. He is carrying a five-round magazine as well and is also dressed similarly.

ALL seek cover from the explosions.

FELIKS

Barely audible against the bombing.

Blyad'... *(translation: Fuck...)*

RUSLAN enters from stage left and jumps through a window to enter the café. He is dressed like the others.

RUSLAN

Looking through the window he jumped through.

Move your ass, Rasputin!

RASPUTIN, dressed like the others, enters from stage left and attempts to climb through a window but trips and falls down.

RASPUTIN

Der'mo! *(translation: Shit!)*

RASPUTIN tries again. While doing so, a bomb detonates behind him, sending shrapnel to his back. The blast thrusts RUSLAN away from the window. RASPUTIN hangs across the bottom of the window, half in the café and half out.

RUSLAN

Rasputin!

RUSLAN drags RASPUTIN through the window and into the café.

PASHA

Looking out a window towards stage left.

G-g-g-germans!

AVRAM

Hide!

ALL hide.

GERMAN SOLDIERS enter from stage left and move past the café.

Some of them are yelling to each other in German.

RASPUTIN clings to RUSLAN and struggles to speak. He is bleeding from his mouth.

RASPUTIN

Ruslan... I... I /

RUSLAN

Interrupting.

Quiet.

RASPUTIN

I... I need you to /

RUSLAN covers RASPUTIN's mouth with his hands and shushes him.

GERMAN SOLDIERS continue to move past the café and then exit stage right.

German voices and gunfire fade away.

Bombing slowly fades to a lower volume and continues throughout.

FELIKS

Looking stage right.

They're gone.

RUSLAN

Rasputin? Rasputin?

RASPUTIN

I'm... I'm...

RUSLAN

Stay with me.

RASPUTIN
It hurts... oh it hurts...

RUSLAN
I know it does. / It's gonna be alright.

PASHA
Overlapping.
He – he oh – he oh – oh /

RUSLAN
Interrupting.
Of course he's not fucking okay, mudak! (*translation: ..., moron!*)

RASPUTIN
I can't feel /

RUSLAN
Interrupting.
Searching his body.
Where are you hit? Tell me where it hurts.

RASPUTIN
My back...
RUSLAN tries to turn him over.
RASPUTIN screams in pain,
stopping RUSLAN.
Stop, stop, / stop, stop...

RUSLAN
Overlapping.
I have to see it / to help you. I need you /

FELIKS
Overlapping.
Ruslan.

RASPUTIN
Interrupting.
No.

RUSLAN
I need you to work with me, Rasputin.

RASPUTIN
No, listen... / You have to...

PASHA
Moves to the opposite side of the café
from RASPUTIN. AVRAM follows.
This is all – all – all my /

AVRAM
Interrupting.
Breathe.

PASHA
I'm the – the – the reason – I could have /

AVRAM
Interrupting.
Places rifle down on a table or on the
floor.
Pasha, listen to me.

PASHA
I – I – I did this. / I did –

AVRAM
Overlapping.
He's gonna be okay. You did not cause this,
Pasha. Listen to me, this is not on you. Just
breathe. Breathe and focus, Pasha. Focus on me.

PASHA
This is – I – he's dying, Avram.

RUSLAN

Overlapping.

We're gonna try one more time, okay? We have to do this. Alright, here we go.

RUSLAN tries again to turn him over. RASPUTIN screams in pain and struggles with RUSLAN.

Come on, comrade.

FELIKS

Ruslan!

RUSLAN

Still struggling to turn RASPUTIN over.

Get something to stop / the bleeding. I need a cloth or /

RASPUTIN

Overlapping.

Ruslan... please... listen... I... blyad' ...
(translation: ... fuck...)

FELIKS

Interrupting.

Forces RUSLAN off RASPUTIN.

You're hurting him!

RUSLAN

We don't have time. We need to stop the bleeding before /

FELIKS

Interrupting.

Ruslan.

RUSLAN

What?

FELIKS

Look at him.

RUSLAN

I am looking at him.

AVRAM

It'll be okay. Look at me, brother. Don't look at him, look at me. There you go. That's it.

PASHA

Looking at RASPUTIN.

I'm sssso sorry. I /

AVRAM

Interrupting.

Don't say sorry. Just look at me and breathe. Breathe with me. In and out. Okay? In... and out...

AVRAM and PASHA breathe.

That's it. One more time. In... and out...
Better?

PASHA

Okay. Okay. I – okay.

AVRAM

Good. Stay here. Keep breathing.

PASHA nods. AVRAM moves to RASPUTIN, RUSLAN, and FELIKS.

RASPUTIN

Please... please / ... she needs...

FELIKS

Overlapping.

It's no good, comrade.

RUSLAN

Shut up.

FELIKS

It's not worth it!

RUSLAN

Shut up!

RASPUTIN

Sitting up straighter and grabbing RUSLAN.

Ruslan!

RUSLAN

What?

RASPUTIN

With the last of his energy.

Misha!

Falls back and goes limp. He dies.

RUSLAN

No. No no no no open your eyes. Open your eyes Rasputin and... you'll be okay. You're gonna be okay. You're gonna get home and... it's all going to be okay. Just open your eyes, comrade. Please.

FELIKS

Ruslan.

RUSLAN

Getting more aggressive. Slowly starts to shake him by his head and force his eyes open.

I know you can hear me, Rasputin. Open your eyes. Open your fucking eyes right now!

FELIKS

Ruslan!

RUSLAN

No!

RUSLAN stops.
Several beats.
RUSLAN slowly gets up and walks towards AVRAM.

AVRAM
Ruslan, I'm /
RUSLAN punches AVRAM in the face. RUSLAN continues to attack AVRAM. AVRAM attempts to push him off.

FELIKS
Struggles to get in between RUSLAN and AVRAM.
Get off... get off him, Ruslan... Ruslan!
Manages to get in between RUSLAN and AVRAM and pushes RUSLAN away.
RUSLAN rushes to the rifle, picks it up, and aims it at AVRAM.
Beat.
FELIKS slowly moves towards RUSLAN.
Put the rifle /

RUSLAN
Interrupting.
Aims rifle at FELIKS.
Step the fuck back.
FELIKS withdraws.
Aims rifle back at AVRAM.
Beat.

AVRAM
Don't do this.

RUSLAN
Why?

AVRAM
It's not my fault.

RUSLAN
You're the reason we're all here.

AVRAM
It's not my fault, Ruslan.

RUSLAN
Whose fault is it then?

AVRAM
I don't know, maybe the German fucking artillery.

FELIKS

You both / need to calm down.

AVRAM

Overlapping.

We all agreed to this. He knew what could happen.

RUSLAN

If not for you /

AVRAM

Interrupting.

No.

RUSLAN

If not for you, he'd be alive. Don't deny it.

FELIKS

Moves in between RUSLAN and AVRAM.

Put the gun down.

RUSLAN

Stay out of this, Feliks.

AVRAM

Don't you dare put this on me.

RUSLAN

Can't handle it?

AVRAM

It's you who can't handle it.

FELIKS

Slowly starts to step towards RUSLAN.

Ruslan, I'm taking the rifle, / okay. I'm taking the rifle.

RUSLAN

Overlapping.

Move out of the way!

FELIKS

Stepping closer to RUSLAN.

It's going to be okay. / You're not gonna shoot Avram. You're not gonna shoot anyone. You're gonna let me take the rifle, and we're all going to calm down.

RUSLAN

Overlapping.

To AVRAM.

He didn't need to die!

To FELIKS. Backing away.

Back off!

AVRAM

No one needs to die! No one needs to live either! What's to stop a shell from landing in this room right now? We have no power, no choice, no nothing.

RUSLAN

Then what's stopping me from killing you right now?

AVRAM

You tell me.

RUSLAN glances at PASHA.

RUSLAN

Idi na hui. *(translation: Go fuck yourself.)*

FELIKS

Slowly starts to grab the rifle.

Let me take it. Everything's okay.

RUSLAN

Starting to give in.

No.

FELIKS

Slowly taking the rifle away from RUSLAN.

That's it. Just let me take it... there you go.

Beat.

FELIKS slings the rifle over his shoulder and places a hand on RUSLAN's shoulder.

Okay?

Beat.

RUSLAN nods defeatedly.

Good.

Beat.

FELIKS gut-punches RUSLAN, making RUSLAN double over and land on one knee.

If you ever hold a gun on him again, or anyone else, I'll beat you so hard that you'll wish I shot you, you understand me?

RUSLAN

Barely audible.

Yes.

FELIKS

Do you understand me?

RUSLAN

Yes.

Beat.

AVRAM

Thank you.

FELIKS

Don't fucking thank me.

Beat.

To PASHA.

Help me move him.

PASHA moves to RASPUTIN with FELIKS. They carry RASPUTIN to a corner of the café.

Beat.

FELIKS finds a table and moves it to center stage. He places the rifle on the table and begins withdrawing contents from his coat and pockets and putting them on the table as well.

PASHA sees this and follows suit.

PASHA puts a can of spam, a shot glass, a canteen of vodka, and his five-round magazine on the table. AVRAM and RUSLAN look at each other for a beat and then slowly do the same.

AVRAM puts pieces of black bread, a shot glass, a canteen of vodka, and the rifle on the table. RUSLAN puts pieces of black sausage, a shot glass, and a canteen of vodka on the table. FELIKS puts his five-round magazine, a shot glass, and three canteens of vodka on the table.

ALL notice how much vodka FELIKS puts on the table.

FELIKS

I've been saving up.

AVRAM

No kidding.

PASHA

I don't know if I'll be able to – to – to drink all that.

FELIKS

You'd be surprised at what you can accomplish when you put your mind to it.

AVRAM

Especially after a few drinks.

Small laughter.

So, we have some bread, sausage, spam, a necessary amount of vodka, three magazines, and one rifle.

To RUSLAN.

Weren't you given a rifle?

Beat.

RUSLAN

I dropped it.

