

FROZEN IN TIME

By
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NOTE: The following text is a working version.

Characters

The Zúev Family

Lína - a woman of about 40, the head of the family
Román (Róma) - her son, 18
Klim - her brother, 45
Sásha - her brother, 40
Grandpa - Lina, Sasha and Klim's father, 80

The Morózov Family

Yúra - head of the family, over 40
Ólya - his wife
Válya - their daughter, 20
Mísha - their son, 18
Grandma - Olya's mother

Vladímir Anatólyevich Voronkó
Sergéi Chernovítsky, his helper
Paté- the town ne'er-do-well
Old Tólya - an old timer in the town of Ragweed
Alyósha the Fool - 18 years old
City residents and tourists

Place: the City of Ragweed.

Time: the Present.

*A piece of earth beneath the sky,
The air so fresh and pure.
And on the lips, like crumbs of bread,
The eyes of heaven: fiery stars.
I lean against an old barn wall:
There's not a sound and not a soul.
The earth is always dear to us:
The less you're worth, the more it means.
May someone bury me here someday,
Where happiness I once knew.
I'll rot beneath the silent soil,
And again I will be close to you.
So when this dream one day returns,
I'll say, with nostrils flared,
"A piece of earth beneath the sky,
The air so fresh and pure."
~ Boris Ryzhy*

Scene 1

*Valya Morozova leads a
tourist group onto the main
city square.*

VALYA

(Continuing her story) Until 1917 one could find as many as 25 drinking establishments in Ragweed, which was somewhat higher than the norm for the average provincial city. However, court records of the time reveal no evidence of excess criminal activity. In fact, to this day, our city has one of the lowest crime rates in the entire district. We don't even have our own police force. Yes, that's right. Perhaps it's the fresh air or the people who live here. To the left of the cathedral we see the home that once belonged to the Radugin brothers, industrialists who made their fortune in the alcohol industry. Radugin vodkas, wines and other beverages were served at the court of His Majesty the Tsar and were every bit the equal of the Smirnov products. The Tsar customarily sipped a glass of liqueur at lunch and this was always a liqueur made here in Ragweed. I will have to ask you not to attempt to enter the building - at present it is unsafe and condemned. The cathedral you see was built according to a plan devised by the architect Zazulin, a pupil of the great Rastrelli. Currently the cathedral is being used as a factory for fruit paste. Three types are made here. The tastiest is the apple butter. And now let's move along. To the right of the cathedral you see the ruins of what used to be the city Poorhouse which was run under the sponsorship of Count Levinsky. There were times when this building housed as many as 100 people. Most were what used to be called "firemen." That's what we used to call people who had been burned out of house and home. That is, fire victims. It's only now that we call "firemen" the people who put fires out. There are lots of things we don't know. By the way, there is a local literary story here, too. You surely have heard of the writer Shumsky. He was a frequent visitor here. Shumsky famously conducted a correspondence with the writer Uspensky. And he once wrote, "Ragweed is a magnificent town! Pull up stakes and settle here! This place is populated with the characters from your books!" Beyond the cathedral is the municipal garden where Fyodor Chaliapin himself performed in 19 and 10. Unfortunately, all that is left of the garden now is a single tree-lined walkway. It is the site of a monument erected in memory of soldiers who fought in World War II. Numerous small, but

fierce, battles took place here during the war. We will take a walk through the garden a little later. But right now I would like to invite you into the city museum to see our series of exhibits. Who does this boy belong to? I asked you to stay out of that building. It could collapse at any moment. Please get him out of there. There currently is a project in the works to revitalize Ragweed as an open-air museum. A living museum. The idea is a simple one—to provide the reconstruction of a provincial city in the early 20th century. There is so much we do not know. How did people live then? What were their joys, their problems, their cares? The life of a common city. There currently are 2,000 residents in Ragweed. We love our city. Now let's step into the museum and have a look at our modest, but interesting, collection. Follow me -

*All enter the building.
Voronko and Chernovitsky
remain on the city square.*

VORONKO

(Reads an announcement on a fence next to the museum) "I'll cure your goat of udder clap."

CHERNOVITSKY

So, what do you think?

VORONKO

Hell if I know. Looks like where I'm from. River Gulch. But there's something I can't put a finger on - something's missing.

CHERNOVITSKY

I dunno, there's lots here. The basic infrastructure anyway. I mean, look, the cathedral. There's plenty of space. Lots of room for outdoor activities.

VORONKO

I can't figure out what's missing.

CHERNOVITSKY

There's no City Hall.

VORONKO

You heard her say they don't even have a police force. But that's not it. It's so hot my head is exploding. I'm thirsty. Do they have a store around here?

CHERNOVITSKY

There comes somebody. Let's ask him. (*Sasha Zuev crosses the city square*) Excuse me, please. Would you tell me where I can find a store here?

SASHA

(*Stops, squints as he looks at the two men*) Got a smoke?

Chernovitsky holds out a pack of cigarettes. Voronko flicks his lighter. Sasha takes his time lighting up.

CHERNOVITSKY

So, where's your store?

SASHA

I dunno.

VORONKO

You're not from these parts?

SASHA

Yep. Sure am.

Voronko and Chernovitsky exchange glances.

VORONKO

Okay, friend. You've had your fun. Just point if you don't want to tell us.

Cigarette in mouth, Sasha flips him off.

CHERNOVITSKY

Say what?

SASHA

You want a scientific explanation?

Chernovitsky sizes up the broad-shouldered Sasha.

VORONKO

(*Takes Chernovitsky by the arm*) Easy now. (*To Sasha.*) Thank you, anyway, then. We'll find it ourselves.

*Sasha turns and calmly
leaves.*

CHERNOVITSKY

(Watching him go) Pleasant fellow.

VORONKO

Must be the fresh air here.

CHERNOVITSKY

Here comes another one.

*Alyosha the Fool crosses the
city square at a brisk pace.
When he approaches the two
men he smiles broadly and
pulls something from under
his belt. He timidly holds up
a picture of a naked woman
ripped out of a magazine.*

VORONKO

(Looks at Chernovitsky) No thanks. We've got plenty of
that. Move along, now.

*Offended like a child,
Alyosha the Fool hides the
picture under his belt again
and bolts off.*

VORONKO (cont'd)

That's quite a crew they've got here. Listen, I need
something to take a pill with. I get splitting headaches
the instant I leave home. It never fails. Let's go find
something ourselves.

CHERNOVITSKY

Look, everybody's coming back again.

*Valya leads the group of
tourists back out onto the
city square.*

VALYA

And now this is what we will do. I'll show you where the
store and rest rooms are. On the way I'll show you the city
park. Only please don't wander off too far. Your bus will

come to pick you up in an hour.

Scene 2

The Zuev home. Evening. Lina sets the table. Grandpa sits in a chair in the corner. Enter Sasha.

SASHA

Hello everybody.

LINA

You're right in time, Sasha. Help me get things moving. (*Turns to the door to another room.*) Roma! Roma! Supper time!

Roman enters holding a book.

SASHA

Hey, kid. Help me get Grandpa.

Roman and Sasha go over to Grandpa, pick him and his chair up carefully and carry them to the table. All sit. Lina puts a jar of golden brown liquid on the table. Sasha pours shot glasses for Lina and himself. They clink and drink. Everybody eats except Grandpa.

SASHA (cont'd)

How's things with the cow, Lina?

LINA

No different. Everybody agreed to ante up 500 apiece. That makes a salary of 6,000. But nobody's willing to tend herd for that.

SASHA

Six thousand? Maybe I should do it.

LINA

Why not? How much do you make at the factory?

SASHA

Same thing. They keep talking about raises, but I don't believe it.

LINA

So do it then. A whole summer of fresh air.

SASHA

(Draws his hand across his throat as if slitting it) That's what I think of your idea. I've done it since I was 7. And the hell if I could catch your cow now if a bull sets off chasing her.

LINA

Then Roma will do it for the time being.

ROMAN

The hell I will.

LINA

The hell you won't, son.

SASHA

(To Roman) I don't get it, kid. Who's that on your T-shirt? Some scientist?

ROMAN

A singer. You don't know him.

SASHA

Looks like that young guy down the street.

LINA

Nya-uh. More like the older one.

SASHA

He bought a Jeep. He's really happy with it.

LINA

And he was bitching about having no money.

SASHA

Don't we all?

LINA

And then go buy new cars.

ROMAN

What color is it?

SASHA

White.

LINA

I'm so gullible. I really believed he didn't have any money.

SASHA

(To Roman) So what's he sing?

ROMAN

Who?

SASHA

The guy on your T-shirt.

ROMAN

Songs. I like him.

LINA

It's like having a saw in your head, Sasha. That never stops. And just keeps going. And the lyrics are dirty, too.

ROMAN

Oh, come on, Mom! Are you going to go on about that again?

SASHA

I saw those sons of bitches again today.

LINA

The neighbors?

SASHA

The tourists. By the museum. I'm going to lose it someday. That stuff pisses me off.

LINA

Yeah, but the Morozov family, they're doing just fine. Valya shows those bumpkins all the town ruins and then sends everybody to her father's store. The whole family's in on it.

SASHA

Yeah, those guys have it made.

ROMAN

What's so wrong about that? People come because they're interested.

SASHA

I'm no baboon for people to go around staring at me.

ROMAN

They're looking at buildings.

SASHA

People live in these buildings. And they're gullible. Next thing you know they'll make all the girls into prostitutes and you'll be washing buses for a living.

ROMAN

What do you think I do at the fire station? I wash trucks.

SASHA

Yeah, but you do it for yourself there. You'll be washing buses for them.

ROMAN

Who cares, if it pays more money?

SASHA

When your mother finishes chewing her food, she'll tell you what.

LINA

I'll wash your truck, boy! Your father and I used to wash you behind the ears. Don't ever let me hear you talk like that again.

ROMAN

Then don't ask.

Sasha gets up.

LINA

You want another, Sasha?

SASHA

No, I'm going, Lina. Some other time. Klim called. He's coming home in a few days. We can knock back a few then. And I'll give the cows some thought. Ah, what the hell--

pour me another. (*Lina pours a glass.*) Here's to us not being baboons.

They clink and drink.

Scene 3

*The Morozov home. Evening.
Olya sets the table. Grandma sits on the sofa watching the TV with the sound off. Valya enters, plops down on a chair in exhaustion.*

OLYA

How was your day?

VALYA

All right. They bused in a big crowd today - thirty people.

OLYA

That's what your dad said. They all bought beer.

VALYA

They say they'll be sending two groups at a time by the end of August. If that's how things go, we'll have to expand.

Enter Yura and Misha. Yury holds a big piece of paper.

YURA

Now you can see the whole thing. This is where the Radugins lived. The market ran through here. Valya, come look at this. (*Valya comes and looks at the paper.*) Excellent, Misha! Look how he laid it all out here! We'll have to get a designer to do it all up right. Maybe he'll even make a map of it. Cool, isn't it?

VALYA

It's great. Only the inn was here and they kept the horses over here. You got it all mixed up. Those buildings looked alike.

MISHA

I'll redo it later.

OLYA

Everybody sit down, please.

*All sit down to dinner.
Grandma continues to watch
television.*

YURA

I'm going to the depot tomorrow. We're out of beer. I want you to man the store until lunch.

MISHA

What about pinhead?

YURA

Pinhead sells sunflower seeds on the street corner. Your sister's name is Valya.

MISHA

Valya, then. She's better at it than me.

YURA

She works for the museum. She doesn't have time to work the store. When I'm away, you're my replacement. And that's the end of that.

MISHA

There aren't any excursions tomorrow and it's not a good time for me. I'm no shopkeeper, you know.

YURA

Then who are you?

MISHA

(Straightening out his shoulders) A bridegroom.

OLYA

Aren't you clever?

VALYA

He's not as stupid as I thought he was.

YURA

All the more so if you're a bridegroom, then. You can earn some change for your wedding.

MISHA

Can't earn any money working for you. Look at my ratty sneakers over there - you promised me new ones ages ago -

YURA

What's wrong with your old ones? When I was your age -

VALYA

You've said that a million times, dad. Get over it.

YURA

What else am I supposed to do if there are people around here who don't give a damn how the family lives?

