

# A SHORT PLAY ABOUT WAR

by  
Jeremy Fox

Jeremy Fox  
54 Crofton Road  
London SE5 8NB  
Tel: 0207 701 3107  
Jeremy@fox.name

## CHARACTERS

ARYANS

MARYA HOSEK

EUGENE HOSEK

SONYA - their daughter

'UNCLE' LEO

KOSTYA - a soldier

HAZORS

KARL - a Lieutenant

MAJOR PAVEL

PRIVATE SEMYON

## ACT ONE

### Scene 1

A streetscape, littered with rubble. Bomb-shattered buildings. Walls pock-marked from the impact of bullets and shrapnel. Windows without panes stare sightlessly at the devastation. A soldier lies unconscious in the rubble - but we do not at first see him. MARYA enters carrying a bag.

MARYA

(Calling)

Sonya! Sonya! Time to go!

(To herself)

Bet she's gone into one of those buildings. They could be booby-trapped for all she knows. Or there might be soldier. And then what? Doesn't listen to a word I say. Sonya!

(She spots a sweater in the rubble which she picks up and examines.)

Nothing a good wash won't fix. Not a hole in it. Whoever it belonged to won't need it any more, I don't suppose. God help them. Better off wherever they are.

(Putting the sweater into her bag, she sits wearily on the edge of a broken wall.)

Ruined houses; sweaters that nobody owns.

(She takes a bottle of water from the bag and drinks. A noise startles her)

Sonya!?! Is that you?

SONYA emerges from a shattered building. She is carrying a pair of red, high-heeled shoes and a can of food.

SONYA

Look what I found!

MARYA

I ask you not to wander off and the next thing I know is you've disappeared. You'll give me a heart attack one of these days if those damned Hazors don't get me first - God forgive me for swearing.

SONYA

I was only looking. Won't find much in the street, will we? What about these shoes! Hardly been used. And they're my size.

MARYA

They won't fetch any money. There's nowhere to walk in high heels any more.

SONYA

I'll keep them.

(Handing the can to MARYA, she tries on  
the shoes.)

They fit fine. What do you think? Do they make my legs look slim?

The soldier stirs.

MARYA

You won't have any legs if you go wandering about those ruins. You never know what's in them. Unexploded bombs. They put booby traps in empty houses for snoopers who are too nosy to mind their own business.

SONYA

That's what we're doing isn't it?

MARYA

What?

SONYA

Minding our own business. Nobody else's going to look after us.

(On the catwalk)

How do I look?

MARYA

Lovely.

SONYA

You always say that.

MARYA

What do you expect? I'm your mother. Now take them off in case we have to run.

(Pause)

There's no label on this can.

SONYA

What do think?

MARYA

Heinz probably.

SONYA

What does that mean?

MARYA

Beans.

SONYA

That will please my grandad I don't think. He hates beans.

MARYA

He shouldn't grumble. It's another day of life for us, a big can like this.

Sound of heavy gunfire.

MARYA (cont'd)

If he knew we were here...

SONYA

He doesn't know.

MARYA

It would kill him if anything happened to you.

SONYA

We're okay.

MARYA

And I'd have nothing left to live for.

SONYA

You'd still have Dad.

MARYA

It's weeks since we heard from your father. Worries me sick.

SONYA

The army would let us know if anything happened.

MARYA

What army? Nobody's trained. Nobody knows what to do. There's nobody in charge. That's what your father said when he came home last time. 'We're a bunch of amateurs,' he said. 'It's those bastards on the other side who've got the army and the guns. All we have are politicians and pitchforks.' That's what he said.

Very bitter about it your father is. If we'd have had any sense we'd have run away at the beginning when we had the chance.

SONYA

We had nowhere to go. You know that. And anyway, we didn't know it would be like this.

MARYA

I had a sense of it and said so. So did your Grandad.. But oh no! Your father and his clever friends knew better. And you backed him up.

SONYA

What was he supposed to do? Wait for the Hazors to take over? Anyway how could anyone know we'd be at war for so long?

MARYA

We should have got out of this rotten country.

SONYA

Where would we go?

MARYA

Canada might have taken us in. Or America.

SONYA

Some hope! No country wants refugees.