FELIKS

Zho-pa. (*translation: Ass.*)

RUSLAN

Some kozyol bumped into me when I was running and I lost grip of it. I wasn't going to stop and pick it up. (*translation: Some asshole...*)

FELIKS smirks.

What, you would have stopped running and picked it up?

FELIKS

No. I would have done something else instead.

RUSLAN

What's that?

FELIKS

Not drop the rifle.

RUSLAN

Suck my dick.

FELIKS

Did you drop that too along with / your rifle?

PASHA

Overlapping.

Whe – whe – where'ssssss the cake and candles?

Beat.

ALL realize where the cake and candles are.

FELIKS

I'll go check.

FELIKS walks over to RASPUTIN and checks his clothes.

He has it all, but the cake is... uh... not looking so good.

PASHA

What's wrong with – with – it?

FELIKS

It's soaked in blood.

Brings the candles to the table.

Beat.

Of course he was carrying the cake.

Beat.

PASHA

What are we g-g-g-g-gonna do with him?

Beat.

AVRAM

I don't think we can do anything with him.

Beat.

PASHA

You mean we're gonna leave him t-t-t /

AVRAM

Interrupting.

We can't go outside and bury him.

PASHA

But /

FELIKS

Interrupting.

We'd just be digging our own graves if we tried.

PASHA

But we can bring him back – we can – right?

RUSLAN smirks.

AVRAM

Pasha, it's /

PASHA

Interrupting.

We can't leave him here. We / have t-t-t-t-to try.

FELIKS

Overlapping.

We'd get caught, lined up, and shot in a matter of minutes. It's not possible.

PASHA

No – another way, there has to be another – way.

Beat.

Ruslan please – help me?

Beat.

RUSLAN

Just tell him.

Beat.

PASHA

T-t-tell me / what?

AVRAM

Overlapping.

Look, Pasha, we just can't.

PASHA

He's our friend.

AVRAM

And as a friend he would want us to not get ourselves killed / over him.

PASHA

Overlapping.

But – but /

AVRAM

Interrupting.

We don't have a choice.

Beat.

I want to bury him just as much as you do, but right now we have to worry about ourselves.

I need you to trust me here, brother.

Beat.

PASHA nods.

Thank you.

Beat.

AVRAM looks around and notices the dead potted plants by the window.

I have an idea.

Brings the plants to the table and makes room on the table.

Dumps both the plants and dirt onto the table.

Happy birthday!

Beat.

Puts the candles into the dirt.

It's your birthday cake!

FELIKS

Avram, did something hit you in the head when /

AVRAM

Interrupting.

Remember when we all made mud pies as kids?

Beat.

Well, let's just do that!

Beat.

We might not be able to eat it, / but at least it's something.

FELIKS

Overlapping.

Might?

PASHA

I – I – I don't /

AVRAM

Interrupting.

We can look at it and pretend that it's there. Sometimes pretending is good enough, right?

PASHA

It's dirt.

AVRAM

It doesn't have to be. Just, do this with me. Pretend with me. I promise that you won't regret it.

Beat.

PASHA

Alright. I – I'm with you.

AVRAM

AVRAM ruffles PASHA's hair.

That's it! What about you, Feliks?

FELIKS

Laughing a little.

Trakhni eto, I'll help make the cake. (*translation: Fuck it...*)

AVRAM

Thank you, comrade. Ruslan?

RUSLAN

I'm gonna watch the street.

Grabs the rifle and magazines and sits in a chair next to a window.

AVRAM

Well, I guess we better start baking our cake.

AVRAM, PASHA, and FELIKS begin molding the dirt together to form a cake.

By this point, lights have gradually dimmed in brightness, showing that the sun is almost set.

PASHA

Just – just like the old days – brother.

FELIKS

You sound like you're turning fifty.

AVRAM

Mother always says Pasha has an old soul.

PASHA

She ssssssays that?

AVRAM

She never told you?

PASHA

N-no. She never talks to me.

AVRAM

Sure she does! I see her talk to you /

PASHA

Interrupting.

No. She doesn't. I – talk more with Father. He likes talking with me.

AVRAM

Mother likes talking to you just as much as Father does. She just shows /

RUSLAN

Moves the bolt of the rifle and looks in the chamber.

Interrupting.

‘Tchyo za ga`lima? (*translation: What the fuck?*)

FELIKS

What is it?

RUSLAN

Did you fire any rounds, Avram?

AVRAM
No, why?

RUSLAN
Throws rifle to the floor.
They gave you an unloaded rifle.
FELIKS laughs.

AVRAM
What?

RUSLAN
It's not loaded! They got lazy.

FELIKS
I don't blame them, it's a bitch to load those rounds. The rim / is way too big.

RUSLAN
Overlapping.
Who knows how many other rifles being handed out weren't loaded? Who knows how many died because of it? I'm tired of this /
Looks out the window.
Germans.
ALL scramble to hide.
GERMAN SOLDIERS enter stage right and search the street while moving past the café.
One GERMAN SOLDIER stops at the door and attempts to open it, but the lock obstructs the door from opening.
The GERMAN SOLDIER shoots several shots through the door.
All GERMAN SOLDIERS exit stage left.

PASHA
They – they – they – they /

AVRAM
Interrupting.
Don't worry. There shouldn't be another patrol for a while. We're safe.
Several beats.

RUSLAN
Struggles to load rounds into the rifle.
Blyad' this is difficult. (*translation: Fuck...*)

AVRAM
If you want, you can help us bake this cake.

RUSLAN
No thanks.

FELIKS
You sure? You're missing out on all the fun.

RUSLAN
It's okay, I'm focused on making sure we don't get killed right now. But by all means, enjoy yourselves.

PASHA
Maybe we should – should – should help Ruslan watch /

AVRAM
Interrupting.
I told you, we're safe.
RUSLAN scoffs.
There won't be another patrol for a while anyway.
Several beats.
You know what cake this is starting to look like?

PASHA
I don't know.

AVRAM
Oh you have to know. It's one of Mother's favorites to make.
Beat.
No guesses?

PASHA
I d-d-d-don't know, Avram.

AVRAM
Her marble pound cake!

PASHA
Oh.

AVRAM
Doesn't it look just like it, Feliks?

FELIKS
Yeah. If you ignore the rocks, and the roots, and the dead worms... yeah, it looks just like your mother's marble pound cake.

AVRAM

Both of you have no imagination.

Beat.

It's my favorite cake she makes. Whenever I smell her baking it I know it will be a good day. I can almost smell it now.

PASHA

I can't. I don't remember what – it smells like.

AVRAM

You don't remember?

PASHA shakes his head.

You have to remember.

PASHA

No.

AVRAM

You can't not remember what that cake smells like, Pasha.

PASHA

I don't.

AVRAM

How can you not /

PASHA

Interrupting.

Avram. I don't.

Beat.

AVRAM

Alright.

Beat.

Don't know how you'd forget.

PASHA

I just don't.

Beat.

AVRAM

Alright.

RUSLAN

You almost done? I'm starving.

FELIKS

Just one final touch.

Inserts the candles into the top of the dirt-cake.

Voilà!

RUSLAN

Moves to table and slings the rifle on his back.

Not bad... I'll get the edible food ready.

ALL gather the rations on the table in a somewhat neat arrangement.

AVRAM begins to strike a match.

RUSLAN instantly grabs AVRAM's hands.

RUSLAN

You're joking.

AVRAM

It'll only be for a minute.

RUSLAN

No.

AVRAM

It's just a few candles, Ruslan.

RUSLAN

Do I have to explain how stupid this is?

AVRAM

Relax, no one's going to see.

RUSLAN

It's night you fool! They'd have to be blind to not see it.

AVRAM

It's a birthday cake, it needs candles, let go of me!

RUSLAN

It's a pile of fucking dirt, Avram!

FELIKS

If you both keep raising your voices they won't need the candles to spot us.

Beat.

Let's just make it quick and huddle around it.

Beat.

Ruslan.

RUSLAN

Fine.

Releases AVRAM's hands.

But if I get shot, I'm going to kill both of you first and then the kozyol who shot me.

(translation: ... then the asshole who...)

AVRAM strikes a match and lights the candles.

FELIKS pours vodka from one of the canteens into all of the shot glasses.

ALL try to block the light with their bodies.

AVRAM stands next to PASHA and puts a chair under him to sit on.

PASHA sits.

AVRAM

Happy birthday, little brother.

PASHA smiles and is about to blow out the candles.

FELIKS

Wait!

PASHA stops.

Why don't we make a toast with a song?

RUSLAN

Oh trakhni menya... *(translation: Oh fuck me...)*

AVRAM

Which one?

FELIKS

"Glory to the Stalin," but improved: "Glory to the Pasha."

PASHA

Isn't that – wrong?

AVRAM

No, I think that's very right. Ruslan?

Beat.

RUSLAN

Fine... yebat' him. *(translation: ... fuck him.)*

FELIKS grabs a ration of vodka and the others do the same.

FELIKS

Holds vodka in the air.

Yebat' Stalin! *(translation: Fuck Stalin!)*

ALL

Together, holding their vodka in the air.
Yebat' Stalin! (*translation: Fuck Stalin!*)
ALL clink their vodka together and drink.

AVRAM

And now, our birthday toast for Pasha.

ALL EXCEPT PASHA

Singing.
AND WHO ARE WE TO THE SONG,
FRIENDS, WE DEDICATE?
AND WHO ARE WE WITH YOU,
WHOM DO WE MAGNIFY?

Bombing begins, darkening the already low amount of light entering from outside.

WE MAGNIFY THE FALCON,
THAT ALL THE HIGHER FLIES,
WHOSE MIGHTY STRENGTH
HE WINS ALL ENEMIES.

WE MAGNIFY THE FALCON,
A FRIEND OF OUR BEST,
WE MAGNIFY PASHA –
THE NATIONAL MARSHAL.

Bombing gets louder.
ALL struggle to sing over the bombing.

THERE IS NO MAN IN THE WORLD
MORE EXPENSIVE, DEARER.
WITH HIM AND HAPPINESS IS HAPPIER
AND THE SUN IS LIGHTER.