OLYA

Yura, why don't we send Misha off to military school? They can clothe him and feed him.

VALYA

He's too old. And even if they did take him, they'd never keep him fed - the portions would be too small. He'd start stealing food from the kids and they'd kick him out.

MISHA

Why didn't you just kill me when I was a baby?

VALYA

If only we'd known how you were going to turn out. We thought you were going to be a human being.

YURA

I must have been too easy on you. If I had so much as hinted about clothes like that to my dad -

VALYA

(Imitating her father's intonation) He would have whacked me on the head. Without a word said.

YURA

You can say that again. No, it's time to start whipping you again. It may be a little late, but who knows? Maybe it would have some effect.

OLYA

Only don't hit him in the head, Yura.

YURA

What's the difference? Valya, change Grandma's channel to a

movie - the news is on.

Valya gets up, goes to Grandma and pushes a button on her remote.

Scene 4

The Morozov store. Yura is at the counter, talking to Old Tolya.

YURA

(Clearly losing patience. Pokes an accounts register in the old man's face) Tolya, it's all here in black and white. You still owe me ten rubles.

OLD TOLYA

So? I get my pension next week. What are you such a tightwad about? Write me down for another bottle and I'm outta here. Too much talking going on.

Lina enters the store.

YURA

Pay up what you owe first.

OLD TOLYA

You heartless bastard. I always pay up when I get my pension! Have I ever cheated you? I borrow from you and I always pay you back. Can you deny that? It oughta be right there in your book. You're not going to let anything get past you, boy. You'd hang yourself to save a kopek! Go on, write it down, I'm late to work. Speed it up, I'm ready to pee in my pants here.

YURA

(Casts a sideways glance at Lina. He's uncomfortable bickering with the old man in front of her) All right. One bottle. But I'm not even talking to you again until you pay up the whole amount. *(Puts a bottle on the counter and makes a note in his book.)*

OLD TOLYA

(Grabs the bottle gloomily): Fascist. Write this down: "I,

the Fascist Yura Morozov, gave the Communist Tolya Sobolev one bottle on credit." Just like that.

YURA

Tolya. Go home, why don't you?

OLD TOLYA

Fascist. You'll get yours. Someone'll torch your chicken coop come Victory Day. (*Goes out mumbling curses.*)

LINA

(*Approaches the counter. Pauses*) How's business? You treating people badly, Mr. Morozov?

In place of an answer, Yura reaches out and touches her cheek with his fingers. Lina does not back off. On the contrary, she leans into his hand.

YURA

Who's abusing who, is what I'd like to know.

LINA

You ought to take it easier on people.

YURA

I'm a man, not a sanitary napkin.

LINA

I know you're a man. Your kids around?

YURA

Nobody's here. Let's go in the back room. I'll close the store. (*Steps out from behind the counter and locks the front door.*)

Lina goes up to a shelf of goods, picks up some chocolates and looks it over. Yura comes up from behind and embraces her.

LINA

You can get anything these days. Remember what we had when we were growing up? Taffy and fruit paste.

YURA

And apple butter.

LINA

I never could stand that. Klim worked at the factory and he brought home bushels full. Now it's only if he's going to make some homebrew.

YURA

Come on, let's go. *(Pulls her towards the back room.)*

LINA

(Turns to face him and shows him the chocolate box) I want one of these.

YURA

Take another one.

LINA

Too expensive?

YURA

Too old. You'll crack your teeth.

They laugh. Yura grabs her hand and pulls her into the back room.

Scene 5

Evening. Music plays. Roman smokes by the entrance to a youth dance hall. Valya comes out on the deck.

VALYA

Hi, Roma.

ROMAN

Hey.

VALYA

Somethin' up? You keep wandering around avoiding my gaze.

ROMAN

Am I supposed to look at you all the time?

VALYA

You could some of the time. I'm a girl. I like it when people look at me. *(Laughs.)*

ROMAN

Yeah right. A girl.

VALYA

Who left the flowers on the deck?

ROMAN

Is that all you can ask, Valya?

VALYA

I know it was you. And I like it. Thank you.

Enter Paté. He's drunk and staggers slightly.

PATÉ

Hey there young folks. I'm down here to chill out, too. *(Nods in the direction of the dance hall.)* Things happ'nin' in there?

VALYA

Go in and find out.

PATÉ

Aren't you catty tonight?

VALYA

Roma, give me a cigarette.

ROMAN

This is my last. *(Turns away. Tosses his butt on the ground.)*

PATÉ

That's pretty rude, isn't it?

ROMAN

It was my last one.

PATÉ

Well, well, bro. We're not getting anywhere like that, are we? Okay. You overreacted. Happens to the best of us. But now you're gonna answer for it. Aren't you? (*Eyes wide, stares him in the face.*)

VALYA

Leave him alone, Paté.

PATÉ

(*To Roman*) I don't hear you.

ROMAN

What's your problem?

PATÉ

My problem? My problem, you say? (*Comes up close to him.*) I'll tell you what. I'll give you problems. You got that, kid?

ROMAN

Yeah.

PATÉ

(*Turns to Valya*) Am I right, Madame?

VALYA

Yeah.

PATÉ

You sure about that?

VALYA

Yeah.

PATÉ

(*Goes up the steps into the dance hall*) All you fuckers are just jerkin' off out here. Somebody ought to snap you mothers into line. (*Goes in the door.*)

VALYA

(*Looks at Roman*) Scare you?

ROMAN

Man, he's just drunk. What do you expect?

Misha enters at a brisk walk.

MISHA
What happened?

VALYA
Nothing happened.

MISHA
I saw Paté getting ready to crawl all over you. What happened, Roma?

ROMAN
Ah, nothin'. He's drunk.

MISHA
Was he hasslin' her?

ROMAN
No, me.

VALYA
Yes he was. Yes he was. And Roma was sticking up for me.

MISHA
All right. (*Quickly runs up the stairs and enters the dance hall.*)

VALYA
Was it really you put the flowers here?

ROMAN
Yes.

VALYA
You silly fool. I knew it. Who else here would have done that?

ROMAN
Is it so difficult to do?

VALYA
I don't know. The last time someone gave me flowers was at high school graduation.

The door flies open. Misha drags Paté out by the scruff of his neck and sends him

careening down the steps.

MISHA

Come on, out with it! Apologize!

Paté mumbles, gets up on his hands and knees. Misha kicks him and he falls on his side.

MISHA (cont'd)

He's not going to do that anymore. Come on, Valya. We're going home. Otherwise the Pokrovsky gang will show up and I'm no match for them.

VALYA

Okay, let's go.

MISHA

You get yourself home, too, Roma. Thanks for sticking up for her. Gimme five. (*Roman shakes his hand.*) You got a grip like a girl. (*Roman squeezes harder*) (*Laughs.*) You oughta pump some iron. That's all right. I'll open up my fitness club and I'll whip you into shape. You'll drive the girls crazy.

VALYA

Quit your blabbering. Let's go. (*Turns to Roman.*) See you, Roma.

ROMAN

See ya.

Valya and Misha leave. Paté gets up on all fours. Roman walks up to him and gives him a gentle kick in the shoulder. He falls over on the ground.

Scene 6

The back room of the Morozov store. Yura in a T-shirt sits on a chair. Lina sits on his lap.

YURA

Things are only right with you.

LINA

I don't believe you. I don't believe a word.

YURA

You know how long you've been saying that to me?

LINA

How long?

YURA

I'll tell you. Since 1982.

LINA

It was before that, Yura. Before that.

YURA

Wait a minute, Lina. November 7. Olga and I showed up at Pasha's. You were already there with Kolya. Then I saw you guys back because Kolya was completely out of it. I dragged him with one arm and escorted you with the other. That's when it all began. And that was 1982 because Pasha went off to work in Siberia in the spring.

LINA

How do you like that? You remember.

YURA

We put Kolya on the sofa and we went into the kitchen. I still had half a bottle in my pocket.

LINA

Let's not start on that, Yura.

YURA

And then he fell off the sofa. We barely had time to get dressed.

LINA

Yura -

YURA

You know, I think about him sometimes. Only don't take this wrong. He was never a bad man. But he was never in control.

LINA

You're in control.

YURA

You doubt it? I've done it all myself, all with my own two hands. And when everything went to hell, I didn't turn to the bottle like some people do. I can look my children in the eye.

LINA

(Pulls away a little and stares at him carefully) What is that supposed to mean?

YURA

Means what I said.

LINA

A-ha. I see. So your kids are doing fine. Aren't you the cat's meow, Yura? Kolya, sure, what else would you say? Couldn't hold a candle to you. Only listen to this: I look my kid in the eye, too. You got that?

YURA

Now don't go get worked up.

LINA

(Jumps up) You tell me this. You think I don't care about my kid? You think I'm a bad mother? Is that what you think, Yura?

YURA

I'm not talking about you -

LINA

Yura, do you fucking understand what you said? I'll fucking strangle for him! Anybody!

YURA

Settle down.

LINA

I'm like a damn hamster in a wheel! All alone! By myself! And you think I'm no mother?! What the hell do you know about it? What have you ever done to help? You think my life is easy? You're no measuring stick!

YURA

(Stands up) Don't yell at me!

LINA

Man, you're not in control. You're a certified prick!

YURA

Oh is that so?

LINA

Well what do you think? I don't need you, Yura. In fact, I never did.

YURA

You'll regret those words. You'll come back yourself. You don't think so?

LINA

I don't think so. You're the one who's going to regret it. And boy are you going to regret it. You'll remember this yet. And Kolya, too.

YURA

Kolya, too, huh? Good girl. Faithful right to the end.

LINA

You're damn right. Kolya's with me every day. He'll forgive me. But you, you'll get what's coming to you. Every bit of it.

YURA

Thatta girl. Dump it all on me. You know what? Get outta here.

LINA

Who's staying? (Goes to the exit. Stops.) Klim's coming. He's wanted to talk to you for a long time. Last time I held him off. This time I won't. And you know Klim.

YURA

Just let him show his face.

LINA

You can hide behind your wife's skirt or you can crawl in the cellar. But I'm not stopping him.

YURA

Tell your brother I blew him off ages ago. For good. And forever.

LINA

I'll tell him that. (*Leaves.*)

YURA

(*Spits on the floor angrily*) Fucking family!

Scene 7

A hill, from which the entire city is visible. Voronko and Chernovitsky take a rest.

VORONKO

Looks pretty good from up here.

CHERNOVITSKY

These are well-known parts. Artists used to come up here all the time. You could say this is the typical Russian landscape.

VORONKO

Well, the landscape is fine. It's all the rest that's got me worried.

CHERNOVITSKY

Just take a look. It's all right there. The factory. The cathedral. See that ravine over there? When they built the factory, they dug that huge ditch by mistake. Ran into some soft ground. Ever since there's been the danger the whole factory might slide into that pit.

VORONKO

(*Whacks himself on the forehead*) Now I get it! I know what's missing. There is no city park here. There is no Ferris wheel. We had one in River Gulch. There isn't one here. I used to save up my money for six months and then blow it all in two hours. I'd ride those rides until I was ready to puke. I'd come home all green. My mother used to think the guys had gotten me drunk. I'd lie down on the sofa and the ceiling would turn somersaults. My mom would cook up some nasty concoction in a pot and make me breathe

it. That's what this town is missing.

CHERNOVITSKY

That can easily be rectified.

VORONKO

(Thoughtfully) Now a shooting gallery, that's another thing. I really loved that. They had these pop songs playing there all the time - you'd hit the target and the music would stop. But now I'm starting to get sentimental. What else do they have here?

CHERNOVITSKY

It's on the highway to Moscow. There's a gas station. *(Laughs.)* The air is special and the people are too -

VORONKO

Yeah, the air. I've got a splitting headache. What's that you were saying about historical connections?

CHERNOVITSKY

Yeah, there is one. There's this guy living here, a retard. He's a direct descendant of Catherine the Great. It started out with Count Bobrinsky and then someone else and someone else. And this guy here is the end of the line. It's all there on paper. The whole thing is documented.

VORONKO

(Looking at his assistant with interest) THE Catherine?

CHERNOVITSKY

I've seen all the papers in the museum. We saw him walking across the city square yesterday.

VORONKO

A total retard?