MARYA

You never know if you don't ask. They'd have taken you at least. You're young and educated. That's what they're looking for in those countries. We don't matter so much. We've done our bit and made a mess of it. Or rather the men have. They're the ones who make war.

SONYA

They're fighting to protect our way of life.

MARYA

Nothing protects us. Only our wits. And God if He decides to look in our direction.

Machine-gun fire.

SONYA

The birds are pecking again, as Grandad Leo says.

MARYA  
We'd better get going.

SONYA  
Is it our side?

MARYA  
I hope to God it is.

SONYA  
(Suddenly frightened)  
We shouldn't have come.

MARYA  
Take those shoes off and put on your own. Quickly now. And help me with the bag.

They each take a handle of the bag and turn to go. The soldier groans.

SONYA  
What was that?

MARYA  
God help us.

Another groan.

SONYA  
Over there.

MARYA  
Don't go near.

SONYA  
He's alive.

MARYA  
Take no notice.

SONYA  
He must be hurt.

MARYA  
Come on, before he wakes up.

The soldier - KARL - lifts his head. He is in pain.

SONYA

We can't just leave him.

MARYA

If he's one of theirs, we can leave him quite nicely. Now come on. The fighting's getting too close.

SONYA

He might be one of ours.

MARYA

Does he have a red armband?

SONYA

I'll look.

MARYA

Careful. He's bound to be armed.

Sonya approaches the soldier.

SONYA

It's black.

MARYA

I told you. We shouldn't have come this far from the centre.

SONYA

We can't leave him to die.

MARYA

What choice do we have?

SONYA bends down to him.

SONYA

I know him. It's Karl Muti. He was two years ahead of me at school. He came to dinner once with Kostya. It's him, mum.



MARYA

Muti? He must belong to the family that owns the supermarket. They're a bunch of thieves and murderers. Rich ones at that.

SONYA

What does it matter now?

MARYA

He isn't Aryan, that's what.

SONYA

There's blood everywhere. All over his uniform.

(To KARL)

Karl, can you hear me? It's Sonya Hosek. Remember?

MARYA approaches reluctantly with the water bottle..

MARYA

Are you sure you know who it is?

SONYA

Of course. My cousin Stepan was a bit in love with his sister.

SONYA tries to take the water bottle.

MARYA

I'll do it.

(Helping KARL to drink.)

You'll end up getting us all killed. Stepan should have known better, God rest his soul.

He didn't deserve to die in this stinking war.

(To Karl)

Is that better?

SONYA

Nobody does.

MARYA

Hazor women are nothing but prostitutes. It's the way they're brought up.

SONYA

We can't leave him here.

MARYA

I suppose not. The trouble you get us into my girl.

SONYA

Karl, can you stand up?

MARYA

He's too weak. You get on that side. Don't touch his shoulder. Try to get your arm round his waist. That's it. Ready?

SONYA

Come on Karl. Quick. They're coming.

The women manage to get KARL on his feet. He has multiple wounds.

KARL

Thank you.

MARYA

What a state he's in.

SONYA

Can we take him home?

MARYA

What choice do we have?. Let's go.

They begin to struggle off stage - KARL in the middle, MARYA and SONYA supporting him on each side.

SONYA

This is a good deed, isn't it? Rescuing Karl?

MARYA

More likely a stupid one.

SONYA

God will reward us.

MARYA

The only reward I want is to see your father home safe and sound.

Blackout. Firing become louder and then fades.

**Scene 2**

Bare stage, possibly with a suggestion of landscape. EUGENE is sitting upright on the ground. Beside him, KOSTYA lies sleeping under a thin blanket. Both wear red armbands. A small stove and a battered coffee pot. Two small rucksacks with a machine-gun propped against each.

EUGENE

Stir yourself, will you? You sleep like the dead.

KOSTYA

What?

EUGENE

Wake up.

KOSTYA

I am awake.

EUGENE

Anybody'd think you were hibernating.

KOSTYA

Feet like I didn't sleep at all. It's freezing.

EUGENE

Coffee?

KOSTYA

What's for breakfast? Eggs, bread fresh from the oven...

EUGENE

A piece of bread.

KOSTYA

Is that all?

EUGENE

Where do you think we are, Holiday Inn?

KOSTYA

It's stale.

EUGENE

Dip it in the coffee. It'll soften.