MAY HE LIVE, BELOVED,
IN HEALTH AND IN STRENGTH,
AND HE IS A NATIONAL,
A BOW FROM RUSSIA.

Bombing begins to decline in volume and frequency.

WE MAGNIFY THE FALCON,
THAT ALL THE HIGHER FLIES,
WHOSE MIGHTY STRENGTH
HE WINS ALL ENEMIES.

ALL EXCEPT PASHA (continued)

Singing.

WE MAGNIFY THE FALCON,
A FRIEND OF OUR BEST,
WE MAGNIFY PASHA –
THE NATIONAL MARSHAL.

To Pasha!

ALL clink their vodka together and drink.

Bombing fades to a low volume and frequency.

AVRAM

Make a wish, Pasha.

PASHA

Beat.

I wish to see Father again.

Beat.

PASHA blows out all the candles but one.

No – no – I /

AVRAM

Interrupting.

Don't worry, it doesn't mean anything.

PASHA

Mother and Father always – always – always – say /

AVRAM

Interrupting.

They do, but they also say a lot of other nonsense. It means nothing.

PASHA

But /

AVRAM

Interrupting.

It's fine.

Beat.

PASHA blows out the remaining candle.

FELIKS

Raises vodka in air.

To Pasha, a new young man!

ALL

Raising their vodka in the air.

To Pasha! S dnem rozhdeniya! (*translation: Happy Birthday!*)

ALL clink together their vodka and drink.

AVRAM, FELIKS, and RUSLAN pull on PASHA's ears.

PASHA

Raises vodka in air.

T-t-t-to you all, my best friends. Thank you sssssso much for this. Avram, this cake may not taste that good, but it's the best – cake I've ever had. Thank you.

AVRAM

It's my pleasure, brother. Now eat and drink everyone! That's an order!

ALL place chairs around the table and sit and begin to eat.

They often sniff the bread after they take shots of the vodka.

Bombing continues throughout at a low volume

Several beats.

FELIKS

If you drink more the food tastes better.

AVRAM

Good advice.

Beat.

PASHA

I miss the big meals we would – we would – have with all our families back home. This – reminds me of that.

AVRAM

I was hoping it would.

Beat.

That's what we should do! Let's tell each other stories of home. Stories about our families, each other, ourselves. Father would always have the family tell stories. Feliks, you know how to entertain. Tell us our first story.

Beat.

FELIKS

You want me to tell you a story.

AVRAM

Yes, about back home.

FELIKS

Um... okay.

Beat.

FELIKS (continued)

Remember when we caught Rasputin with Misha?

AVRAM and PASHA laugh.

RUSLAN

Don't.

PASHA

Laughing.

Too late.

FELIKS

Misha, Misha, Misha... just the loveliest and most beautiful and most pure and innocent girl back home... well, I don't know if pure and innocent apply to her anymore.

RUSLAN

Feliks, if you say another word about her, I'm going to shove your head so far up your ass /

FELIKS

Interrupting.

She's your sister, right?

RUSLAN pulls FELIKS's chair backwards, causing FELIKS to fall down.

Laughter.

Blyad'! (*translation: Fuck!*)

AVRAM

I had never seen Rasputin run so fast before. His bare ass was flying out of that room and down the road as fast as humanly possible. Wasn't that his eighteenth birthday, too?

FELIKS

Getting up.

Yes, sir.

Beat.

Pasha, I sincerely apologize that we don't have anything nearly as good to give to you for your birthday.

PASHA

It's okay Feliks. I think I c-c-c-c-could do better.

RUSLAN

Watch it. Also, don't forget that I know where you sleep, Feliks.

FELIKS

Get in line behind the Germans and Kazimir and everyone else in this pile of rubble.

PASHA

“That part of Ssss – of Ssss – Ssstalingrad – which has been captured – must be liberated!”
Which bricks do you – you think Stalin is talking about?

AVRAM

Any that have his name on them.

ALL laugh.

A toast to Ruslan’s lovely sister, Misha! May her days be long, fruitful, and open to all that life has to offer... like her legs.

Laughter.

ALL except RUSLAN clink their vodka together and drink.

Bombing gets a little louder and more frequent.

PASHA

Is that us or – or /

AVRAM

Interrupting.

Ignore it.

Beat.

Okay, Pasha, your turn.

PASHA

I – I don’t – know /

AVRAM

Interrupting.

No, no, there are too many stories to choose from. You have to have at least one drifting around up there. Come on, let it out.

PASHA

Avram, I /

AVRAM

Interrupting.

Tell a story about Father.

Beat.

PASHA

Father? Are you sure – sure /

AVRAM

Interrupting.

Absolutely.

Beat.

PASHA

Well... um... there is um – one /

AVRAM

Interrupting.

Perfect!

Beat.

PASHA

I was fffffive years old, I think. I d-d-don't – I loved playing in our – our garden, picking off leaves and – and – and – other things. I would give them names, like they were our pets. And, um... there was this one tree we – we – we – we – we had /

AVRAM

Interrupting.

“Comrade tree,” yes!

PASHA

Yes.

Beat.

I loved that tree. I'd sit in its ssssshade and play in the dirt – around it. I w-w-w-would talk to it when I – didn't have any – one else to t-t-t-t-talk – to.

Beat.

And um – there was this – I don't know what I was – was doing... maybe dancing with it or – or – or something... but I was ssssshaking it. Not hard... but enough that things fell down, things I had never – seen. They were ssssssmall – and colorful and – there was this red – coming out of them. It was thick and – I was fascinated by it. I had – had – had – had – had never seen something so – dark, and red, and so... I kept shaking the t-t-t-tree harder – and harder – until more came down and broke on the ground so that I could see the um – the um – um – the red. Then Mother came out screaming for me to stop, “No, Pasha, no!” She hate – hated when I played with the tree. But – when she saw me ssssssmiling and pointing at the red – she stopped. She looked at it for a long time, and um – um – um – um – um...

Beat.

She slapped me. Hard. Sssso hard that I fell – She had hit me – hit me – hit me – hit me before... but this time was different... She didn't – didn't – she looked scared... she looked scared... She t-t-t-t-told me what the red was, what I had d-d-d-done to that – poor bird mmmmother, and then walked – away. So I sat on the ground, staring at the – the – the blood – and I cried.

Beat.

Father came home from town and found me. I told him what happened and that I, I was so sorry. I felt so – so – so um – guilty and I c-c-c-c-couldn't stop saying, “I'm sorry – I'm sorry – I'm sorry – I'm sorry – I'm sorry” – until he stopped me and he said – he said – “Do something about it.” So um – I did. I buried the eggs – by the tree, with Father's help. I said “sorry” one last t-t-t-t-time... and... I stopped crying.

Beat.

PASHA (continued)

Father said he was – was proud of me. I didn't know why at the time... but I think I – I – I know why now.

Several beats.

Looks at RUSLAN.

I promise to – to do...

Beat.

I promise to do something about it.

Several beats.

Bombing increases slightly.

AVRAM

Za roditeley! (*translation: To our parents!*)

ALL clink together their vodka and drink.

Several beats.

Ruslan?

RUSLAN

What?

AVRAM

It's your turn.

RUSLAN

I'll pass.

AVRAM

You can't pass.

RUSLAN

What?

AVRAM

You can't pass.

RUSLAN

Why can't I pass?

AVRAM

Because it's your turn!

Beat.

RUSLAN

I'm not telling a story, Avram.

AVRAM
Why not?

RUSLAN
Because I don't want to. Why don't you go?

AVRAM
I have to go last.

RUSLAN
Then skip me, tell your fucking story, and then we can be finished with story-time for the night just how you want to.

AVRAM
No, we *all* have to go. It wouldn't be right if / we all didn't share stories.

RUSLAN
Overlapping.
Oh give me a break.

AVRAM
Will you for once in your life just fucking co-operate and not be such a kozyol?
(translation: ... asshole?)
Several beats.

RUSLAN
We all have to go, huh?

AVRAM
All of us.
Beat.

RUSLAN
Alright.
Beat.
In that case, let me ask Rasputin if he wants to go.
To RASPUTIN.

Hey, Rasputin! For some odd reason, I *cannot* think of a story for the life of me! Would you mind going before me?
You can't think of any stories either?
Laughs.

FELIKS
Ruslan.

RUSLAN

Wait, what was that?

You wanna tell a story *together*?

Oh that's perfect!

To AVRAM.

Does that count?

AVRAM

What?

RUSLAN

Does telling a story together count as both our stories?

AVRAM

Uh...

RUSLAN

To RASPUTIN

I think that's a "yes."

FELIKS

Ruslan!

RUSLAN

What?

FELIKS

What do you / think...

RUSLAN

Overlapping.

Avram said that *all* of us have to go. So that's what we're doing.

RUSLAN

To RASPUTIN.

Right, comrade?

Laughs.

Now, which story did you have in mind?

Yes! How could I not think about that one! I've probably had a little too much to drink. Oh well, budem zdorovy!! (*translation: ... to our health!*)

Raises vodka to RASPUTIN and drinks.

Do you want me to start or you?

Me? Whatever you say.

To OTHERS. Laughs intermittently and pours himself another shot.

When me and Rasputin were kids, our fathers would go hunting together every Sunday morning. Only, they didn't call it hunting. They told us was that they were "playing with the animals."

RUSLAN (continued)

And then they'd come back with a deer or some quail or what not and say that, that the animals were sleeping because they were so tired from playing.

To RASPUTIN.

Parents, right?

Mocking AVRAM's toast.

Za roditeley! (*translation: To our parents!*)

Raises vodka to ALL and drinks.

To the others.

So, one day, Rasputin and I have the grand idea to "borrow" our fathers' shotguns and play with the animals.

To RASPUTIN.

You wanna, you wanna tell this part, Rasputin?

Laughs. To the others.

This part is good.

Pours himself another shot of vodka and laughs sporadically as if RASPUTIN is continuing the story for several beats.

FELIKS

Ruslan... are you okay?

RUSLAN

I'm great! I love this story.

Beat.