CHERNOVITSKY

Total.

VORONKO

Then who needs him?

CHERNOVITSKY

He's got relatives abroad. Very wealthy people.

VORONKO

Why haven't they taken him in?

CHERNOVITSKY

When his parents were alive, they were against it. He hasn't been along all that long. I hear there are already some papers in the pipeline to send him to France.

VORONKO

Fuck them.

CHERNOVITSKY

Meaning.

VORONKO

We'll adopt him. He'll stay here. Using him as a front, we can request financing for reconstruction.

CHERNOVITSKY

You think that'll work? He's got relatives.

VORONKO

I do too. We'll make it happen. We need some connections here. And this is a good one. Do you know where he lives?

CHERNOVITSKY

We can find out.

VORONKO

I'm think I'm losing weight here. My pants are falling down. (*Unbuttons his jacket, tugs at his belt.*)

CHERNOVITSKY

I've put together a list of residents. We can start making the rounds today.

VORONKO

Then let's go make the acquaintance of the poor folk. (*Turns around, looks back at the city.*) You know, it's good there's no carousel. Makes it all a bit calmer.

Scene 8

The Zuev home. Lina cuts Grandpa's hair.

LINA

You got a rat's nest here, daddy. I'll borrow Tanya's automatic clippers and fix you up better than new. I'll leave you some here and on the sides. I'll have to pull out some of your old photos to see what you looked like when you were young. And I'll cut it just like it was then. Bend over. *(Bends his head over.)* A little more. What the hell did I go over there again for? I always regret it after. This looks pretty even here. *(Listens to sounds on the porch.)* Roma's back from work -

Enter Klim. Paté is shadowing him. They're both drunk.

KLIM

(Goes to Lina, embraces her and kisses her cheek) What's up, sis? *(Bends over, kisses father.)* What's up, pop? *(Points at Paté.)* This guy, he's uh, he's with me.

LINA

I can see that. Sit down at the table. I'm done.

Klim sits at the table. Paté plops down next to him.

KLIM

How're ya doin'?

LINA

(Sits across from him) Fine.

KLIM

Look me in the eyes. *(She looks him in the eyes.)* Shall we toast my homecoming?

LINA

Maybe it's not such a good idea? You're both already two sheets to the wind. You'll just start up again -

KLIM

Now don't insult me in front of my guest. We'll just have a drop. Aren't you happy to see me?

Paté hiccups. Lina gets a bottle of vodka and shot glasses from the cupboard. Puts them before the guests. The bottle top crackles as she twists it open. She pours. Takes the bottle away and sits back down.

KLIM (cont'd)

Ah, well that's better. How about yourself?

LINA

Thanks. I'm fine as is.

KLIM

Talkative, aren't we? *(Raises his glass.)* To the Zuev family!

Paté and Klim drink.

KLIM (cont'd)

(To Paté.) Here I am finally home. I grew up here. *(Gestures towards Grandpa.)* That's my dad. And my sister. Name's Lina. That's short for Angelina. That was dad's idea. Dad was a tough one. We used to have a priest living here. A real scumbag. And one time dad gets together with a bunch of other hot-headed revolutionary types - well, that was back when there was such a thing... And real polite-like they told this guy to pack up and get out. But he dug in and wouldn't listen. So they set his place on fire. They hammered his door and windows shut so he couldn't get out. After that dad got real sick. And then my sister was born. He named her Angelina. After that he got better again.

LINA

What the hell are you talking about? That never happened. Dad made up that cock-and-bull story.

KLIM

Well I believe it. Dad, that's what he was like. Still is. He doesn't miss a thing. He's looking at us and thinking there aren't any real men left. Just a bunch of tadpoles - *(Paté looks at Grandpa in wonder.)* They don't make 'em like him anymore. Two glasses of vodka at lunch and two more in the evening. And that's on a working day. But I never saw him drunk. Never once.

LINA

You shouldn't have brought this guy in here.

KLIM

Shut up. Lyosha, want a drink? (*Paté gloomily shakes his head in the affirmative.*) Then go and ask her for one. Only do it nice. I'll be watching. Go on.

PATÉ

(*Stands. To Lina*) My friend and me here... (*Runs out of words. Tries using gestures.*)

KLIM

(*To Lina*) You hear that? The voice of a human being -

PATÉ

Just another shot and then we'll go.

KLIM

We gonna have to wait long?

Lina roughly bangs the bottle down on the table. Paté pours Klim vodka, Klim downs it in a gulp. Pat. Fills his own glass, spilling the excess on the table.

KLIM (cont'd)

You want me to teach you to drink propane?

PATÉ

Nah. I prefer vodka.

KLIM

It's easy. You down it then you run like hell for as long as you possibly can. That way it doesn't kill you.

Paté laughs. Klim grows gloomy. Gets up. Grabs Paté by the collar. Pat. quits laughing. Looks at Klim in fear but doesn't try to struggle free.

KLIM (cont'd)

How come you're not laughing? You came in this house like a human being and you were received like a human being.

LINA

Let the guy go.

KLIM

You fucker, you think just because we let you in here, you can do anything you want?

LINA

Klim! *(Goes to him; puts her hand on his shoulder. Paté does not try to break loose.)*

KLIM

We lived our whole lives in this house. We've been through everything - weddings and funerals. I got drafted in the army here. And every holiday. What's your favorite holiday, sucker?

PATÉ

(Hiccups) My birthday.

KLIM

Fucker. *(Shoves him away.)*

Paté falls on the floor. Lina helps him up and sees him out the door.

KLIM (cont'd)

(Looks at Grandpa.) So that's how it is, pops. I'm in charge here now. Don't you worry.

LINA

Got it out of your system now? *(Klim goes to her. Embraces her. She strokes his head.)* What a silly fool you are.

KLIM

Anybody mistreatin' you?

LINA

I can dish it out myself.

KLIM

I'll be looking after all of you now. I'm taking you and

Roma under my wing. You guys got nothin' to worry about with me here.

LINA

Fucking bodyguard, huh?

KLIM

I think I'll probably stay. I can't take it in the city anymore. That's not living. I tried it, but it just didn't work. So that's how it is. Basically, I'm back. Now things are going to be hopping.

Scene 9

The Morozov house. At table are Yura, Olya, Voronko and Chernovitsky. In the corner Grandma sits in front of the TV.

VORONKO

So that's our proposal. You've known him for some time, have you not? He's comfortable with you and you with him. And it's only temporary anyway. We'll take on all the expenses. After all, we're building a long-term relationship here. There's no point in hiding the fact that we need people we can work with here, a base group of reliable partners, so to speak. So it's up to you; the ball's in your court. *(Gets up and begins pacing the room.)*

Olya looks questioningly at her husband.

YURA

You really think this is necessary?

VORONKO

Of course not. You can do whatever you want. You can live your whole life in poverty. Be my guest. Nobody will deprive you of that right. You can sit here and wait for the whole town to close up. Be my guest. We didn't come here to force you to do anything. That's not how things are done anymore. We're all adults here, so let's talk like adults. There is a certain desire here to have this town

come to life. All you have to do is join the party.

YURA

We're in.

OLYA

But what are people going to say about us? (*Yura looks at her in surprise.*) You could do that? Just take in a stranger off the street?

VORONKO

No. But if the welfare of my family depended on it I could.

CHERNOVITSKY

We're not suggesting you adopt him. Just be his guardians. A committee will come to verify that he's all right here with you and that will be it.

OLYA

Pardon me, please, but do you have children?

CHERNOVITSKY

No. But I understand what you're driving at -

OLYA

No you don't. Someone has to answer for them. It doesn't happen like that, not even when you're talking about life getting better as a result. The government began offering compensation to parents having a second child, but do you see people going out and having more kids? That isn't what's important at all.

YURA

Olya, let's talk about this later.

OLYA

Wait a minute. My mother here (*gestures towards Grandma*), there were eight people in her family. Three of 'em they brought in off the street. Nobody paid Grandma anything for that and no committees came by to verify anything. I knew his parents, Nadya and Igor - knew them my whole life. You could even say Nadya and I were friends. They always kept him clean and clipped and dressed no worse than anybody else. He used to play with our kids. We all know everything about each other. Who's going to believe we just up and decided to take him in?

VORONKO

Madam, I told you right at the first that you don't have to do this out of the goodness of your heart.

OLYA

What's the difference? What are people going to say? "He lived on his own for three years and, bam! the Morozovs take him in. Now, why could that be?" That's what people are going to say.

VORONKO

Are you so afraid of people? That they'll stop saying hello? Tell me, what's that going to change?

OLYA

Nothing. But they'll think all kinds of things.

YURA

You don't think they talk about us already?

OLYA

Well, they'll really get going now.

VORONKO

Is that such a big deal?

OLYA

What do you care? You come and you go.

YURA

Listen, keep it down.

OLYA

Don't you go trying to shut me up, Yura - (*Yura looks at her with increasing amazement*) This money will come back to haunt us.

YURA

Olya!

VORONKO

Wait a minute. I can't make heads or tails of this. First you blame us for money and then it turns out you're afraid of gossip. You guys ought to figure out what you're talking about.

OLYA

This is what we're going to do. We'll just take him in.
Without money. He can live with us.

Pause.

VORONKO

I hope you'll pardon us if we have insulted you in any way.
I rather think we have worn out our welcome. Only I would
like to remind you again that we have not withdrawn any of
our offers. In truth, I'm very grateful to you. And I hope
that we have come to some sort of understanding. Good-bye.

*Voronko and Chernovitsky
leave.*

YURA

Have you fucking lost your mind?

OLYA

It's not me, Yura. And let's not get into that.

YURA

What do you mean not get into it?! Do you think about what
you're saying? It's going to come down on me (*gestures with
his hand as if axing the back of his neck*), come down on me
right here!

OLYA

We'll deal with it.

YURA

There are times I'd like to throttle you.

OLYA

Say that again?

YURA

No.

OLYA

You and I are going after him right now.

YURA

I think I'm going to be sick.

OLYA

You want a drink?

YURA

Yes. Tell me, Olya. Are you serious about this?

OLYA

You and I are going to have a drink and then we're going after him. On the way, you're going to pick me a bouquet.

YURA

Why?

OLYA

Because I said so.

YURA

I'm not talking about the bouquet.

OLYA

I'm not either.

Scene 10

Late evening. Roman sits on the museum veranda. Enter Valya, who sees him and smiles.

VALYA

You waiting for me?

ROMAN

Nah. Just sitting here.

VALYA

Ah. Where's the flowers? *(Roman holds out a bouquet. She sticks her nose into it and sniffs. Sits next to him.)* Thank you. When I was in school I always wanted to learn ikebana. I always used to make bouquets.

ROMAN

I remember you even had an exhibit once.

VALYA

What do you remember? You were just a little twerp.

ROMAN

I'm only two years younger.

VALYA

You know when I noticed you? When you broke your hand in gym class. The whole school was talking about it.

ROMAN

Ah, they just put the mats out wrong. I could tell already when I was in the air.

VALYA

Did you know you're cute?

ROMAN

Me?

VALYA

No, me.

ROMAN

Never thought about it.

VALYA: You have attractive nostrils. Very attractive.
(*Roman sniffs.*) (*Laughs.*) Only your bangs are dumb.

ROMAN

I'll cut 'em.

VALYA

Roma, what if I say "jump" -

ROMAN

In a lake.

VALYA

Will you?

ROMAN

Why not.

VALYA

'Cause that's not what I want, Roma. I want to do it myself. I want to jump in a lake myself for somebody. You

know what I mean?

ROMAN

I'm trying.

VALYA

Only don't be hurt. I really like you. Really.

ROMAN

People break up after things like that.

VALYA

Who said?

ROMAN

That's what they say in the movies. (*Gets up.*) I guess I'm goin'.

VALYA

Sit down.

ROMAN

(*Sits down*) You remember when you had that exhibit? You had this bouquet there, with hedge rose and all kinds of branches. I ate the top off it. And after that my mouth was always filled with this weird taste. I really remember that.

VALYA

So, what am I supposed to do, stick my butt up for you now?

ROMAN

Wow, you didn't have to say that.

VALYA

Oh, come on. Smile. (*Roman smiles with difficulty.*) I like your poems. Only they're pretty naïve. Have you been writing for a long time?