He pours coffee into a tin mug and hands it to KOSTYA

KOSTYA

Do you know where we are?

EUGENE

Same place as last night.

KOSTYA

I know that.

EUGENE

We have to continue south about ten kilometres, then cut left across country and upwards to the pass. It's the only safe way through the mountains. Once we're through, it's a more or less straight descent into Katova.

KOSTYA

What's so safe about the route?

EUGENE

There's no road, so I'm banking on there being no enemy troops. I can thread my way through the area blindfold.

KOSTYA

Sounds good.

EUGENE

I've been all over those hills. When I was young, I'd sometimes I'd be up there for a week or more. For the joy of it. To be alone with the wind, to smell the wild grasses, the lichen, and the forest pines; and at night to gaze at the stars and feel a little closer to them. I used to love this land. When we had it to ourselves. Now I'm fifty, I suppose it's only the memory I love.

KOSTYA

This coffee is genuinely foul.

EUGENE

It's chicory. All we have. You've been spoiled, that's your problem.

KOSTYA

Six months of shooting at people I went to school with while they try to shoot me. Call that spoiled?

EUGENE

What have you got to complain about? You're still alive.

KOSTYA

Call this living? How much longer will it go on?

EUGENE

When your way of life is threatened - your family, your children - you have to fight back. We didn't ask for this war.

KOSTYA

My family's out of it, thank God.

EUGENE

How come?

KOSTYA

We live near the border. They crossed as refugees and made it to England. I could have gone with them, and now I think back on it, maybe I should have.

EUGENE

Your job is to defend you people. My family's still in the thick of it. They're the ones I'm fighting for. And for your folk too, so they can come home again.

KOSTYA

There's been a lot of fighting in Katova over the last few weeks.

EUGENE

How do you know?

KOSTYA

It was on the radio. I heard the captain listening to it while I was on guard.

(Pause)

It's over a month since I've had a letter from England. My mother writes every week..

EUGENE

The mail's probably being held up at the censor's. Every letter is supposed to be opened and read. Imagine the backlog. Come on, let's move. We've only four days leave.

KOSTYA

We could do with a vehicle.

EUGENE

Better without. In a car, we'd have to cross Hazor lines.

They repack their rucksacks and check their weapons.

KOSTYA

Years ago, at school, I remember seeing a Russian film. About a soldier going home on leave. He travels on and on through the endless Russian landscape, just like one of those stories in Chekhov, meeting all sorts of people affected by the war. So many are needy, and he does his best to help them even though every act of kindness slows his journey. We know how little time he has, so the tension keeps mounting. Eventually, he gets home; but his time has run out. He can't stay even for a few minutes because he has to get back to the front. He looks round for his mother and sister but they're working in the fields. All he can do is wave in their direction. Then he's gone, back to the war. And we know they'll never see each other again.

EUGENE

What was it called?

KOSTYA

I don't remember.

EUGENE

We'll have at least one night at home. Two if we make good time.

KOSTYA

Maybe I'll have a chance to visit...

(Checking himself)

EUGENE

Who?

KOSTYA

My girlfriend lives not too far away from Katova. Didn't like to mention it because it's...complicated. She's on the other side.

EUGENE

What are you talking about?

KOSTYA

Her home. It's in the Hazor zone.

EUGENE

That's rough luck.

KOSTYA

Yeah.

EUGENE

Yeah what?

KOSTYA

It's what you're thinking. She's Hazor.

EUGENE

For fuck's sake.

KOSTYA

We met at university. It just happened. We got pretty close.

EUGENE

Don't tell me you're going to marry her.

KOSTYA

Nothing's settled.

EUGENE

Your father know about this?

KOSTYA

No.

EUGENE

Just as well. Don't even think of seeing her on this trip. Because if her family's still there, then ours won't be.

KOSTYA

Don't say that.

EUGENE

One side or the other has to go in this war.

KOSTYA

Maybe not everywhere.

EUGENE

The Hazors have always loathed us and we've always loathed them. Hatred passes from generation to generation and people don't change. You'll understand when you're older.

KOSTYA

It's the old that make war then?

EUGENE

With age, the blinkers fall from your eyes. You learn that people are assholes. Don't trust anybody. Not if they're Hazor.

KOSTYA

So what are you telling me?