Looks at the others.

What? You can't hear him?

AVRAM

No...

RUSLAN

Why not?

Beat.

AVRAM

Because he's... he's...

RUSLAN

He's what?

Beat.

AVRAM

He's dead.

Beat.

RUSLAN

Oh der'mo, I'm sorry, I must have forgotten. (*translation: Oh shit...*)

To RASPUTIN.

I'm sorry, Rasputin. They're having a hard time hearing you.

Why?

Because you're dead.

I said because you're dead.

Laughs. To the others.

He's dead.

Laughs. To RASPUTIN.

Why don't I give you a break and tell the rest of the story? You can uh, "rest in peace."

Laughs. To the others.

So, like I said /

FELIKS

Interrupting.

Ruslan!

Beat.

Stop.

RUSLAN

Serious.

Not until I'm finished my story.

Beat.

Smiles again.

As I was saying, we took our fathers' shotguns and went to play with the animals. Rasputin's father had a dog that they would take with them to hunt, so we thought that we would play with his dog. We chased that damn dog around the house for what felt like hours, laughing our little asses off pretending to do whatever we thought we were supposed to do with the shotguns. We thought it was the best game in the world. Fathers know best, right?

Laughs.

Then, out of nowhere, BANG!

The others jump at "BANG!"

The dog just stopped. It didn't even look like a dog anymore. I looked over at Rasputin and he had this look of absolute horror. He had *no* clue what had just happened, and nor did I!

To RASPUTIN.

We were so young.

Laughs. To the others.

Next thing you know, his father is running out of the house and finds us with the shotguns and his dead hunting dog and he absolutely loses it. I had never seen this man's face so red in his life. I thought he was going to explode. He was yelling and yelling at the top of his voice, and, and all that...

Laughs. To RASPUTIN.

I'll never forget this.

Laughs. To the others.

All that Rasputin could say, over and over again, was... "But Papa, he's just sleeping!"

RUSLAN (continued)

Laughs hysterically.

Just sleeping...

Laughter slowly fades.

Beat.

Both our fathers had a talk with us the next day. They made us promise to be more careful around guns and other dangerous things. They said that if we weren't careful, we could get ourselves killed.

Beat.

To RASPUTIN.

I guess we should have listened.

Beat.

Raises vodka in the air to OTHERS.

Budem zdorovy!! (*translation: to our health!*)

Drinks vodka.

Bombing continues as it has been.

Several beats.

Tell him, Avram.

Beat.

FELIKS

This isn't the time.

RUSLAN

To AVRAM.

Tell him why we're here, or I will.

Beat.

I'm done playing games.

Beat.

PASHA

What's he t-t-t-talking about?

Several beats.

AVRAM

We aren't going back, brother.

Beat.

PASHA

What?

Beat.

AVRAM

We're going home.

Beat.

PASHA

What – what – um – what do you mean?

FELIKS

It's been our plan the entire time.

PASHA

To AVRAM.

Why?

AVRAM

We're getting slaughtered. Every time we go over that river it's a massacre, and /

PASHA

Interrupting.

No – no – why didn't you – tell me?

AVRAM

You didn't need to know.

PASHA

How /

AVRAM

Interrupting.

I didn't want you to worry or, or to freak out, or feel in danger. All you needed to know was that we were leaving to celebrate your birthday, and then going back the next morning.

PASHA

Sssssso this was all – all pretend?

AVRAM

No. No, no, no, not at all. Your birthday was real. I just /

PASHA

Interrupting.

I c-c-c-an't believe you – you – lied t-t-t-to me. How could – could you lie t-to me? How? How?

AVRAM

Just calm down. It's okay.

PASHA

Nnnno! It's n-n-n-n-not okay! How could you lie to me?

AVRAM

To protect you! To keep you happy and safe, like I said. I wanted you to feel normal again for once.

PASHA

Normal! Normal! N-nothing – nothing is normal about – about this! Nothing is n-n-n-normal – about – I – you are – you – I /

AVRAM

Interrupting.

I was just trying to help you!

PASHA

Keeping me happy isn't – isn't keeping me safe – isn't keeping me – me – me – alive!

Beat.

I'm not a kid – anymore. I'm not a – not a – a fool.

AVRAM

I never said you were.

PASHA

Then why are you acting – like I am? Why are you acting like I – I – I – you know better than me?

Beat.

What about Father? We c-c-c-c-can't leave him.

Beat.

AVRAM

He wants us to go.

Beat.

PASHA

He ssssspoke to you?

AVRAM

He wrote me a letter. He said that, that he wanted us to go home, to desert, because of how bad everything was getting. He said he couldn't bear the thought of losing us and that we'd be safer if we just left and traveled back home.

PASHA

What about him?

AVRAM

He said he'd meet us there.

RUSLAN smirks quietly. FELIKS glares at him.

PASHA

Sssssshow me – me – me – me the letter.

AVRAM

It's gone.

Beat.

He instructed me to get rid of it. He was scared it'd be found and said that it was the only way to ensure we left without anyone knowing.

Beat.

Look, Father told me before we left home that it was my job to protect you, no matter the cost.

PASHA

Avram /

AVRAM

Interrupting.

No, I need you to hear this.

FELIKS

Looking out one of the windows.

Germans.

ALL hide very quickly.

GERMAN SOLDIERS enter from stage left and meander around the café for several beats.

GERMAN SOLDIERS gradually exit stage right.

Beat.

ALL slowly move out of their hiding positions.

RUSLAN

We should leave while it's still dark.

AVRAM

No, let's sleep tonight and leave tomorrow morning.

RUSLAN

That's not what we agreed on.

AVRAM

I know, but /

RUSLAN

Interrupting.

You said once we are done here, we keep going.

AVRAM

We are no good exhausted. If we go now, we will make mistakes and get ourselves killed.

RUSLAN

If we stay here we will get ourselves killed.

AVRAM

You don't know that.

RUSLAN

How are you so sure we will be safe tomorrow? In broad fucking daylight if I may add?

AVRAM

We're in danger no matter where we are! There is no difference between us staying one more night than to be out there in the pitch-black hiding from Germans and our own comrades.

RUSLAN

Every step we take away from this city puts us in less danger. Our choices decide whether we live or die. We have to make the right choice here. We have to leave.

AVRAM

No

RUSLAN

We have to leave, Avram.

AVRAM

Give us a fucking break, Ruslan!

RUSLAN

We don't have time for breaks!

FELIKS

Will both of you shut the fuck up?

Beat.

I'll decide what we do.

AVRAM

Feliks, I /

FELIKS

Interrupting.

You two have been going at each other like dogs this entire night and I am sick of it. I'm done waiting for you to come to an agreement, it won't happen, I'm making the call.

Beat.

We're staying.

RUSLAN

Seriously?

FELIKS

I'm tired. No, I'm past tired. I've reached a new phase of exhaustion that I didn't know even existed. I can't do it tonight, I need to sleep, and so do you.

RUSLAN

It's a bad idea.

FELIKS

Laughing.

This was all a bad idea! We need the rest. We'll wake up tomorrow morning and we'll figure it out.

Beat.

RUSLAN

We can't make stops like this anymore. When we leave tomorrow morning, we don't stop.

FELIKS

Moves to prepare to sleep.

Agreed.

RUSLAN

To AVRAM.

Because you wanted tonight so badly, you get to have first watch.

Moves to prepare to sleep.

AVRAM

Wait a moment, I still want to tell my story.

FELIKS

Avram, there's been enough stories for the night.

AVRAM

No, this is important. It's a toast that our father tells at the end of every birthday we celebrate.

To PASHA.

It's tradition.

Bombing slightly increases in volume and frequency.

Beat.

RUSLAN and FELIKS move back to the table.

Thank you.

Raises vodka in air.

I am not my father, so I will not be able to do this toast the justice it deserves by any means.

Beat.

Bombing gradually increases in volume and frequency as AVRAM speaks.

Tonight we have come together to celebrate the life of another. We have, as much as we are able, put aside our own lives, our own worries, our own troubles, to lift one person above theirs, so that they can have one moment of happiness.

AVRAM (continued)

Beginning to compete with the bombing to be heard.

Moments of happiness, true happiness, are often scarce. It takes a great deal of sweat, blood, and tears to earn moments of happiness, so it is important that we dedicate at least one day every year, just one, to guarantee that each of us can be happy. Each one of us deserves to /

Bombing spikes in volume suddenly, cutting off AVRAM.

AVRAM continues to compete with the bombing as it continues to get louder.

Each one of us deserves one day in which we don't have to work so hard to be happy. Each one of us deserves the right to take a break /

Bombing increases in volume even more, causing AVRAM to yell above the noise.

And let our friends, our family, and our loved ones lift life's burdens from our shoulders and carry the weight for us. So here we are /

Bombing reaches a volume and frequency that is so intense that AVRAM can no longer be heard. He realizes this, almost loses his composure, but then regains it and smiles. He continues the toast, even though the audience and the other characters cannot hear him. They watch him, nonetheless, holding their vodka in the air, waiting for the end of the toast.

Inaudible.

So here we are, Pasha, carrying the weight for you. We hope that you have been able to have one moment of happiness tonight, uninterrupted by life's troubles, and that you are ready and eager to live the next year of your life. We will be with you every step of the way, and together, we will work to earn more future moments of happiness. To Pasha!

AVRAM raises his vodka higher, signaling to the others the end of the toast. ALL drink. ALL stand up and prepare to sleep.

Bombing continues at the same volume and frequency.

AVRAM grabs the rifle and five-round magazines and sits on a chair by one of the windows.

The others begin to sleep in their chosen positions.

AVRAM stares into space for several beats and then also slowly falls asleep.

Lights dim to be even darker and bombing fades away.

Several beats.

Four GERMAN SOLDIERS enter stage left and quietly enter the café through the doorway.

Each GERMAN SOLDIER stands above one of the Soviet soldiers with a rifle and bayonet in their arms. They each raise their rifle above the Soviet soldiers. All of the GERMAN SOLDIERS nod their heads to each other and then bring their bayonets down on the Soviet soldiers.