ROMAN

Ever since school. I wrote the first one in third grade.

VALYA

You ought to apply to the Literary Institute -

ROMAN

That's no profession.

VALYA

You can make something of yourself anywhere. You're just too weak-willed. But at least you're not stuck up.

ROMAN

What do you want to do?

VALYA

I want to get up in the morning and put on a white robe. And then take it off and slip into a hot bath. And then sit there until I can't take it anymore. And then get out and -

ROMAN

Dress up in your robe again.

VALYA

What are you, ignorant? You don't "dress up" in robes. Sounds good, though huh?

ROMAN

Big one?

VALYA

What.

ROMAN

Bathtub.

VALYA

Huge.

ROMAN

Enough for how many people.

VALYA

Eight.

ROMAN

That's a swimming pool.

VALYA

That's the dream I have. A great big bath and a white robe. And I want the faucet to sparkle like it's made out of silver. Can you do that?

ROMAN

I can try. It's just plumbing. Not much of a dream, though. What about a case of shampoo and a gold-lined scrubbing sponge. That ought to round out your dream.

VALYA

(Thoughtfully looks at the flowers) What'd you say? You ate my bouquet when you were in school? You wanna do that now? Here. Come on, come on. What's wrong? *(Holds the bouquet out to him.)*

ROMAN

There's no hedge rose here.

VALYA

(Laughs) You gonna see me home?

ROMAN

Maybe let's still go for a walk?

VALYA

Let's go past the factory. Okay. Move it. Let's go. *They get up from the porch. (Squints into the distance.)* Wait a minute. My folks are coming. Let's duck outta here.

*They go around the corner.
Yura and Olya appear in the
distance and pass by. She
holds a bouquet. Valya and
Roman come out of the dark.*

VALYA (cont'd)

I don't get it. What's wrong with them? An evening stroll with flowers?

ROMAN

What about it? People go for walks.

VALYA

No they don't. Something's up. That doesn't just happen. I haven't seen them do that since I was a kid.

ROMAN

What about us? Did something happen with us?

VALYA

I dunno yet.

ROMAN

Listen, you know what? Why don't you just go home by yourself? Maybe then you can figure it out.

VALYA

(Thoughtfully looks to where her parents disappeared) Not today. They put a scare in me. You know how to hold hands?

ROMAN

Show me.

VALYA

(Bends his arm at the elbow, slips her arm into his and gives him a critical look) Keep the face simple. More. That's better. Left foot first -

They leave.

Scene 11

*The Zuev home. Late evening.
Lina, Sasha and Klim play
cards. Grandpa sits nearby.*

LINA

Mmm. Wait a minute, wait a minute. Aha. Take that, people.

KLIM

All right.

SASHA

Me too.

KLIM

I'll bet you that's a bluff.

LINA

No, wait. Here we go. There. What do you think of that?

SASHA

That's it. I'm out.

LINA

Next.

SASHA

Klim, she's got a full house. I know her. She doesn't attack like that for no reason.

KLIM

I know her too. She ain't got nothin'. She's just bluffing out of fear.

SASHA

Not only. She's got her dander' up. I know her, too. Fear makes her lethal.

LINA

Do you men mind?

KLIM

Not at all. (*Sasha peeks at Klim's cards and sniffs disapprovingly.*) Were yours better?

SASHA

A lot.

A knock at the door. Lina puts down her cards, goes to open it. Voronko and Chernovitsky stand in the doorway.

VORONKO

Good evening ladies and gentlemen. My name is Vladimir Voronko. You may have heard about me. This is Sergei Chernovitsky, my assistant. We're out making the rounds of the town. And now we've come to you.

The Zuevs silently look at the visitors. Pause.

LINA

Well, come in, then.

Voronko and Chernovitsky pull up chairs and sit at a bit of a distance from the Zuevs. Chernovitsky unsnaps a folder and pulls out photos and drawings.

VORONKO

Have you heard of our project?

LINA

Rumors.

VORONKO

That's wonderful.

Pause. Voronko looks at Chernovitsky.

CHERNOVITSKY

(Clears his throat) Our chief goal is to return this town to its residents. You can't exactly call Ragweed a prosperous town. It's deserving of more. Wouldn't you agree?

Klim and Sasha are silent.

LINA

What's it deserve?

CHERNOVITSKY

A better life. A more advanced infrastructure. Investments flowing into the city. And you know yourselves what that means: more jobs and a higher standard of living. This is no podunk town you've got here.

LINA

No what?

VORONKO

(Tired) You will see king crab appear on the shelves of your store. They're really big. IKEA will move in with a new outlet. They're incredibly convenient. It won't happen all at once, but it will happen. Nothing ever happens all at once. But you don't want to be left behind when it does. We've been to twenty homes tonight and I'll admit our tongues are a bit tied at this point, but the basic story is the same: Life will be better, life will be more joyous.

LINA

We're not exactly bathed in tears as it is.

VORONKO

Then let me get down to business. I would like to offer you a partnership contract. A mutually advers..., I mean, a mutually ad-van-ta-geous contract. Son of a bitch, I always have trouble getting that out. It must have something against me. You help bolster the image of the city and in exchange you earn money for yourselves. Let me say this immediately - there is very little you have to do. You just live your lives the way you always do. Approximately three times a week you get dressed up in the historical clothing of townspeople from the early 20th century. (*To Chernovitsky.*) Show them. (*Chernovitsky shows the Zuevs a picture.*) There are two costumes - one for holidays and another for everyday wear. What else?

CHERNOVITSKY

The genre scenes.

VORONKO

Oh, yes. That's also three times a week. Not more than an hour. All you have to do is go out for walks around the cathedral on the city square. Once a week we'll ship in a singer like Chaliapin who will sing in the park. We'll ask him to keep his repertoire varied. We will rebuild the cathedral. We will put in a parking lot nearby and we'll put in a souvenir stand. Ragweed is ready for the future. Any questions?

CHERNOVITSKY

The house, Mr. Voronko.

VORONKO

(*Looks over the walls and ceiling*) Oh yes. I almost forgot. You're rather more fortunate than the others. You live in an old structure. If I'm not mistaken, this was built in 1905.

CHERNOVITSKY

1905. That's in the relief on the facade.

VORONKO

Excellent. Then, also three days a week tourists will come visit you in your home. At specific hours, naturally. And again, you need not do anything special. You can eat or do anything else that needs doing. Although we will have to redo the interior a little. But that's only here in this room. All the others can stay as is. The beginning of the

last century - you obviously can't have a TV set in here. And for that you receive extra payment. Yes. There are only three such buildings left. Your coordinator will be Yury Morozov.

Lina and Sasha glance furtively at Klim, whose face betrays no emotion.

VORONKO (cont'd)

In the event that someone gets sick or has to be out of town. You can trade off with others. Payment will be made immediately after each group of tourists leaves. (Pause.) (Grimaces, rubs his temples.) There's nothing new about any of this. They do it in Europe. They do it everywhere. It's no silly game - they take it very seriously. Imagine you are going to live as your great-grandparents did. You'll get a feel for the lives they led. It's like reconnecting with your ancestors. And that is really important, especially in our days. Most important of all - you don't have to do anything. You just live your life and that's it.

Sasha takes the costume drawings from Chernovitsky and looks them over. Begins to laugh. Klim sits and stares gloomily into space. Lina looks at him questioningly.

VORONKO (cont'd)

We will spiff your house up for you. We can plant some new trees by your porch. Install carved wooden benches. It's all right here in the plans. It's really quite beautiful. (Intuitively recognizing that Klim is the most important person here, he holds the plans out to him.)

KLIM

Go fuck yourself.

Voronko continues to hold the plans in his outstretched hand. Klim calmly looks him in the eye. A tense pause.

VORONKO

I can accept that. (Stands, as does Chernovitsky.) Good

evening, ladies and gentlemen.

They leave.

LINA

They forgot their picture.

SASHA

(Picks the costume designs up off the table and begins laughing again): Nah, I think you'd look good, Klim. I can just see you out on the city square. With a walking stick.

KLIM

Gimme those. *(Takes the papers and flings them aside.)* Who's going to be in charge, there? Yura Morozov?

LINA

Why don't you forget about him? You can't keep that up forever.

KLIM

I'll have that man taken care of forever.

LINA

Oh, come on.

SASHA

It's good dad can't hear. My God, what things have come to-

LINA

You're not listening to me.

SASHA

We don't even count as people any more.

KLIM

I'm not leaving it at that. I give father my word on that. *(Turns to Grandpa.)* Nobody has ever laughed at the Zuevs. Don't worry, dad. We'll have every one of their asses yet.

Scene 12

The Morozov house. Furniture has been moved around. The TV is gone; in its place stands

a real spinning wheel. Two broad benches have replaced the chairs and stools. Yura enters in the costume of a man from the early 20th century. Carefully looks at the table, picks up the salt and pepper shakers and hides them in a cupboard. Sits at the table. Enter Olya, also in an old-fashioned dress. She sits next to her husband. They are silent for awhile. Look at each other. Finally she can't hold it in and begins to laugh. He frowns.

OLYA

You haven't looked that silly since you got out of the army.

YURA

You're a good one to talk.

OLYA

Why? I like it. It's very comfortable. I had a dress like this when I was pregnant with Misha.

YURA

(Goes to the mirror; looks at himself) You know what? If somebody showed us what we look like right now back when we didn't look like this yet, we would have really -

OLYA

I am now.

YURA

When we used to do amateur theatricals we played adaptations of historical novels. And we had costumes like this. But somehow that was all very different.

OLYA

Just pretend you're in a play now.

YURA

I don't want to. But I'd better get going. It's all going to start soon.

OLYA
You've still got time. Sit down.

He sits across from her.

OLYA (cont'd)
(Takes him by the hand.) What's wrong with you? You agreed to do it. So now let's just do it.

YURA
I'm okay.

OLYA
But you're obviously not.

YURA
That's my problem.

OLYA
No, it's ours.

YURA
We're going to have tourists here today. Do you remember everything?

OLYA
What's there to remember?

YURA
Keep your mouth shut. Sit there silently at the spinning wheel and that kind of thing.

OLYA
What if somebody asks something?

YURA
Keep it shut. Valya can answer for you.

OLYA
Sounds easy to me. But you know, why sit there like a robot? Maybe I oughta sing?

YURA
What are you going to sing?

OLYA

Whatever. Madonna. I'll do it quietly. But there are songs you sing specially for weaving. My grandmother used to sing them. Only I don't remember everything.

YURA

(Pulls a piece of paper out of his pocket, looks at it) No. There's nothing about that written here. *(Reads.)* "Townspeople shall hold their silence throughout the entire visitation; shall not enter into dialogue, shall not interrupt the excursion leader. Townspeople are required to observe the customs of the historical era at all times. The consumption of alcoholic beverages is strictly forbidden."

OLYA

I wonder, can we smile?

YURA

(Looks at the paper) Nothing about that, either. Probably not.

OLYA

And you say this is easy.

YURA

(Stands) You know what? Today's the first day. I don't think I'm going to bring anyone here today. Next time. Let's wait and see how others do it.

OLYA

But can I stay in my dress? I want to get used to this.

YURA

Why not? What's the difference? But you can't do everything at once. Let's hold this thing off for one more day.

Scene 13

Roman sits at the table reading a book. Lina sorts out grain. Roman closes his book and looks out the window.

LINA
Don't feel like reading?

ROMAN
No.

LINA
What's the book about?

ROMAN
A fantasy novel.

LINA
What about?

ROMAN
I can't explain it. When you read, it's interesting - when you close it, there's nothing to say about it.

LINA
You're looking kinda punk today. Are you coming down with something?

ROMAN
I don't have time to be sick.

LINA
What's it that's got you so busy?

ROMAN
Mom, I think I'm going to be leaving here.

LINA
(*Stares at him*) What did you say? All right. Out with it. When did you get this idea?

ROMAN
Mom, can't we talk normal? I don't want to live here anymore. What is there for me here? I've never even been anywhere.

LINA
Is this your idea? (*He lowers his head.*) Out with it. I'll tell you who got under your skin. You want me to tell you? (*He's silent.*) What do you think? You think somebody needs you out there? You think somebody's just waiting for you to show up? Do you have any idea how hard it is to start a new

life in a new place?