EUGENE

Forget about this girl. If she's not fighting us, her father will be, or her brothers.

KOSTYA

Her father died already. Her brother's in the Hazor army, that's true.

EUGENE

One day you might find yourself in his gunsights.

KOSTYA

Karl wouldn't shoot me.

EUGENE

And you wouldn't shoot him, right?

KOSTYA

I don't want to think about it.

EUGENE

Then pray to God you never have to.

(He takes a photograph from his wallet)

That's my daughter, Sonya.



KOSTYA

She's cute.

EUGENE

Kind of girl you should be going after. Not that I'm making suggestions. But don't tell me you can't find a wife among our own kind. Let's go.

They shoulder guns and rucksacks.

KOSTYA

Eugene?

EUGENE

What is it?

KOSTYA

Whose God is it?

EUGENE

What are you talking about?

KOSTYA

You said 'pray to God'. But the Hazors also pray to Him.

EUGENE

In this war He'd better be ours.

Exeunt.

**Scene 3**

Main room of a basement - furnished with essentials from the house above. A makeshift kitchen against one wall; dining and sittings areas etc. One or two pieces suggest a gracious lifestyle now vanished. To the rear one door leads to the street, another to the back yard. Small windows at head height. Two rooms offstage. MARYA is at the stove. LEO, white-haired and dressed in a threadbare caftan and slippers, sits in the only armchair, glass in hand, a bottle at his elbow.

LEO  
What's for dinner?

MARYA  
Soup.

LEO  
Doesn't smell of much. What's in it?

MARYA  
Turnip. And a carrot.

LEO  
One carrot?

MARYA  
It's all we could find.

LEO  
Any bread?

MARYA  
No.

LEO  
It'll be dark soon.

MARYA  
Why don't you draw the curtains? I wish you wouldn't drink.

LEO

You needn't worry. I've only a couple of bottles left. And I'd swap them both right now for a loaf of good bread, or a dozen bagels like that Arab used to sell.

MARYA

You're talking about Steinitz. He was a Jew not an Arab.

LEO

Jew, Arab, it's all the same to me. I don't hold with either of them. Still, the bagels were something else.

MARYA

My great grandfather was Jewish.

LEO

You don't really know that. They didn't have such good records in those days. Not that I'm anti-Semitic. The Jews never did us any harm. Not directly anyway.

MARYA

What's that supposed to mean?

LEO

We're the ones who are fighting and dying, aren't we? Us on one side, the Hazors on the other. The Jews just stand back and make money selling to both sides. Very smart when you think about it.

MARYA

It's easy to blame others for our troubles.

LEO

Well if it's not the Jews, it's the Arabs. We don't benefit, that's for sure.

MARYA

Let's drop the subject.

LEO

Keep quiet. Yes, that's what they want. But I won't be silent. If I see the truth, I'll say so.

MARYA

I don't know what's got into you.

LEO

You're a fatalist, that's your problem. You think everything that happens is written in the skies. But it's people who make the world unlivable, not fate. When you've lived as long as me, maybe you'll understand. You never see the evil in anything, Marya.

MARYA

Perhaps that's why your son married me.

LEO

I make no secret I wasn't too happy about it at the time. We're a scholarly family.

MARYA

Whereas I'm working class, right?

LEO

No, I don't go that far. You haven't been a bad wife to him. A bit too independent perhaps.

MARYA

He's supposed to be coming home for a couple of days.

LEO

I miss him as much as you do. Those aren't curtains. They're rags.

MARYA

I sold the good ones.

LEO

What?

MARYA

For a sack of potatoes.

LEO

You didn't ask me.

MARYA

You didn't even notice. They've been gone for a month.

LEO

My mother made those curtains. They were a family heirloom. Beautiful handiwork. Who bought them? Or stole them I should say?

MARYA

A United Nations soldier. They've plenty of food.

LEO

Peacekeepers they call them. What peace? They spend their time dealing on the black market - and screwing our women.

MARYA

Leo!

LEO

It's the truth. They look on while we kill each other, then when we're all dead or too weak to defend ourselves, they march in and pick up the spoils. Where's Sonya?

MARYA

Dressing Karl's wound.

LEO

Isn't he better? He's outstaying his welcome if you ask me.

MARYA

You know what a state he was in when we found him.