Each Soviet soldier responds with an intake of breath.

Fast blackout and fade out of bombing.

Beat.

Lights come up on stage. Bombing slowly fades back up and is at a much lower volume and frequency than before.

PASHA wakes up gasping for air and holding his chest.

AVRAM is sitting awake in the chair he was sitting in before.

Lighting is very dark.

PASHA

Breathing harshly and holding his chest.

Everyone – died – and – and there was nothing I could do. It happened so fast and – and – I could feel the knife – inside me, in my – in my – chest. The pain – the pain – the /

AVRAM

Interrupting.

Hey, hey, it's okay. Don't worry. You're safe. You're safe now. No one is here but us. We're safe.

PASHA struggles to breathe slowly.

Several beats.

I'm sorry I treated you like a fool.

Beat.

That's what I was going to say before that patrol came.

Beat.

I assumed I knew what was best for you and... I didn't treat you with respect. I apologize.

Beat.

Your birthday was real. I know you might not think it was, but it was.

Beat.

You know how mother always says, "You reap what you sow"?

PASHA

Sssshe said it every time she was about t-t-t-to beat me.

AVRAM

Laughs.

Yeah, yeah, me too.

Beat.

She doesn't mean it only as getting punished. At least, that's how I look at it. You do good things and you will reap good things. This was a good thing. I promise you that.

PASHA

How do you – you – how can you be sssso certain?

AVRAM

It's just how I feel.

Beat.

Of course I don't know if any good will come out of this, but I say I do because, because it feels... right. Sometimes... what we feel is all we have.

Beat.

Why do I deserve more birthdays than you? You deserve one more birthday before... If I died, it would mean I died young, but if you died, then it's as if you never even got a chance to live.

Beat.

For one second, I forgot about everything, and all I knew, all I was doing, was having dinner with friends, and that second is worth it. That one second where everything else fades away.

Beat.

AVRAM (continued)

I know that I'm not the only one who felt it.

Beat.

PASHA

I felt it, too. I'm – grateful – for it. But... Rassssputin didn't feel it.

Beat.

You – you know – what I was thinking right before he died?

Beat.

Please don't – don't let me – die – like that. Dying like that – knowing that there is n-n-n-nothing you c-c-can do – knowing how truly ffffffucked you are. You can ssssee it in his eyes... I n-n-never want to be – that – that – afraid... he was sssssso afraid.

AVRAM

I promise I will never let you get that afraid.

PASHA

How c-c-c-can you make – that promise? You can't protect mmmme from – from /

AVRAM

Interrupting.

I have to try.

PASHA

You c-c-c-c-c-c-can't.

AVRAM

You're my brother, Pasha. What else am I supposed to do?

PASHA

Treat me with respect.

Beat.

Protecting me doesn't g-g-g-g-give you the – the – the – the right to t-treat me like a child.

Beat.

You're not Father.

Several beats.

AVRAM

You're right... I'm not.

Beat.

But I made a promise to Father that I will always protect you, and I... I can't...

Beat.

I can't lose you.

PASHA nods.

Beat.

AVRAM (continued)

In the letter, he wished you a happy birthday. He said that he was sorry he couldn't say it in person.

Beat.

He signed it, "I'll see you in your dreams."

Beat.

PASHA

Like his lullaby?

AVRAM nods.

Beat.

AVRAM

Sings softly and hesitantly.

NOW IT'S TIME TO SAY GOODNIGHT

PASHA joins in.

AVRAM & PASHA

Singing softly.

PASHA stutters slightly from time to time, so AVRAM takes his time with him.

GOODNIGHT

SLEEP TIGHT

NOW IT'S TIME TO SAY GOODNIGHT

GOODNIGHT

SLEEP TIGHT

I'LL SEE YOU IN YOUR DREAMS

Beat.

PASHA

I hope he's ssssssafe, wherever he is.

AVRAM

Me, too.

Beat.

PASHA prepares to go back to sleep.

PASHA

Goodnight, Avram.

AVRAM

Goodnight, Pasha.

Beat.

AVRAM quietly moves to RUSLAN and shakes him awake.

Whispers.

Ruslan... Ruslan, wake up.

RUSLAN

Waking to a start and in fear.

What's wrong?

AVRAM

It's your time to watch.

RUSLAN understands and nods.

AVRAM hands RUSLAN the rifle.

AVRAM prepares to go to sleep.

RUSLAN sits at a chair by a window.

AVRAM goes to sleep.

Beat.

RUSLAN

Sings/mumbles to himself.

ARISE, VAST COUNTRY,
ARISE FOR A FIGHT TO THE DEATH
AGAINST THE DARK FASCIST FORCES,
AGAINST THE CURSED HORDES.

Beat.

LET NOBLE WRATH
BOIL OVER LIKE A WAVE!
THIS IS THE PEOPLE'S WAR,
A SACRED WAR!

Beat.

THE RAPISTS AND THE PLUNDERERS,
THE TORTURERS OF PEOPLE.
THE BLACK WINGS SHALL NOT DARE
FLY OVER THE MOTHERLAND,
ON HER SPACIOUS FIELDS
THE ENEMY SHALL NOT DARE TREAD!
WE SHALL DRIVE A BULLET INTO THE FOREHEAD
OF THE ROTTEN FASCIST FILTH,
FOR THE SCUM OF HUMANITY
WE SHALL BUILD A SOLID COFFIN!

Beat.

We shall build a solid coffin.

Beat.

We shall build a solid coffin.

Beat.

We shall build...

Looks at rifle and holds it in front of him.

Rubs muzzle of rifle against his forehead.

Beat.

RUSLAN looks at RASPUTIN, who is looking back with open eyes.

RUSLAN (continued)

What are you looking at?

RASPUTIN is motionless.

They stare at each other.

Beat.

Did it hurt?

Beat.

RASPUTIN

Why do you ask?

RUSLAN

No reason.

RASPUTIN

Laughs.

Beat.

Stay alive.

RUSLAN

Why?

Beat.

RASPUTIN

You have to.

RUSLAN

You need me to.

RASPUTIN

She needs you to.

Beat.

RUSLAN

Isn't that ironic? Now that I've failed at keeping you alive, here you are trying to keep me from blowing my head off.

Beat.

Is it really true?

Beat.

RASPUTIN

Ruslan, please...

RUSLAN

What?

RASPUTIN

Can you...

RUSLAN

Can I what? Spit it out.

RASPUTIN

I'm trying.

RUSLAN

Try harder.

Beat.

RASPUTIN

Can you take care of it?

RUSLAN laughs.

RUSLAN

Yeah, I can take care of *it*.

RASPUTIN

I don't know what it is.

Beat.

I guess I never will.

RUSLAN

No, I guess you won't.

Beat.

I'm sorry.

RASPUTIN

No, you're right. I fucked up.

RUSLAN

You didn't fuck up.

RASPUTIN

Yes. I did. I can't die, I can't leave her like that, I... oh fuck me I really messed up.

RUSLAN

It's okay.

RASPUTIN

It's not. / It's not okay.

RUSLAN

Overlapping.

It is. I'll look after her. I'll look after them both.

RASPUTIN

You shouldn't have to.

RUSLAN

I know /

RASPUTIN

Interrupting.

It's not your job! It wasn't... I... I want to help, I want to be there I... blyad'... I'm so sorry.
(translation: ... fuck...)

RUSLAN

It's not your fault.

RASPUTIN

I'm hurting them.

RUSLAN

They'll understand.

Several beats.

RASPUTIN

Sorry about the cake.

Beat.

I know Pasha was really looking forward to it.

RUSLAN

Don't worry. We made our own.

RASPUTIN

Yeah I noticed.

Beat.

That was fucked up... what you did with me.

RUSLAN

They deserved it.

RASPUTIN

Did they?

RUSLAN

Yes.

RUSLAN (continued)

Beat.

Yes they did.

Beat.

I wish you were there.

RASPUTIN

I was.

Beat.

I don't want to stay here.

Beat.

RUSLAN

Stay?

RASPUTIN nods.

Beat.

I would take you if I could.

RASPUTIN

I know.

Beat.

Ruslan?

Beat.

Don't get stuck here with me.

RUSLAN

Rasputin /

RASPUTIN

Interrupting.

Promise me. For her. I don't want /

Loud, nearby gunfire interrupts RASPUTIN.

RUSLAN looks outside.

He looks back at RASPUTIN, whose eyes are closed and head is back in its original position.

Beat.

FELIKS sits up.

FELIKS

Were you just talking?

RUSLAN

No.

FELIKS

Weird.

FELIKS (continued)

FELIKS gets up and goes to another window to also watch the street.

Can't fuckin' sleep.

Several beats.

I keep thinking about something Pasha said.

Beat.

He said his mother never talks to him and that he only talks to his father.

Beat.

He's right. I just never noticed.

RUSLAN

He's never had it easy.

Beat.

FELIKS

He isn't going to take it well when Avram tells him.

RUSLAN

He needs to know.

FELIKS

Maybe when we get back home.

RUSLAN

And when will that be?

Beat.

We could be out of the city right now.

FELIKS

Or dead.

RUSLAN

I'd rather die out there than in here.

FELIKS

I'd rather not die at all.

RUSLAN

We should not be here.

FELIKS

Give it a rest. We're here. We made our choice.

RUSLAN

What if it's the wrong one?

FELIKS

Laughs.

It's obviously the wrong one.

RUSLAN

Then why'd you say that we should stay?

FELIKS

Honestly?

RUSLAN

No. Please lie.

FELIKS laughs.

RUSLAN joins in a little.

Beat.

FELIKS

I did it for you.

Beat.

You look like shit.

Gestures to his own body.

Not just here.

Gestures to his own head.

But up here, too. Avram thought he and Pasha need a break, but really it's you who needs it the most.

RUSLAN

I don't need /

FELIKS

Interrupting.

I know you were talking to him.

Beat.

Misha's pregnant?

Beat.

RUSLAN nods.

Beat.

I'm sorry I brought her up.