ROMAN

But what am I going to do here?

LINA

You've got a home here. Your own home.

ROMAN

I've never seen anything else.

LINA

What a fool you are, young man! What the hell do you expect to see out there? You think the streets are paved with gold? Talk to Klim - he'll tell you. Think about it, son. Maybe you oughta just deep-six that idea, huh?

ROMAN

But I want to try. I can't hang onto your skirt hems forever.

LINA

(Boldly swipes all the grain to the side with a single motion of her hand. Pause) You're all I've got. The Morozovs can do what they want with their kids. But you're going to live here with me. When I die, you can go wherever in the hell you want. But until then - you're here. And that's the end of that.

ROMAN

(Slams the book shut) Then I'm getting married.

LINA

I'm gonna...

ROMAN

Think on that, why don't you! *(Jumps up and leaves, bumping into Klim on the way out.)*

KLIM

What's going on here?

LINA

Ah, things -

KLIM

Something wrong?

LINA

Klim, you're not against us, are you?

KLIM: What are you talking about?

LINA

I'm afraid for Roma. He wants to leave. That's that bitch of his putting him up to it.

KLIM

What bitch?

LINA

Valya Morozova.

KLIM

Yeah -

LINA

What "yeah"?

KLIM

I've heard this before.

LINA

I can't make it without Roma, Klim. You know that.

KLIM

Why not? What if things work out for him?

LINA

Klim! (*Breathes with difficulty.*) He's not going anywhere. Do you understand that?

KLIM

(*Nods*) I'm going to go out on the square and see what's up. Those people have a get-together out there today.

LINA

Ab-so-lutely no-where.

KLIM

(*Prepares to leave*) I got you, sis. Don't worry. He's not going anywhere. (*Leaves.*)

Lina returns all the grain to

*its proper place on the table
with a single swipe of her
palm.*

Scene 14

*A handful of people dressed
in early 20th-century garb
are gathered by the
cathedral. Voronko and
Chernovitsky carefully and
critically look them over.*

VORONKO

I guess that must be it.

CHERNOVITSKY

That's it.

VORONKO

When's the bus?

CHERNOVITSKY

In a half an hour.

VORONKO

How's Chaliapin doing?

CHERNOVITSKY

Almost ready. He starts in a moment. The son of a bitch
forgot his shoes at home and he'll be singing in sandals.

VORONKO

It'll do for the first time. But make sure from here on out
that all is done according to instructions.

CHERNOVITSKY

They called from the printers and the souvenir calendars
will be ready Monday. All four versions.

VORONKO

That's great. Another week here to iron out the kinks and
we'll be able to fly the coop.

Sounds of someone singing

"Song of the Volga Boatmen"
in the park.

VORONKO (cont'd)

Sounds all right.

CHERNOVITSKY

It's not exactly Chaliapin -

VORONKO

How in the hell would you know?

CHERNOVITSKY

My wife likes the stuff and sometimes I tag along to
concerts. I've picked up a bit here and there.

VORONKO

I can't listen to anything but Vysotsky. Ever since I was a
kid. Let's take cover in the shade. It's too hot here -

Valya and Roman approach.

VALYA

Everybody's in place. Do we have much longer?

VORONKO

Let's wait just a bit. And I want to remind you, Valya - an
hour about town and then wrap it up. Don't be dallying
anywhere.

VALYA

No problem. And don't worry about the sandwiches.
Everything's ready.

VORONKO

Sehr gut. What now? Shall we begin? Let's go and pay up the
electricians, Sergei. And, Valya, give the people here
another once-over. Just in case. Let's get to work, folks.

*Valya and Roman head off in
one direction. Voronko and
Chernovitsky in the other.
Old Tolya, all dressed up,
smokes as he leans against
the fence to the garden.
Klim approaches him with a
bottle of beer.*

KLIM

Hey, Tolya.

OLD TOLYA

(Gloomily) Hello.

KLIM

You're looking pretty fine there, old man. Takes the breath away. I'll bet you haven't looked like that since you got married. *(Old Tolya holds a gloomy silence.)* So, how are the duds? Nothing pinch? Can you sit down?

OLD TOLYA

Go on your way, wherever you were going.

KLIM

I was coming right here. I'm one of them, too, you know. What's it? A townspeople. I may be in my own clothes, but I'm not rejecting the community. Everybody's out here strolling and, me, I am too. Tell me, old man, are you going to have to stand right here in this spot the whole time? What if you have to take a piss? Or do townspeople have to hold it?

OLD TOLYA

Get outta here. Fascist.

KLIM

Fascist, you say? You just turn around, now. And you look over there. You see that statue? Who's that statue for? You know. My dad knows. And about five other people know. Some of us know for real. You can say whatever you want. Back then you didn't break. But now all they have to do is wave money in front of your face and you'd even hang a number around your neck. What do you think this is if it's not an occupying army?

OLD TOLYA

(Angrily tosses his cigarette butt into a corner) Listen, you fucking little snot! You know what I was fighting for then?

KLIM

What?

OLD TOLYA

For you... for you to -

KLIM

To what?

OLD TOLYA

Go fuck yourself! (*Turns his back on him.*)

KLIM

I'll be happy to go. Only you're stuck right here.

OLD TOLYA

(*Turns around*) You think I oughta be in the ground with the rest of 'em? I fought the whole war front to back, you son of a bitch. You know why I'm still alive? Because I wanted to live. I really wanted to live! And I do now, too! So what are you going to accuse me of, suckface? You don't know anything about it. What have you ever given me for what I did for you?

KLIM

Wait a minute. Wait a minute. Calm down, now. Calm down. But, you know, maybe it would be better, huh? We'd be drinking German beer right now. You'd be collecting your pension in German marks. Now what's wrong with that, huh?

OLD TOLYA

You son of a bitch! (*Pales, falls into the fence, grabbing at his chest.*)

KLIM

(*Concerned*) What's the matter? Your heart?

OLD TOLYA

(*Quietly, gritting his teeth*) Get outta here, you fascist-

Valya and Roman approach.

VALYA

Are you all right?

KLIM

Help him get up.

Klim and Roman pry him loose from the fence.

OLD TOLYA

(Wincing. Takes a step forward) I'm gonna - I'm going home.

VALYA

Of course. Go on if you're not feeling well. I'll mark you as having been present.

OLD TOLYA

That's not what I mean. I mean I'm going home for good. You can come pick these rags up later. On the other hand.. Everybody knows me here. I'll just - *(Pulls his shirt off over his head and tosses it to Valya. Leaves.)*

VALYA

What happened? Is he drinking again? We told him: you can't do that.

KLIM

(To Roman) You and I are going to have a serious talk. A very serious talk.

VALYA

Can that wait, please?

KLIM

It can. *(Stares silently at Valya.)* How's your mom?

VALYA

Fine, thanks. How about you?

KLIM

(After a pause) Me? Couldn't be better. You've grown up.

VALYA

Other people's kids always grow up fast.

KLIM

Isn't that true. How come you have an earring in just one ear?

VALYA

That's the fashion.

KLIM

So, kids, what's going on? When's your zoo get started? I came out here to look at some tourists.

VALYA

Only please tell me you aren't planning on making life difficult. Can we skip the fights?

KLIM

Valya, what if I buy you another earring like that? That just doesn't look good -

VALYA

Give me your word you're not going to be in the way.

KLIM

All right. I'm outta here. Here come your tourists.

The noise of a bus arriving is heard.

Scene 15

The Morozov house. Olya sits at the table next to Alyosha-the-Fool. A large book is open before them.

OLYA

Look. These are paintings by different artists. I got this book as a gift when I was still in school. Your parents got a copy of it, too. The whole class did. It contains all the best paintings in the world. The most famous. I don't remember how this one is named... This one, it's written right here - a still life. That's when everything is piled up in a pile like that. Isn't that pretty? (*Alyosha nods.*) I used to look at this picture and think - wow, the 17th century and they had pears just like us. The whole picture is cracked - that's because it's old. And that makes it more valuable, too. Everything here is just the opposite - the new refrigerator, new shoes. But that's how it is with this. Kinda hard to understand.

Klim appears in the doorway. Crosses the room and sits across from Olya. They look at each other silently.

OLYA (cont'd)

Now you shouldn't have done that. Please go before it's too late.

KLIM

It's already too late. I'm not going anywhere. I've had it. That's enough.

OLYA

What if I really ask you to go?

Klim shakes his head. Pause. Alyosha leafs through the book, lifts it up and shows it to Klim. It's a portrait of a nude woman.

KLIM

(Nods) That's pretty.

OLYA

I thought it was finally behind you. Didn't I hear you got married there?

KLIM

Something like that.

OLYA

Well, what's done is done. You know? I'm human, too. I can err. But what am I supposed to do now? Suffer my whole life long? If you really love me, then see to it I don't have to suffer. Please.

KLIM

What about me?

OLYA

I don't care.

KLIM

Maybe that's right.

OLYA

There you are. There you are. You're beginning to make sense.

Alyosha shows another

portrait of a nude woman.

KLIM

I can't do it.

OLYA

But you have to. Somebody has to answer for things. You're a man. You do it.

KLIM

Why wasn't I born a woman?

OLYA

Rejoice.

KLIM

Olya. (*Reaches out to her.*)

OLYA

Don't do that. Let's try to put this thing behind us. It can't possibly work. You've got to understand that. Why are you so hard-headed? I don't love you. You understand that? I don't love you.

KLIM

I don't give a fuck.

OLYA

But I do. I want to live a normal life. If only you know how much I regret everything that happened.

KLIM

(*Stands. Smiles*) All right.

OLYA

(*Smiles back to him*): Only don't tell me I'm going to regret it.

KLIM

I won't. But what if you do?

OLYA

I'll survive.

KLIM

Well then. Good-bye.

Alyosha suddenly slams the books shut with a loud clap.

OLYA

(Shudders) You little shit! Lord forgive me.

Enter Yura. Stops and looks Klim over in confusion.

YURA

Didn't expect to see you here.

KLIM

I can imagine. But maybe you expected this?

With a swift, heavy punch Klim knocks Yura off his feet. Olya leaps up. Klim leaves.

YURA

(Gets up holding his jaw) They asked me today to keep out of fights, to keep the tourists out of this stuff. How did they put it? Keep things under control. Did pretty good out on the square. Couldn't do it at home, though. My own home.

OLYA

He won't be back.

YURA

He'll never show his face here again. Not in this city.
(Goes to the table.)

Alyosha happily shows him another portrait of a nude woman. Yura looks at the picture and slowly clenches his hand into a fist.

OLYA

(Calmly) He whacked you one good.

Yura relaxes his fist.

Scene 16

Evening. Music plays. Roman smokes, standing on the dance club deck. A large bouquet lies on the steps. Paté appears, very drunk.

PATÉ

Listen, bro, I don' get it... is that a... are you a local or a tourist?

ROMAN

Meaning?

PATÉ

What the fuck what meaning?

ROMAN: You like poetry?

PATÉ

What'd you say?

ROMAN

Do you like poetry? You know, poetry. You fond of it? Want me to recite something? (*Puts out his cigarette. Recites.*)
"A piece of earth beneath the sky.
Air so fresh and clean and tart.
And on the lips, like crumbs of bread,
The eyes of heaven: fire and stars."

Paté quits weaving back and forth. Grabs the handrail.

ROMAN (cont'd)

You get that? The eyes of heaven.

PATÉ

(*Hiccups*) Friggin' Commie Commissars.

ROMAN

Hey, that rhymes. Not bad.

PATÉ

Have you totally lost it?

ROMAN

Absolutely.

PATÉ

(Swallowing with difficulty) Kid... Get lost. I've got a date here. You're ruining the view.

Misha approaches the club at a bold, quick step. Without missing a beat he gives Paté a swift kick. Paté collapses off the deck.

MISHA

(Extends hand) Hey there, Roma.

ROMAN

Hey.

MISHA

How're things?

ROMAN

Not bad. All right.

MISHA

You want things to stay that way? Clear skies overhead?