Several beats.

RUSLAN

I have to get back, Feliks.

Beat.

I have to get back.

Beat.

FELIKS

You will. Tomorrow. We'll go.

RUSLAN

Nods.

Tomorrow.

Beat.

FELIKS

Go to sleep, I'll take watch.

RUSLAN

You sure?

FELIKS

Positive.

RUSLAN

Alright. Don't even think about falling asleep.

FELIKS

I wouldn't dare.

RUSLAN

Prepares to go to sleep.

Goodnight, Feliks.

FELIKS

Goodnight, comrade.

FELIKS takes the rifle and takes RUSLAN's post. He watches the street.

Lights slowly fade to black.

Bombing slowly fades out after.

End of Act I.

Intermission.

Quiet, probably for the first time. Lights slowly fade up. It is late morning. ALL are asleep. FELIKS wakes up and nearly jumps out of his seat, realizing he fell asleep on his watch. He quickly looks around and realizes everyone is still sleeping. He is relieved. He looks around at everyone else and smiles. He begins cleaning up the aftermath of the birthday party. He organizes the rest of their rations and cleans the tables they used. He also sets the chairs back up. Several beats pass as FELIKS cleans the café in a casual and gentle manner, until a very loud gunshot breaks the silence. FELIKS is shot in the chest, causing blood to burst out of his back instantaneously. FELIKS staggers, blood pouring out of his chest. The others wake up to the gunshot confused, and then their confusion turns to panic as they look at FELIKS. FELIKS falls to his knees. He looks at the others, lets out a little laugh, and then falls to the floor and dies.

AVRAM

No.

AVRAM rushes over to FELIKS.

Gunshot. AVRAM is shot in the thigh.

PASHA moves towards AVRAM.

RUSLAN pulls PASHA down and forces him into cover like himself.

Gunshot. Bullet misses PASHA and makes impact somewhere in the café.

RUSLAN looks out the window, searching for the shooter, and then quickly pulls his head back behind the wall.

Gunshot. Bullet misses RUSLAN and makes impacts somewhere in the café.

AVRAM grunts in pain trying to apply pressure to his leg.

Der'mo... (translation: Shit...)

PASHA crawls over to AVRAM, staying in cover.

Feliks.

PASHA searches FELIKS and shakes him a little. Then he stops.

RUSLAN

Is he dead?

Beat.

Is he dead?

PASHA

Yes.

Beat.

AVRAM

Pasha... I need help.

PASHA moves to AVRAM and helps him apply pressure to the wound.

Get me something to stop the bleeding, hurry.

PASHA

Quickly looks around.

I c-c-c-can't see /

AVRAM

Interrupting.

Check Feliks.

Beat.

Check him check him now!

PASHA moves to FELIKS and searches him.

PASHA

There's n-n-n-nothing.

AVRAM

Rasputin, check Rasputin.

PASHA crawls to RASPUTIN.

PASHA searches RASPUTIN and finds a bandage.

Yes, yes, that can work.

PASHA crawls back to AVRAM and starts wrapping the bandage around the wound.

AVRAM grunts in pain.

RUSLAN

How bad is it?

PASHA

Frantically wrapping AVRAM's leg.

I – I don't – I don't – I don't know.

Beat.

What do we do?

Beat.

What do we do?

RUSLAN looks out of the window he is close to and then returns to cover.

Gunshot. Bullet makes impact on the wall or somewhere in the café near RUSLAN.

RUSLAN

He's in that tall building two blocks down. He's got the whole fucking street in his view.

Beat.

Can you walk, Avram?

AVRAM
I don't know...

RUSLAN
Yes or no, can you walk?
AVRAM tries to stand while remaining in cover. It is extremely painful and he sits back down.

PASHA
Sssstay still.

RUSLAN
Trakhni menya... (*translation: Fuck me...*)
Beat.
We can't stay here.

PASHA
What?

RUSLAN
That sniper has nothing but time. He's either gonna wait for us to make a mistake or he's going to alert a patrol. He might already have. We need to go.

PASHA
N-n-n-n-not without Avram.

RUSLAN
We don't have a choice.

PASHA
I'm n-n-n-not leaving him!
Gunshot. Bullet makes impact on the wall or somewhere in the café near RUSLAN.

RUSLAN
If we stay here, more will come.

PASHA
Let them come.

AVRAM
Pasha.

RUSLAN
We'll die here!

PASHA

Idi – na hui. (*translation: Go – fuck yourself.*)

AVRAM

Pasha!

PASHA looks at him.

He's right.

PASHA

No, I'm n-n-n-n-n /

AVRAM

Interrupting.

You have to.

PASHA

I don't!

AVRAM

Pasha, you can't /

PASHA

Interrupting.

I'm staying – I'm staying – I'm staying – I'm staying – I'm staying /

AVRAM

Interrupting.

Okay... okay.

PASHA

To RUSLAN.

Go.

RUSLAN laughs.

I'll stay here and pro-pro-pro-tect /

RUSLAN

Interrupting.

Spare me, Pasha. I'm going to leave, he's going to send a patrol here, and you'll both get used as fucking target practice.

AVRAM

Ruslan, please, you don't / have much time.

RUSLAN

Overlapping.

I'm not leaving.

AVRAM

You can't stay, you'll /

RUSLAN

Interrupting.

No, yebat' tebya, and yebat' tebya. I'm staying. (*translation: No, fuck you, and fuck you.*)

PASHA

Then what are we – we – we – we gonna do?

Several beats.

RUSLAN

We kill him.

AVRAM

What?

RUSLAN

You won't make it if he's still out there, so we have to kill him. He doesn't know how many of us there are – we can use that.

Beat.

This is what we do. I'm going to make a run for it. Hopefully he thinks I am the last one since he has only seen me besides who he shot. If you two stay out of sight, he might think there is no one left alive, meaning he doesn't need to alert anyone... if he hasn't already.

AVRAM

How are you going to leave without him shooting you on sight?

Beat.

RUSLAN

We use Rasputin as a distraction.

PASHA

What?

RUSLAN

You lift Rasputin up in front of the window, he shoots Rasputin, and I can escape as he does.

AVRAM

`Tchyo za ga`lima... (*translation: What the fuck...*)

RUSLAN

Then I find him, kill him, come back, and we get the hell out of here.

PASHA

How?

RUSLAN

We'll figure that out when I come back... and if I don't come back, then you have to leave, Pasha.

PASHA

No.

RUSLAN

I am doing this for you. Not Avram. You. Misha is all alone and she needs... someone needs to make it back. Promise me that if I don't come back, you'll go.

Beat.

Promise me.

PASHA

Looks at AVRAM, then looks at RUSLAN.

I...

Beat.

I promise.

RUSLAN

Good.

Crawls to rifle and removes bayonet.

Crawls to PASHA with rifle and gives it to him.

Take this.

PASHA

But /

RUSLAN

Interrupting.

It'll slow me down. You'll need it more than me, anyway.

Crawls with bayonet to opposite side of café of where RASPUTIN is laying.

Okay, get ready to lift him up.

PASHA crawls to RASPUTIN and struggles to drag him to the nearest window.

AVRAM crawls in pain to PASHA and prepares to help him lift RASPUTIN.

Ready?

PASHA

Read – ready.

RUSLAN

Okay.

AVRAM

Ruslan.

Beat.

AVRAM (continued)
Thank you.

RUSLAN
Nods.
Lift on three.
Beat.

One... two... three!

PASHA and AVRAM grunt as they lift RASPUTIN up in front of the window so that RASPUTIN is facing the street.

Gunshot. RASPUTIN is shot in the chest and is flung back out of their hands. He hits the floor hard.

RUSLAN jumps out of the window as this happens and exits the café. He exits stage right.

Gunshot.

Beat.

Gunshot.

Beat.

Gunshot.

Several beats.

PASHA
How d-d-d-do we know he wasn't...

AVRAM
We don't.
PASHA and AVRAM stare at FELIKS.
Several beats.

PASHA
Still looking at FELIKS.
How's your leg?

AVRAM
Still looking at FELIKS.
Still bleeding... we'll need to change the bandage soon.
PASHA nods.
They continue to stare at FELIKS.
Several beats.

I'm so sorry, Pasha.

Beat.

I'm slowing you and Ruslan down. I'm endangering you.

Beat.

I've done nothing but endanger you this entire time.

PASHA
Stop.

AVRAM
If it hadn't been for me, we'd be miles away by now. But no, I wanted to celebrate your birthday. Your fucking birthday. I'm such a fool.

PASHA
You're not! You're – you're – you're /

AVRAM

Interrupting.

I just needed one night. One night to breathe. One night to forget about everything. One night where I can feel fucking normal again. Is that too much to ask? Does it really cost the deaths of my friends to have that? Because they're dead. They are dead and rotting right in front me, and there's nothing I could do about it except think that I killed them because I couldn't handle it anymore. Because I was selfish, and weak.

Pounds his wound with his own fist.

I'm weak.

Pounds his wound with his own fist.

I'm selfish.

Pounds his wound with his own fist.

I'm stupid.

Pounds his wound with his own fist.

I killed them.

Pounds his wound with his own fist.

I killed them.

Pounds his wound with his own fist.

I killed them.

Pounds his wound with his own fist.

I killed them.

Pounds his wound with his own fist.

I killed them.

PASHA

PASHA stops AVRAM from hitting himself again.

Stop – stop – hurting yourssself!

AVRAM

The sniper should have been a better shot and got me in the head.

PASHA

Slaps AVRAM in the face.

Sssshut up!

Beat.

It's n-n-n-n-no use. They're dead – and that's it.

PASHA (continued)

Beat.

What would – would – would Father say?

Beat.

What would he say?

Beat.

AVRAM

Pasha, I /

PASHA

Interrupting.

What would he ssssay?

Beat.

AVRAM

“Do something about it.”

PASHA

Sssso what are you gonna do?

Beat.

AVRAM

I don't know.

PASHA

Not – good enough.

AVRAM

What can I do? I failed them and I failed you and, and... I failed Father.

PASHA

No.

AVRAM

Yes! I failed him. I had one responsibility and /

PASHA

Interrupting.

I'm sssstill here, Avram. You didn't fail him. Maybe you – you – you failed them, but not Father, and – and – and – not me.

AVRAM

I'm gonna die and leave you all alone. Don't you get that?

Beat.

I'm leaving you to die.

Several beats.

PASHA

Stands behind the wall, so he is still in cover.

Yeeeeeeebat' tebya. (*translation: Fffffffuck you.*)

Beat.

AVRAM

What?

PASHA kicks AVRAM.

AVRAM grunts in pain and shock.

Pasha, what the /

PASHA kicks AVRAM repeatedly and AVRAM tries to stop him.

Stop... stop it... stop it you're... stop!

AVRAM manages to shove PASHA away.

`Tchyo za ga' lima! (*translation: What the fuck!*)

PASHA

I'm – I'm – you're – I /

AVRAM

Interrupting.

What?

PASHA

I'm not a child! I d-d-d-don't need your – your – protection! You treat me like I am this fffffffucking fool all – the – the – the – the – time and I – I – I – you haven't fffailed me because I d-d-d-don't need you! Maybe I needed you be-be-be-be-before, but nnnnot anymore!

AVRAM

Brother, I didn't /

PASHA

Interrupting.

I've killed. I've starved. I've watched our ffffriends die. I've d-d-d-d-done everything and sssseen everything that you have. So don't you dare – don't you dare act – act – act like I haven't. Don't – don't you dare – t-t-t-t-t-t-take that away from me.

Beat.

Ssssstop trying so hard – to be Father... I don't need a father, I d-d-d-d-don't need a – a brother. I need – I need – I need...

Beat.

Be my comrade.

Lowers himself to AVRAM.

Be my comrade.

Beat.

Be – my comrade.

Beat.

AVRAM

Okay.

PASHA

Be my – be my comrade.

AVRAM

Okay.

Several beats.

PASHA crawls to FELIKS and rips off a piece of clothing.

PASHA crawls back to AVRAM and begins undressing the bandage.

Beat.

Thank you.

PASHA nods.

PASHA starts to apply the new bandage.

The sounds of footsteps and German voices enter from stage right.

They look at each other.

Pretend to be dead, go.

PASHA crawls to the opposite side of the café with the rifle and lays down to pretend to be dead. He lays down facing AVRAM.

AVRAM crawls to RASPUTIN and lays near him.

Beat.

Two GERMAN SOLDIERS enter from stage right and look into the café through the windows. They enter the café through the windows and search the room. One GERMAN SOLDIER moves FELIKS over with his foot and kicks him to see if he responds.

As he does so, the other GERMAN SOLDIER moves to the table with the organized rations. He slings his rifle on his back and begins transferring the rations to his pockets. The GERMAN SOLDIER who checked FELIKS then moves to RASPUTIN and does a similar action. After that, he moves to AVRAM to check him.

PASHA watches him and slowly moves the bolt of the rifle.

The GERMAN SOLDIER moves AVRAM over with his foot and sees his leg wound. He looks at it for a beat and then steps on it. AVRAM grunts in pain.

GERMAN SOLDIER

Scheiße! (*translation: Shit!*)

The GERMAN SOLDIER aims his rifle at AVRAM.

PASHA fires his rifle at the GERMAN SOLDIER above AVRAM, killing him.

The other GERMAN SOLDIER turns around, sees the fallen GERMAN SOLDIER, and then fumbles with his rifle.

PASHA shoots the GERMAN SOLDIER, killing him.

Beat.

PASHA pukes.

AVRAM

You have to go.

PASHA continues to puke and then gag.

More will come.

PASHA gathers himself and moves to AVRAM.

You have to go.

PASHA

Examines AVRAM's bandage and fixes the bandage.

You're still – still – still – still losing blood.

AVRAM

Pasha.

PASHA

I won't – I won't /

AVRAM

Interrupting.

You don't have a choice.

PASHA

Ruslan will be here soon and – and /

AVRAM

Interrupting.

He's probably dead.

PASHA

You're c-c-c-c-coming with me.

AVRAM

I'm not.

PASHA

Avram /

AVRAM

Interrupting.

I'm not. You know I'm not.

PASHA

Then what – what do I tell Father?

Beat.

How do I tell him – that I left – left you t-t-t-to die?

Beat.

PASHA (continued)

How do I do that?

PASHA continues wrapping AVRAM's new bandage.

Beat.

AVRAM

Father's dead.

PASHA stops wrapping the bandage.

Beat.

Kazimir told me a few days ago. He said, "he died with honor, fighting for Stalin to the last breath."

Beat.

I would've told you, but your birthday was coming, and I... I... I couldn't do it. I know how you two were... I know how much you... I couldn't do that to you. I couldn't... it was... and...

Beat.

We decided to desert that night. I knew that you wouldn't be able to leave Father behind, so I lied. I thought that if I lied to you, I could protect you. I could keep you safe, and... and happy... and I lied so much that even I started to forget... and I was happy.

Slowly starts to cry.

Lying made me so happy, and it made you happy too, and... we haven't been happy in so long that I... I didn't stop. I didn't stop...

Beat.

When Rasputin died... it all fell apart. The truth came rushing back with a vengeance and now everything and everyone is fucked all over again.

Beat.

And I'm tired. I'm tired of lying to myself, I'm tired of trying to stay normal, I'm tired of starving, I'm tired of people dying, I'm tired of killing, I'm tired of the constant noise and bullets and shells and screaming and blood and... I'm tired of being tired.

Beat.

I'm so sorry, Pasha. I'm so sorry. I don't want... you to hate me. I don't...

AVRAM is crying hard now.

PASHA moves to AVRAM and slowly starts to hold him.

I don't... please don't hate me... please don't hate me, Pasha... I tried... I tried my best...

PASHA

It's okay.

AVRAM

I don't want to leave you... I just... I thought that... I'm sorry...

PASHA

It's okay, brother. I'm right – right here. I'm – I'm – I'm here.

AVRAM

Please don't hate me... I didn't mean to... I tried so hard...

PASHA

I d-d-d-don't hate you. I understand... I understand... I understand.

AVRAM

I love you, Pasha... I love you so much...

PASHA

I love you, too... I don't – don't – don't hate – don't hate you... I understand... I understand...

They hold each other quietly.

Beat.

RUSLAN enters stage right and enters the café through the door.

He is wearing a bloodied German coat and a German helmet and is carrying a German sniper rifle.

He has a black eye, busted lip, other bruises, and is bleeding from his nose.

He stands and looks at the others, who also look at him, and then he looks at the two dead GERMAN SOLDIERS.

Several beats.

RUSLAN walks to a table.

He slowly leans the rifle against the table and places the helmet on the table.

AVRAM and PASHA watch him do so, not knowing what to say.

RUSLAN withdraws the bayonet from his coat and places it on the table; it is covered in blood. He then takes rounds out from his coat and places them on the table next to the bayonet.

He sits at the chair at the table and stares into space, holding the German rifle in his lap.

Bombing increases slightly in volume.

Several beats.

RUSLAN pulls out a German cigarette pack from the coat.

He stands and searches for the matches used for the candles and finds them.

He goes to AVRAM, pauses, and then offers him a cigarette.

AVRAM considers and then takes it.

RUSLAN lights a match and lights AVRAM's cigarette.

RUSLAN goes to PASHA and repeats the same offer. PASHA accepts the cigarette.

PASHA coughs a little as he starts to smoke.

Distant gunfire. The gunfire continues throughout the rest of the scene with the bombing, which also gets a little louder.

RUSLAN stands center stage.

He pulls out a cigarette, puts it in between his lips, and tries to strike a match to light it.

The match doesn't light.

He tries multiple times, getting more frustrated as he continues trying.

His attempts get more and more violent.

RUSLAN

Blyad'! (*translation: Fuck!*)

RUSLAN throws the bad match and matchbox.

He then knocks a table to the ground, grabs a chair, and smashes it to pieces repeatedly.

He falls to the ground and sits, exhausted.

He looks at his bloodied hands and realizes that the German coat is covered in blood. He begins to hyperventilate and pulls it off in a struggle. He throws it away from him. He struggles to regain composure but cannot.

Bombing gradually increases again in volume and frequency.

PASHA stands and gets a new cigarette from the pack. He brings it to RUSLAN and puts his cigarette's end to the other cigarette end and lights it as RUSLAN breathes it in.

PASHA sits on the ground next to him.

AVRAM struggles to crawl to them and sits on the opposite side of RUSLAN.

All sit close together on the ground, smoking in silence.

All don't react to the bombing.

Silence continues for a long time, the longest time it ever has.

Lights slowly fade, showing that the sun is setting.

Bombing and gunfire slowly get quieter as the lights fade.

Distant German voices slowly get closer and closer.

GERMAN SOLDIERS quietly enter stage right and can be seen through the windows preparing for an assault on the café.

ALL look at each other, understanding what is probably going to happen.

PASHA grabs the Soviet rifle as AVRAM collects Soviet rounds. PASHA and AVRAM move to a window on one side of the café. RUSLAN quietly grabs the German rifle and its rounds and moves to a window opposite of them. ALL stay in cover.

GERMAN SOLDIERS' voices go quiet.

Several beats.

A German grenade is tossed through the window that RUSLAN is at, landing very closely to him. RUSLAN immediately grabs it and throws it back outside.

Loud explosion. German voices cry out.

RUSLAN and PASHA begin firing on the GERMAN SOLDIERS. They attempt to take cover as much as possible.

There is a lot of very loud gunfire. The sounds of bullets hitting the wall of the café are heard as well.

RUSLAN

Fires all of his rounds.

Reloading!

RUSLAN reloads and repositions at another window.

He begins firing again.

PASHA

Avram!

AVRAM hands PASHA a five-round magazine.

PASHA loads the rounds into the rifle, repositions at another window as well, and then begins firing again. AVRAM struggles to follow him.

RUSLAN

Stop them from getting to the door!