ROMAN

What are you -

MISHA

Let me inform you. In short, you're not seeing Valya anymore. And there's no appeals. Listen up. I'm telling you this real calm-like. Even though I should be doing it another way. I think you get the drift. *(Picks up the bouquet and throws it off the deck.)* That's how things are, kid. And now I think that case is closed.

ROMAN

Why?

MISHA

Let's get this straight. I'm going to turn and leave now. And you're not going to say a word.

ROMAN

In the beginning was the word.

MISHA

What?

ROMAN

In the beginning was the word.

MISHA

Well it isn't now. (*Turns and disappears into the darkness.*)

*Paté crawls out from behind
the veranda on all fours.
He's all covered in flowers.*

PATÉ

(*Looks at Roman in amazement*) What the hell? What the hell is going on?

ROMAN

(*Squats down next to him. Whispers*) Shhh. I can't speak. You know?

PATÉ

Why?

ROMAN

I'll find out soon enough.

PATÉ

You've lost it, man.

ROMAN

I think I'm just beginning to find it -

Scene 17

The Morozov house. Olya and Valya sit at the table. Grandma watches the TV with the sound off. Alyosha has found a place next to her.

VALYA

Maybe we should set the table. Why isn't dad here?

OLYA

He's going to spend the night in the store.

VALYA

What for?

OLYA

He just wanted to.

VALYA

What happened?

OLYA

Valya, I already told you. Let him if he wants to.

VALYA

Oh, I get it. You had a fight.

OLYA

No big deal. He can sleep in the back room and think a little about life. What I want to know is this: Is this whole thing with this museum really going to do us any good?

VALYA

Are you kidding, mom? Our whole lives will change. They already have.

OLYA

That's for sure.

VALYA

And that's only the beginning.

OLYA

Ugh -

VALYA

You'll get used to it. What's so bad about it?

OLYA

I don't like it. I don't want people coming in here staring at me.

VALYA

But it's like a game or something. It's like they used to say: "There's no charge for looking." But now there is. What's so bad about that?

OLYA

'Cause I feel like I'm - like I'm an old, cracked painting or something. What do these people care about us?

VALYA

What do we care about them?

OLYA

Their eyes are filled with, you know... They're all interested and I get sick to my stomach from it.

VALYA

It's not every day. On TV there's people in front of cameras 24/7. How they take baths and everything else like that. But this is just people coming in, saying "hi," smiling and leaving again.

OLYA

I never imagined our home turning into a museum like this. I always used to hurry home from work so I could shut the door and close out the world. This feels like somebody's stealing something from me.

VALYA

Mom, knock it off. What else are we going to do? You think that store is making money? Look around you. Everything is falling to pieces. You yourself said you wanted me to stay here in town. Think about me for a minute. You want me hanging out with cows or you want me doing something serious?

OLYA

I'm just talking. As long as you're happy.

VALYA

You're damn right. I've got big plans. I'm planning on living a life here.

OLYA

Well that's just what I wanted to talk to you about. Maybe you really ought to leave this town?

VALYA

There's a good one for you. What are you trying to say? First it's one thing, then another.

OLYA

Time is passing. In just a few years you're going to be just like me. Think about it, please.

VALYA

What's so bad about your life, mom?

OLYA

What's so good about it? I had a few dreams, too, you know. Times were different then, though. I thought I had plenty of time.

VALYA

Plenty of time for what?

OLYA

Oh forget it. Nothing.

VALYA

No, I want to know. Did you want to go into space?

OLYA

Yeah. (*Nods at Alyosha.*) His mom and I shared a desk in school. You could always make her laugh. Every single composition we did, she ended it with the words: "The future will come and Olya and I will fly to Mars." They constantly made her rewrite everything.

VALYA

I always thought you named me for Great-Grandma. But you named me for her, didn't you? The first woman in space?

OLYA

I want you and Misha to live better than us. I want you to find a different way of living. But I'm afraid it will be more difficult.

VALYA

Oh, come on. A person has to know what he wants from life.

OLYA

Are you planning on having a family?

VALYA

Of course.

OLYA

(Sighs) Thank God.

VALYA

I see perfectly well what kind of life you and dad have now.

OLYA

We're doing just fine.

VALYA

Yeah. Couldn't be any better. Just a simple little spat. I'll tell you what I think. I think you guys need to go off somewhere together. A cheap weekend getaway. Everybody does it now and it doesn't cost an arm and a leg. When everything settles down here now, Misha and I will take care of things and you guys go.

OLYA

You think things will settle down?

VALYA

Oh, get off it. You're always like that - everything's terrible; everything's fine. These days it's like this: every person answers for himself. Every person reaps the benefits of his own decisions.

OLYA

So. You've decided?

VALYA

Why beat around the bush? You said so yourself - time's a'wastin'.

*Olya goes to the window.
Looks into the darkness.*

VALYA (cont'd)

Forget it, Mom. Everything's going to be all right. You want me to go with you to see dad?

OLYA

I'll go myself. Do you smell smoke? I could swear I smell something burning.

VALYA

They're burning weeds.

OLYA

No. I know what burning weeds smell like. This is something more unusual. You smell something like this two or three times in your life. Something's burning.

Scene 18

The embers of the Morozov store are burning out. Yura, covered in soot, squats and stares at the fire. Topsy Old Tolya approaches him from behind.

OLD TOLYA

Well, what do you know?! Congratulations, Yury! Ain't that a beaut, ah? (*Yura doesn't respond.*) Finally! I've been waiting for this day. Somebody finally did it. Some good man did it! Now that's how it should be. You had it coming, fascist. I've been waiting for this. See? Some people still have a conscience.

YURA

(*Calmly*) Where you gonna get your vodka now?

OLD TOLYA

None of your fuckin' business, fascist. I'll do fine. You're the one with the bare ass now. You won't come back after this. (*Yura is silent.*) It'll happen to all of 'em. You shouldn't fuckin' live offa somebody else's troubles. That's just how it should be. That's the way we do things. So warm your cock, now, while you still can. (*Leaves.*)

Voronko and Chernovitsky approach Yura.

VORONKO

We are terribly sorry.

CHERNOVITSKY

Maybe it was an electrical short.

Yura slowly shakes his head.

VORONKO

Do you suspect someone in particular?

Yura nods. Voronko and Chernovitsky exchange glances and move off.

VORONKO (cont'd)

Fuck. That's all we needed.

CHERNOVITSKY

I'll bet it's a short.

VORONKO

Damn. Two days left and everything was set. And then something like this.

CHERNOVITSKY

Should we call the police?

VORONKO

No. Let's sweep this under the rug somehow. We've got to get through just two more days. And then let 'em all slit each other's throats if they want.

CHERNOVITSKY

We'll have to get someone to ship in beer and water.

VORONKO

We can put up a food stand or something to hide this mess.

CHERNOVITSKY

We're going over budget.

VORONKO

We'll work it out. The main thing is to hang on until we get this thing up and running. I had premonitions. The first time I saw this place on a map I got a splitting headache. And I still have it.

CHERNOVITSKY

That's the air. But you should be used to it by now.

VORONKO

What we should do is just blow this whole place to kingdom come.

CHERNOVITSKY

Yeah, and leave nothing but the river.

VORONKO

No. Everything. That would be safer.

Valya, Misha and Olya appear.

OLYA

Yura. Come on home.

He doesn't move. She casts a hopeless glance at her daughter.

VALYA

(Approaches her father, touches his shoulder) Dad. There's nothing you can do now. Come on home.

YURA

(Stands, looks at his family) What do you say, guys? It wasn't a bad store, was it? Wasn't very big. But it was a good one. Whatever you needed, you could find it here. And I was going to start stocking cleaning products. So people could get that here, too. Deodorants. Paints and things. Good I never got around to it or the whole place would have blown to fucking bits. Although it couldn't be any worse. What are you all looking at me for? Cat got your tongue? Ten fucking years. Man, I poured everything... What am I going to do tomorrow? I get up first thing in the morning and come here. What now? Why even bother to get up? Ten years. *(To Valya.)* You were ten years old. Misha was eight. I didn't even notice how you kids grew up. I'm always here. But I did it for you. I sure didn't need it. I don't need this crap! Me, I don't need a God-damned thing! I don't need nothing!

Misha approaches his father and attempts to embrace him.

YURA (cont'd)

(Pulls away.) Olya! Can't you say anything? Come on, say something! What are we going to do tomorrow? You're a smart

woman, tell me! What do we do tomorrow?

VALYA

(Approaches her father) Let's get out of here. People are watching.

YURA

People are watching? Fuck me! They took everything!
(Unbuttons his shirt, takes it off and throws it on the ground.) Take fuckin' that! Take it all! *(Begins unzipping his pants.)* I'll give you people everything I have!

Misha grabs his hands. Valya zips his pants back up.

YURA (cont'd)

(Breathes heavily.) Olya! That's better, isn't it? Isn't that better? That's how we'll live now.

OLYA

Everything's going to be all right.

YURA

Well, I know who did this and you know it too. You and me, we're through.

Olya picks the shirt up off the ground, tries to put it on her husband.

YURA (cont'd)

(Yanks the shirt out of her hands.) I'll do it myself. People are watching.

Scene 19

Night. Voronko and Chernovitsky approach their house.

VORONKO

Well, here we are. What a night. I don't really want to go in. What do you say we have a smoke?

They sit on the veranda

*steps, pull out cigarettes
and light up.*

VORONKO (cont'd)

And what do you say we have a drink?

CHERNOVITSKY

You're not supposed to do that.

VORONKO

Ah, it's been ages. I haven't had a drink in a year.

CHERNOVITSKY

And before that?

VORONKO

Man, I was never sober. But that's the kind of work I had -
couldn't do it sober. And when I quite working for the Man,
[POINT BEING THAT HE WORKED FOR THE SECRET SERVICES]
everything hit me - liver, heart, everything. Just one
drink now. I've gotta have a drink.

*Two figures appear in the
dark. It is Klim and Sasha.
One stands in front of
Voronko, the other in front
of Chernovitsky.*

KLIM

Good evening.

VORONKO

Ah - the Zuevs. Good evening, good evening. How come you
weren't at the fire? The whole town was there. I don't
remember seeing you folks.

SASHA

It's impolite to stare at another man's sorrow.

Pause.

VORONKO

Somehow I get the feeling you have something you want to
tell us. Some important information. Equally advantageous
for both of us. If so, then there's a chance this might be
a friendly meeting and the two sides might reach a
mutually, a mutually adverse... fuck! In short, gentlemen,

I'm happy to see you.

SASHA

You can't imagine how happy we are.

KLIM

(Walks right up to Voronko) Gentlemen, wrap up your tents and get out of here. Do it nice. Tomorrow when I walk out on the square there isn't going to be a soul. It's going to be the way it used to be. That's what I want to see.

CHERNOVITSKY

And if there is?

KLIM

I'll take care of that. We're people here, not clowns. Nobody's building a circus here.

SASHA

This isn't Moscow, you know.

VORONKO

Yeah, I've noticed that. And there'll never be anything like it here. You know why?

KLIM

Well?

Pause.

VORONKO

Gentlemen... we've reached a dead□end.

KLIM

You didn't answer.

VORONKO

Tell me one thing. There's one thing I just don't get. Somebody gives you a piece of bread, take it and eat it in silence. I mean I understand all those things - pride and everything - but then refuse the handout quietly and let others eat their fill. Why should they suffer? You don't want to eat? That's your problem. Others want to - it's not your business to decide for them. Am I wrong?

KLIM

We're wasting words. *(Gestures with his hand as if he wants*

to straighten Voronko's shirt.)

VORONKO

(Calmly and boldly) Only keep your hands off me.

KLIM

(Drops his hands) Tomorrow I'm walking out onto the city square and I want it to look like it always did. I'm not doing any more talking. Let's go, Sasha.

VORONKO

You wait. *(Klim and Sasha turn to leave.)* And now you listen to me, Mr. Tough Guy. I'm a retired officer. I don't like the word "retired." In my life I never misfired, not once. I get things done when they have to be done, not you. And I hope for your sake you don't wind up in front of me at the wrong time. I'll crush you.

Klim and Sasha exchange glances.

SASHA

Tough man.

KLIM

I wonder if he'll live to see sunrise?

SASHA

(Shrugs his shoulders) Fuck if I know.

KLIM

Isn't that true.