Gunfire continues.

Beat.

RUSLAN (continued)
They're getting closer!

PASHA

I know I know!

RUSLAN reloads and then begins firing again.

RUSLAN gets shot in his left shoulder and groans from the pain.

He drops the rifle on the ground and sits against the wall, holding his shoulder.

AVRAM crawls to where RUSLAN was sitting and takes the German rifle.

He takes cover at a window and struggles to fire and take cover.

PASHA

They – they – they're everywhere!

PASHA reloads and positions himself back at the first window he was firing from.

He resumes firing.

Beat.

AVRAM

The door!

A GERMAN SOLDIER bursts through the door and enters the room as RUSLAN gets up.

RUSLAN screams and sprints at GERMAN SOLDIER, body checking him to the ground.

The GERMAN SOLDIER kicks RUSLAN back away from him.

PASHA sprints to the GERMAN SOLDIER and slams the butt of his rifle on the GERMAN SOLDIER's head repeatedly while screaming.

AVRAM watches for a brief couple of seconds in horror and then returns to firing.

RUSLAN gets up and closes the door and pulls PASHA away from the GERMAN SOLDIER.

PASHA looks at RUSLAN and then runs back to a window to continue firing.

Beat.

AVRAM

Comrades coming down the street!

AVRAM and PASHA continue firing and reloading.

SOVIET SOLDIERS and LIEUTENANT KAZIMIR enter from stage left and fire on the GERMAN SOLDIERS.

AVRAM and PASHA stop firing.

The remaining GERMAN SOLDIERS exit stage right.

Gunfire stops.

SOVIET SOLDIERS and LIEUTENANT KAZIMIR take cover on the street.

PASHA

It's K-K-K-K /

RUSLAN

Interrupting.

Kazimir.

LIEUTENANT KAZIMIR

We are coming in! Drop your weapons now and raise your hands above your heads! If you are armed when we come in, we will shoot you on sight! Am I understood!

AVRAM, RUSLAN, and PASHA look at each other, not knowing what to do.

Am I understood!

AVRAM

Yes, Lieutenant!

AVRAM and PASHA drop their rifles. ALL lift their hands above their heads except RUSLAN, who can only lift his right arm.

LIEUTENANT KAZIMIR and three SOVIET SOLDIERS enter the café through the door.

LIEUTENANT KAZIMIR

Line up and put your hands down.

RUSLAN, and PASHA do so. AVRAM struggles to stand but cannot. He has lost a lot of blood by this point and is struggling to stay conscious.

I said stand up, Private Kamenev.

AVRAM

I... I can't...

LIEUTENANT KAZIMIR

To the three SOVIET SOLDIERS.

Sit him on a chair.

The SOVIET SOLDIERS move a chair to center stage and place AVRAM on it. RUSLAN and PASHA stand on either side of him.

Search the room.

The SOVIET SOLDIERS search the room in a brutal manner, flipping chairs and tables over. In doing so, they destroy the dirt-cake and turn over FELIKS and RASPUTIN harshly.

PASHA

What do – what do – Avram?

LIEUTENANT KAZIMIR

Interrupting.

Quiet.

Beat.

Surveys the room.

How long have you been here?

RUSLAN

Almost a day.

LIEUTENANT KAZIMIR

I'm surprised you made it that long.

LIEUTENANT KAZIMIR (continued)

Looks at FELIKS and RASPUTIN.

Well, most of you.

SOVIET SOLDIERS finish their search.

SOVIET SOLDIER #1

Lieutenant. Some rations, two rifles, some ammunition, and two dead.

LIEUTENANT KAZIMIR

Names?

SOVIET SOLDIER #2

Checks the bodies for identification.

Private Rasputin Orlovsky... and Private Feliks Rabinovich.

LIEUTENANT KAZIMIR

Nods.

To AVRAM, RUSLAN, and PASHA.

All of you know that you disobeyed a direct order. All of you know what I have to do.

Points to AVRAM.

Tie him down.

GERMAN SOLDIERS quietly enter stage right without alerting the Soviets.

PASHA

N-n-n-no no no!

SOVIET SOLDIERS begin tying AVRAM to the chair with bandages that they have.

PASHA attempts to step out of line and move in between AVRAM and the SOVIET SOLDIERS.

LIEUTENANT KAZIMIR

Pulls pistol out of holster and aims it at PASHA.

Back in line.

PASHA moves back in line.

You have all disobeyed Order no. 277 and are found guilty of desertion and cowardice and deemed traitors of the Motherland. You are all hereby sentenced to death.

Gunfire. One of the SOVIET SOLDIERS tying AVRAM to the chair is shot and falls dead.

ALL in the café take cover immediately except for AVRAM, who remains sitting in the chair half-tied down to it.

Return fire, return fire!

The two remaining SOVIET SOLDIERS return fire from two windows.

RUSLAN charges toward LIEUTENANT KAZIMIR.

LIEUTENANT KAZIMIR shoots RUSLAN in the stomach.

RUSLAN tries to step toward him again, but then doubles over and falls down. He begins to bleed out rapidly.

You all knew your orders. Never desert. Never surrender.

AVRAM

Struggling to speak.

Pasha... Pasha... / where... where are you... Pasha...

LIEUTENANT KAZIMIR

Overlapping.

Private Kamenev. I expected more from you.

Aims pistol at AVRAM.

LIEUTENANT KAZIMIR is shot in the shoulder.

PASHA charges LIEUTENANT KAZIMIR.

They wrestle with one another for the pistol.

AVRAM

As LIEUTENANT KAZIMIR and PASHA struggle over the pistol.

Disoriented.

It's gonna be okay Pasha... just... don't worry... don't worry about me...

PASHA wins the pistol and shoves LIEUTENANT KAZIMIR away from him.

LIEUTENANT KAZIMIR

Don't /

PASHA shoots LIEUTENANT KAZIMIR in the chest. He falls to the ground.

One SOVIET SOLDIER turns towards PASHA and raises his rifle.

PASHA shoots him, killing him, and then shoots the other SOVIET SOLDIER, killing him as well.

LIEUTENANT KAZIMIR tries to crawl away from PASHA. PASHA walks toward him and turns him over with his foot so he is facing him.

Wait /

PASHA shoots LIEUTENANT KAZIMIR repeatedly until he is pulling the trigger without any rounds left. Then he stops pulling the trigger.

Beat.

AVRAM

Pasha...

PASHA moves to AVRAM.

PASHA

I'm g-g-g-gonna /

AVRAM

Interrupting.

It's okay... don't worry about me... everything's okay...

GERMAN SOLDIERS speak outside. They prepare to enter the café.

PASHA

I – I have to hide – I'll – I'll – I'll be right – back – ssssstay still – and stay quiet, okay? Do you hear me?

AVRAM

Happy birthday, Pasha...

PASHA

I'll be right – right – right back.

PASHA goes to RUSLAN who is still bleeding out on the floor.

Stay down. G-G-G-Germans coming in.

RUSLAN nods and pretends to be dead.

PASHA finds a spot to lay down and pretends to be dead as well.

Beat.

GERMAN SOLDIERS enter quickly. They scan the room and search the other bodies, ignoring AVRAM for the most part.

AVRAM

I'm cold... and tired... I think... I think I'll rest my eyes a little, Pasha...

FELIKS and RUSLAN are kicked and moved, but they succeed in pretending to be dead.

The GERMAN SOLDIERS search the room, scavenging what they can find. They also take out their dead.

Sings softly and slowly, smiling.

NOW IT'S TIME TO SAY GOODNIGHT

GOODNIGHT

SLEEP TIGHT

One GERMAN SOLDIER steps to the side of AVRAM and unholsters a pistol.

NOW IT'S TIME TO SAY GOODNIGHT

GOODNIGHT

SLEEP TIGHT

I'LL SEE YOU IN YOUR /

GERMAN SOLDIER shoots AVRAM in the chest, killing him.

AVRAM's head drops to his chest.

GERMAN SOLDIERS finish searching the room and taking out their dead. They exit the café and exit stage right.

Beat.

PASHA gets up and looks at AVRAM.

Beat.

RUSLAN shifts and grunts.

PASHA moves to him and turns him over.

RUSLAN is bleeding heavily from his gut and from the mouth.

RUSLAN

Struggling to speak.

Misha... I need you... I need you to...

PASHA

Holding him.

It's okay... it's okay, Ruslan. I'll look – look – look after – her.

RUSLAN

Keep her... keep her safe please... she's all alone...

PASHA

D-d-d-don't worry. She'll never be – she'll never be alone. I promise.

RUSLAN

Trying not to cry.

Tell her... tell her I... I /

PASHA

Interrupting.

I'll t-t-t-tell her. I'll t-t-t-tell her everything.

RUSLAN

Thank you... you're a good... a good... friend...

RUSLAN dies.

PASHA lays RUSLAN down gently and looks at AVRAM.

Beat.

PASHA searches the room for the bayonet, finds it, and takes it with him to AVRAM. He cuts the bindings and frees AVRAM from the chair. He then lifts AVRAM out of the chair and lays him down gently. He drags RUSLAN next to AVRAM, and then drags both FELIKS and RASPUTIN one by one next to the others. They all now lay center stage, downstage from the chair that AVRAM was tied to. After arranging their bodies in their line, PASHA moves all their hands so that they are clasped together on their chests. He then takes dirt from the dirt-cake and sprinkles it on each of them. After doing so, he sits down on the chair and looks at his friends.

Bombing continues.

Several beats.

PASHA

Speaks slowly, patiently, and does not stutter.

Now it's time to say goodnight. Goodnight. Sleep tight. Now it's time to say goodnight.

Goodnight. Sleep tight. I'll see you in your dreams.

Several beats.

PASHA stands up from the chair and moves to the table with the German coat and helmet. He puts on the coat and helmet, finds and grabs the German rifle and its rounds, and then steps to the door. He looks back at his friends one last time and then exits the café. He exits stage right.

Several beats.

Lights fade to black.

Bombing lingers and then slowly fades out.

End of play.