Klim and Sasha go off into the dark. In a calming gesture Chernovitsky takes Voronko by the arm.

VORONKO

(Shudders) Keep your hands off me.

CHERNOVITSKY

Let's have a drink.

VORONKO

(With unexpected good cheer) Listen! My headache's gone! Things are clearing up. You see what it means to have a

good talk with people?

CHERNOVITSKY

Those aren't people. They're beasts.

VORONKO

Say, where are you from? I'm sorry. I never asked you.

CHERNOVITSKY

It's a beautiful place. The Volga runs through it, you know? (*Smiles.*) The Vol-ga -

VORONKO

Then let's drink to your hometown. And to my River Gulch, too. The place that gave birth to me. And day after tomorrow we'll get in our car and we'll go home. I haven't missed my home like this in ages.

Scene 20

Night. Roman sits on the steps of the dance club. Enter Valya.

VALYA

Hey, poet.

ROMAN

Hey.

Valya sits next to him. Roman looks away indifferently.

VALYA

(*Elbows him in the side*) What am I supposed to do, kiss myself?

ROMAN

Go ahead, try it.

VALYA

O-o-o-h. What's wrong?

ROMAN

I talked to Misha. You and I can't see each other anymore.

Otherwise I'm done for.

VALYA

Okay. Now let's hear this in more detail.

ROMAN

Basically, that's it.

VALYA

And you? You agreed?

ROMAN

What else am I going to do?

VALYA

Are you serious?

Roman moves away from her.

ROMAN

Valya, you amaze me! I couldn't be more serious. You think I want to get it up the ass every time I try to see you? Anyway, I faint easily and I was sick when I was a kid. I had everything - meningitis, measles, mumps -

VALYA

Yeah, yeah, you're a mump all right.

ROMAN

And you're a mump's girlfriend. You're a fine one.

VALYA

It's dad. Everything at home right now -

ROMAN

I know.

VALYA

Like in some shitty theater.

ROMAN

Why so hard on theater?

VALYA

It's never very lifelike.

ROMAN

See, I don't care what it's like. Most important thing for me is that you don't get scared off.

VALYA

What about you?

ROMAN

When I'm with you I'm not afraid of anything.

VALYA

But you are afraid, aren't you?

ROMAN

Depends on you.

VALYA

You know what a woman wants more than anything, Roma?

ROMAN

Yeah - to be loved.

VALYA

That's true. But the most important thing is to walk the streets at night with somebody and not feel afraid. You know?

ROMAN

And that's it?

VALYA

That's the main thing. Everything else is secondary. Can you do that?

ROMAN

That's almost too easy. But if that's what you want, I can do that.

VALYA

It's not easy, Roma. It's not easy at all. My God, what a silly fool you are.

ROMAN

But that's the truth about meningitis.

VALYA

So are you going to kiss me now?

ROMAN

(Lowering his voice) Well, all right. Let's.

VALYA

(Imitating him) Well, then, take this.

They laugh and kiss.

Scene 21

*Voronko and Chernovitsky sit
on the steps of the veranda.
They hold glasses.*

VORONKO

There's nothing compares to alcohol. Such undulating waves.
Oh, that's good.

CHERNOVITSKY

You're no amateur at this.

VORONKO

Now? I'm an amateur. But I used to be a pro at it. I always
had a bottle of cognac in my office. I'd put away a bottle
a day. And then I'd go drinking with friends after work.
People were tougher then, you know.

CHERNOVITSKY

Do you ever regret resigning?

VORONKO

That's not the kind of job you resign from.

CHERNOVITSKY

I wish I'd been able to get in there. It's a good job. I
had the chance once.

VORONKO

I had a friend once who wanted to emigrate to Israel but he
wasn't a Jew. So he says, "the most important thing is to
be circumcised in your mind." There's always a chance.

CHERNOVITSKY

Then let's drink to that.

They clink glasses and drink.

VORONKO

I must be getting old. I want to go home. I'm tired. I'll come home and take my daughter to the zoo. I need to have a break from looking at all these ugly mugs.

CHERNOVITSKY

I'll say. What do you think - are we going to have trouble with the Zuevs?

VORONKO

Don't be silly. They're just poppin' off. They'll knuckle under when push comes to shove. You just gotta set 'em up right. Gotta lay down the law. People don't give a damn about authority anymore. You've got to educate and edify them. Take me, for instance. I was alone with my mother for a long time before my step-father showed up. He was a captain in the police. Transferred to our city on a promotion. My mother was a courthouse secretary. That's where they met. And - how shall I put this? - I was a total fuck-up. I was a street kid, I was into everything. I smoked and gambled at cards. I was a little thug. Like everybody else around me. And my stepfather took things into his own hands. You see how I'm sitting here? Look at yourself. We would sit down to dinner and my step-father would make me squeeze two books between my elbows. God forbid one of them should fall. He had a way of looking at you. Nothing out of the ordinary, but it would cut right through you. He never smiled, but he could laugh. But he never smiled. Right at the beginning he promised my mother he would never lay a finger on me and he never did. He just had a way of looking at you.

CHERNOVITSKY

You do that sometimes, too.

VORONKO

That's my step-father. He raised me.

CHERNOVITSKY

Is he alive?

VORONKO

Yes. After my mother he had another wife and family. The kids there were all grown up. And when the time came, they

put him in an old folks' home. I went to see him there a year ago. He had grown old, but he was hanging in there. We reminisced about that number. (*Grins.*)

CHERNOVITSKY

What number?

VORONKO

We had this number painted on the door of our apartment. And in the department store in the shoe section I saw these metal numbers hanging there. Size 43 - just like our apartment number. So I stole it and brought it home and nailed it on the door. I figured they'd come home and thank me for it. "Where'd you get that?" he said. "Take that down right now and take it back where you got it." So I'm walking along the street and I'm all turning inside out. I must have walked circles around that store for three hours. I could not bring myself to go in there. But I also couldn't go back. I couldn't lie to him. It was pointless. He'd just give me one of those looks and that would be it. So I went in there and gave that thing back to the saleswoman. She didn't care anything about it. But I burst out on the street about as happy as I could be! Started singing some song. I'll bet you that is probably the most vivid memory I have of my whole childhood. And so we were sitting on a bench in the garden and I reminded him about that incident. And he said he remembered it well. Turns out he had followed me and he stood there watching me go 'round and 'round the store and then how I came racing out of there all happy. And he said, "When I saw how happy you were, I knew I had a good son." And you know what? For the first time I ever remembered, he smiled. It even scared me a little. Bottoms up. (*Drinks without waiting for Chernovitsky.*) Everybody's got to be taught. There is no such thing as someone who can't be taught. You've just got to make a person understand what he needs. Sometimes, of course, you've got to do it with whole communities. What else can you do when there isn't time to find an individual approach to everyone?

CHERNOVITSKY

We sure don't have any time left. We've got one day.

VORONKO

We're okay. We're sticking to schedule.

CHERNOVITSKY

I'll drink to that. (*Drinks.*)

Scene 22

The Zuev house. Klim and Sasha sit at the table. Lina looks out the window. There are objects covered by a newspaper on the table in front of Klim.

KLIM

Well? You ready?

SASHA

(*Looks at his watch*) Wait a minute! Wait a minute! Go!

Klim tosses the newspaper on the floor. A disassembled machine gun lies on the table. Klim closes his eyes and begins assembling it. He is finished in a matter of seconds.

SASHA (cont'd)

Got it.

KLIM

Which I had to prove.

LINA

I'm telling you, guys, don't do this. Klim, you swore you turned that in to the police.

KLIM

Changed my mind on the way there. What of it? (*Strokes the machine gun.*) This is a useful tool. There's no telling what might happen in the future.

LINA

And I went and believed you.

KLIM

That's enough, huh? Nobody's planning on killing anybody.

SASHA

We're not even taking any ammunition. We're just going to show these dickbrains who's boss around here. That's all.

KLIM

And we're the bosses here. Or does somebody question that?

SASHA

There's nothing to question.

LINA

All right. I'm outta here.

KLIM

Where're you going?

LINA

On a fucking date.

KLIM

Well, go on, go on, then.

SASHA

Tell everybody hi from us.

Lina leaves.

KLIM

Fuck, man. I can't get a grip. Fucking retired officer.

SASHA

He's a civvy now. All show.

KLIM

Naw. He's got a soldier's posture. Only you can see in his eyes he never saw combat. You can see combat in our eyes. I've never made a mistake about seeing that in a man's eyes.

SASHA

I'll bring a hatchet. Hey, didn't there used to be a bayonet up in the attic somewhere?

KLIM

Yeah. I used that to poke a hole in that big asshole's leg. Remember that jerk?

SASHA

And I caught hell for it.

KLIM

You shouldn'ta gone talking.

Enter Roman. Klim quickly covers the machine gun with the newspaper.

ROMAN

How come you guys aren't in bed?

KLIM

Got things to do. Listen, put on some music, something military□like.

SASHA

To get the blood flowing.

Roman shrugs his shoulders, turns on the tape player. Music plays.

SASHA (cont'd)

What's that? What's that song?

KLIM

Sounds like somebody's pulling on some poor bastard's dick.

ROMAN

For God's sake. Put on your own military march then. I'm going to bed. *(Turns off the tape player and leaves.)*

Sasha and Klim stand.

KLIM

Whadya say, bro? Shall we go have a talk with the gentlemen?

SASHA

What if they get physical?

KLIM

Are you a man or a mouse?

SASHA

Easy for you to say when you're so big.

KLIM

Then sit home like a wussie.

SASHA

No, I'm with you.

KLIM

If you rat to mom and dad I'll kill you. (*Shakes a fist at Sasha.*)

SASHA

Scout's honor!

They laugh.

Scene 23

Voronko and Chernovitsky sit on the steps. Yura stands before them with a bottle in his hands.

VORONKO

You did the right thing coming to us.

CHERNOVITSKY

Let me get a glass. (*Goes into the house.*)

VORONKO

Have a seat. (*Yura sits beside him.*) I'm not going to waste time asking how you're doing. I went through something similar once. Although I wouldn't dare to compare. Anyway, I was young then. And you're going to have to start all over again at your age. Can you do that?

YURA

No.

VORONKO

Well, that's what you say now. Everything is going to be okay. Right now everything is a mess. (*Gestures with his hand.*) Just wait a bit.

Chernovitsky returns with a glass.

VORONKO (cont'd)

(*Opens a bottle, pours a full glass and holds it out to Yura.*) Here. You know what we'll drink to? We'll drink to you having the strength to start all over again. To start all over from scratch. That's what separates the men from the boys. Drink up.

They drink.

VORONKO (cont'd)

(*Exhales heavily.*) This air you've got here could be a chaser. Cut it with a knife. No sooner do I get used to it than it's time to go.

CHERNOVITSKY

You can spend your weekends here.

VORONKO

No thans.

YURA

I've got a question. What do you think about... what are the chances of me finding work in Moscow?

VORONKO

I think it's possible.

YURA

Would you help me?

VORONKO

Oh, come on, forget that. Everything's going to be fine. There are four additional excursions in the planning right now. What are you going to do in Moscow? Mix cement? Live your life here. You're a good organizer.

YURA

My great uncle was a warden during the German occupation.

VORONKO

And?

YURA

And nothing.

CHERNOVITSKY

My dad was a black marketeer. There were eight people in his family and they all survived. He didn't fight in the war. Spent his whole life hanging around storehouses. He didn't do what everybody else did. I used to be kind of ashamed of him until I realized that man was a true hero. Eight people and they all survived.

VORONKO

Yep, that's just what it was.

Klim and Sasha approach the veranda in the dark.

VORONKO (cont'd)

Uh, gentlemen -

KLIM

Well looky here. If it isn't Yura. Just passing by I guess.
(*Pulls the machine gun off his shoulder.*)

Chernovitsky and Voronko exchange glances. Yura silently stares at his glass.

SASHA

So, guys, run out of things to say?

VORONKO

Maybe you guys would like to join us. Let's have a drink and a talk.

KLIM

And you call yourself an officer. What's this supposed to mean? "I get things done when they have to be done." Didn't you say that? Now you're going to have to answer for that.

Voronko stands. Klim aims the machine gun at him.

VORONKO

I'll answer. I'll answer for everything. But I suspect you want to hear something special from me.

KLIM

Yes I do. Tell me, officer, you ever been in this situation? (*Nods at the machine gun.*) You ever done this before?

VORONKO

Yeah. A mob came at us at a political demonstration. That was about the same thing.

KLIM

Pissin' in your pants?

VORONKO

Something like that.

SASHA

On your knees.

VORONKO

Oh, that's cheap.

SASHA

Time's wasting.

KLIM

And we'll have some of that vodka. You can serve it to us on all fours.

VORONKO

And if I don't?

KLIM

Listen, scum. You have a family?

VORONKO

All right, all right. (*Turns to Chernovitsky.*) Bring me a glass, please. There's one in the stand by the window. It's clean.

Chernovitsky looks at Klim, who nods. Chernovitsky goes into the house.

VORONKO (cont'd)

(Slowly gets down on his knees.) The last time I did this I was ten years old. My step-father mademe do it.

SASHA

Shut up.

KLIM

You too, Yura.

YURA

(Raises his eyes to Klim) I'll sit, thank you.

KLIM

Sasha.

Sasha approaches Yura, knocks his glass out of his hand. Grabs him by the collar and drags him to Voronko.

KLIM (cont'd)

Fuck, ain't life grand? Everything's in place. Makes you want it to be like this all the time. Maybe someday it will be.

VORONKO

You shit.

KLIM

Say that again.

VORONKO

You're shit. Always will be. You don't have fucking brains enough to think your way past a bottle of vodka. That's your limit. You'll never have another fucking idea in your life.

KLIM

So, what would you do?

VORONKO

You wanted to humiliate us. Satisfied? Maybe you ought to call off the dogs?

KLIM

I'll decide that. I'm in no hurry.

Chernovitsky comes out on the veranda. Holds a glass in one hand, the other is behind his back.

SASHA

(To Voronko) Pour us a glass.

Chernovitsky aims a pistol at Klim.

SASHA (cont'd)

Oh shit. (Grabs Yura by the hair and holds the bayonet to his throat.)

CHERNOVITSKY

Put down your weapon.

VORONKO

May I get up?

KLIM

No.

VORONKO

Listen, man. You're fucked no matter what.

KLIM

So, what do we do?

Paté, drunk, suddenly appears from the darkness. Stops, looks at everyone in amazement.

PATÉ

What the fuck is this? War?

All are startled. Chernovitsky fires. Sasha slices with his bayonet.

Scene 24

*Olya and Lina in the street.
We hear the voices of Valya
and Misha through the open
windows of the Morozov house.*

VOICE OF VALYA

Who asked you? What are you sticking your nose in my life for?

VOICE OF MISHA

Bug off.

VOICE OF VALYA

Misha, I'm telling you I don't ever want you pulling any more stunts like that. You hear me?

VOICE OF MISHA

Does dad mean so little to you?

VOICE OF VALYA

You mean you guys thought this up together?

VOICE OF MISHA

Yes we did.

VOICE OF VALYA

Ah, now I get it. And now you listen to me. Don't you even think of touching him. If you try, I'll have your head. That's for one. Don't you even go near him. And I'll tell dad that, too. Don't you worry. You know what?

VOICE OF MISHA

What?

VOICE OF VALYA

You oughta wash your own dishes, man! You eat? Go wash your own damn dishes! I'm not your goddam cook. I've had it! That goes for dad, too. For everybody! Wash your own fucking clothes, assholes! Good night!

A door slams.

LINA

You've got a good pair of kids.

OLYA

I can't complain.

LINA

I always envied you. It's not so frightening when you have two kids. God forbid something should happen, but you always have one left.

OLYA

Why didn't you ever have a second?

LINA

Who'd be the father, Olya?

OLYA

If you wanted one, you could have had one, though.

LINA

What's the point of talking about it now.

OLYA

But you still want one?

LINA

What do you think? Of course I do. You should have at least two kids. They've got to live on after. So there'd always be someone for them to come to for a crust of bread. So they come to their own flesh and blood instead of going begging to strangers. It's gotta be family. What a fool I was.

OLYA

You're no fool.

LINA

A fool. Olya, don't think my men did it. Klim and Sasha - they're not capable of that. They're fools, of course. But they're not capable of that. I know them.

OLYA

I don't know what to think. You tell me this -

LINA

Don't even say anything yet. Just don't be angry at me. I won't even come near you folks anymore. I promise you that.

OLYA

You already said that once. Remember?

LINA

I remember. But this time I mean it. Believe me, please.

Alyosha appears from the darkness carrying a bouquet of ragweed. He holds it out to the women.

OLYA

You see? Now we've even got flowers. *(Takes the bouquet, splits it in two and gives half to Lina.)* All right, let's go. Stop by sometime.

LINA

Olya, I'm sure everything is going to be all right.

OLYA

You know, I think so too. In fact, now I just know it is.

LINA

Yes it is, Olya. It definitely is.

OLYA

Okay. Well, good-bye now.

LINA

Good-bye.

Olya pushes Alyosha towards the house. They go up the steps and disappear inside. Lina lays the ragweed on the veranda and leaves. Yura appears, staggering and holding both hands to his throat. His shirt is soaked in blood. His strength is giving out. He slumps on the steps, takes the ragweed and holds it to his wound then slowly keels over on his side.

Scene 25

*Day. Valya and Roman sit at
the bus stop.*

ROMAN

You know what I heard? Monks pray on Mount Athos. They have this prayer there - it's called "the day rule." And it's a prayer that keeps the world turning. These monks say this prayer that runs exactly 24 hours. And then they trade off with others who pick it up again. They've been doing this for centuries. That prayer just keeps going on and on and on. But recently they starting having troubles - they can't get through it all in a day. It's always been thought that time is an unchangeable physical phenomenon, but they can't fit it in anymore. Nobody can understand what's happening.

VALYA

What are you talking about, Roma?

ROMAN

What do you want to hear?

VALYA

I want to hear something that will leave a pleasant trace in my memory.

ROMAN

I love you.

VALYA

Fuck that.

ROMAN

Someday I'll marry you.

VALYA

That's not it.

ROMAN

Valya! I'm farting wet gunpowder! I'm never going to fly! Do something!

VALYA

You silly fool.

ROMAN

You're a silly fool's girlfriend, then. You're a fine one.

VALYA

I think I'm going to cry.

ROMAN

Now that we don't need. I've seen enough of that and I don't need any more from you.

VALYA

All right. We'll dry your gunpowder and you'll take off.

ROMAN

Now that's what I want to hear. Here's my bus.

VALYA

I'll come join you soon. As soon as everything blows over here, I'll be there. So don't you worry -

ROMAN

Main thing is don't be surprised when you come. I'm going to be all flashy and decked out in rhinestones. At first I'll feel awkward around you. Then everybody will get used to you. I'll introduce you to my new sugar pie. And then, little by little, they'll start letting you back into the night clubs. You'll get a job as a waitress serving pineapple juice in the VIP room. That'll give you a chance to see me every night.

VALYA

Hug me.

Roman embraces her. Paté approaches them. He is shaking.

PATÉ

Hey guys. Gimme ten rubles. You got any money?

ROMAN

We're short on money at the moment. How about I read you a poem? I swear it'll make you feel better.

PATÉ

How about I read *you* a poem and you give me ten rubles?

ROMAN

An offer I can't refuse. Let's hear it, Paté.

PATÉ

(Clicking his teeth) With never a blink, my cherry brown eyes tear in the wind. I'll never forget you and you'll never see me again. Ten rubles, guys.

ROMAN

You got it. *(Hands him a ten ruble bill.)*

PATÉ

How's the family?

VALYA

Bad.

PATÉ

That whole thing should never have happened. None of it. You all used to live here like civilized people.

VALYA

Leave us alone, would you? Please?

PATÉ

What's it to me? What do I care? You don't understand nothing in life, bitch. Got another five?

VALYA

Roma, hold me tighter.

He hugs her. Paté spits and leaves.

ROMAN

Just don't be afraid of anything. Don't you be afraid and I won't be afraid. Is it a deal?

VALYA

It's always easier to leave.

ROMAN

Maybe. I don't know. This is my first time. I don't have anything to compare it to.

VALYA

Okay. Go on.

They stand. Roman tosses a big sports bag over his shoulder.

VALYA (cont'd)

I'll come in about a month. Something like that.

ROMAN

That's right. Just come as soon as you can. All right -
(*Leans over to Valya.*)

Scene 26

LINA

It had been ages since I was in Moscow. It's totally changed. All built up now. Like it's a different city. You don't recognize a thing. Buildings like I've never seen before. I'll bet they don't even have buildings like that in America. I saw a program about America on TV. And people say we don't know how to build. Well, look at this: we've learned. And it's really beautiful, not like it used to be. And the people are different. Girls wear jeans with half their butts sticking out and the guys all have spikey hair. You can't even tell who's a girl and who's a boy half the time. When I arrived at the train station I come off the platform and saw two girls hugging. And then they start kissing. I understand - we were brought up different, although we did pretty much everything there was to do, too. Somehow it was different, though. But who am I to say? I'm a sinner myself. Like you've never seen. That will always be on my conscience. It's just that we all lived so tight together and what happened is what happened. We're always in each other's face - there's nowhere else to go. Everybody knows everything about everybody and we visit each other and we help if someone needs it. But here - I wonder; can you live like that? People still live their lives, though. You can't forbid 'em to do that. I put in a petition and they accepted it. All his buddies from the regiment came. They had this committee. Said it wasn't the first time it's ever happened. They promised to get a lawyer. Really a great bunch of guys! They paid for his hospital bills and they're keeping a vigil by his bedside. You can't imagine all the good things they say about him. He never used to talk about himself. And they all saw me

off to the train, twenty of them. Every one of them looked like Klim. I don't know, it must have been something in their eyes. I found it all pretty embarrassing somehow and I only began to feel better about it when I got on the train. I just wanted to get home. Roma came to the station, too. We stood there awhile and then I said, "Get outta here. The hell if I want to watch you walk away from me. I don't want to see your back." It was easier for me that way. Most important thing is I have reason to hope Klim will pull through. All his friends swear he'll be fine. They say they'll find more money if we need it. He's having an operation now and what comes next I don't know. Everybody decided Klim should take the fall. Sasha's still got his whole life ahead of him. This way it's better for all the other guys too. The eldest takes the rap. We kids always worshipped him. That's the way it was. That's the way we were brought up. I have this feeling Roma will come to his senses and end up coming back home. I'm not going to get in his way. If he wants to be independent, that's his business. But I think that'll pass. I rode back from the station on the bus and the driver had the radio on really loud. I'd like to kill the bastard. I felt horrible as it was and then I had to listen to that crap. I can't stand this popular music. It's like a dull saw buzzing in your head. It just goes on and on and on.

Epilogue

*The light, barely audible
sound of a car running. The
voices of two elderly people;
a man and a woman.*

-Thank God it's all over. How does Serge say it? "We did it!"

-It's his birthday today. First time in eight years he'll celebrate it without us.

-That's all right. Just think about that present we got him.

-You don't think it will scare him?

-I don't think so. I talked with each of them. Our kids are

pretty smart, Katya. Our grandkids, too. After all, I'm their grandfather. (*Laughs.*)

-What a shame you never became a diplomat.

-You respect me less for that?

-After all these years? I'm afraid it doesn't matter anymore.

-(*Laughs.*) The main thing is to sweep a woman off her feet. You do that and it's all downhill from there.

-It's very pretty here.

-Yes. Half of all the Russian landscapes were painted here.

-Yes. I thought of our living room right away.

-Light me a cigarette.

-Can't you wait a bit? What if it bothers him?

-Whatever you say!

-But I'm concerned, you know. Mary is so sensitive -

-(*With unexpected firmness.*) For us he is a member of the family. He is no different than us. Am I wrong?

-No. Oleg, look, he wants something. Oleg, there's something wrong!

*The sound of the automobile
falls silent.*

-What's wrong, Alyosha? Are you sick? Wait a minute, I'll undo your seatbelt. Let's step out and get some fresh air. Come on. Breathe deeply. The air is good here, you'll feel better quickly. You'll feel better right away. Take a deep breath.

Curtain.