LEO

Yes. But now he hobbles around now as if he owns the place. I reckon he's putting it on. None of you know what a wound really means. Remember my leg? That was a wound.

MARYA

You got it in a traffic accident.

LEO

So what? It was a real injury. All this Karl got were a few scratches.

MARYA

Please Leo, will you stop complaining? I can't stand it much longer.

LEO

You can't stand it! Priceless. What you can't stand is a few home truths. I say you should have left him in the street where he belongs. You forget he's a Hazor. He's probably killed a good dozen of our lads. Maybe more.

MARYA

Karl's a gentle boy. He's on the other side because his family are Hazors. It's not his fault. He thinks we should all live together in peace.

LEO

If his commanding officer ordered him to shoot us, do think he'd disobey? He'd probably do it without a second thought.

MARYA

He would not.

LEO

You forget we've been here for a thousand years. This is our land. They're the newcomers. If our boys hadn't held them off, they'd have cleared us out by now. There isn't a Hazor within a hundred miles who wouldn't murder us all if he could. I want that Karl out of here. We're harbouring an enemy. It's a disgrace.

MARYA

The bible tells us...

LEO

To hell with the bible. This is my house. There's not much left of it. But I decide who lives here.

SONYA enter from within.

SONYA

The birds are pecking again.

LEO

What's that? Sonya my dear you'd better stay out of this.

SONYA

Out of what?

MARYA

Your grandfather wants Karl to leave.

LEO

He's a danger to us all.

SONYA

No grandad. He's a friend.

LEO

The Hazors are no friends of ours. Where do you think this boy's allegiance lies? With you? Or with his people?

SONYA

He didn't ask for this war.

LEO

Did we?

SONYA

We could to live in peace if we put our minds to it.

LEO

What's he doing anyway?

SONYA

Getting dressed. It takes him a long time.

LEO

You like this boy, don't you?

SONYA

Yes.

LEO

You be careful. Now go tell him to get a move on. It's dinner time.

SONYA leaves

LEO (cont'd)

Is she fancying him?

MARYA

No, I don't think so. I hope not.

LEO

You'd better find out.

MARYA

She wouldn't go for a Hazor. It's not our way.

LEO

His family wouldn't like it either. He's probably trying to manipulate her. You're too trusting Marya. I don't trust anyone. Not even my own son. He's lied to me more than once. No doubt he had his reasons. Everybody does. Words have no truth in them. Only bias and convenience.

MARYA

Including your words?

LEO

At my age I've nothing to hide. That's why I tell it like it is. Only the old lose their fear of language. We don't have a stake any more in a rosy future. I've nothing to look forward to. That's why I drink.

KARL enters followed by SONYA. He has one shoulder heavily bandaged and walks with a stick.

LEO (cont'd)

There you are young man. You're getting better I see. You can walk well enough!

KARL

Thanks to you all.

MARYA

Soup's ready. Sit down everybody.

LEO

I'll stay put if you don't mind.

MARYA

(Sotto voce to SONYA)

He's in one of those moods. Driving me mad.

SONYA

Has he been drinking?

SONYA, MARYA and KARL sit at table together. LEO remains in his chair while SONYA serves him.

LEO

Now young man. We've been in debate. And to cut a long short. You were the theme.



KARL

I understand.

LEO

If you understood you wouldn't be here.

SONYA

Grandad!

MARYA

Leo, please.

LEO

We're in different camps. You know that as well as anybody. Keeping you here is a big risk. If we'd had any sense, we'd have turned you in already. But the female members of my family seem to feel that wouldn't be right. What do you think?

KARL

If you hand me over, I'll probably be executed, sir. Nobody's taking prisoners in this war.

LEO

You're part of it.

KARL

We're all victims, aren't we?

SONYA

That's right grandad.

LEO

You'll have to leave sometime.

SONYA

There's no hurry, is there Karl?

LEO

I say there is. If I were you I'd want to get back to my own side as soon as possible so as not to be branded a deserter. The Hazors would shoot you then and save us the trouble.

MARYA

Leo that's nasty.

LEO

So is the truth.

KARL

You talk about your people and my people, sir. But only a few years ago, we all thought we were the same. I've done no real thinking about this war. I found myself on one side because of my religion, got drafted and then did what I was told. Of course, they tried to ram a lot of propaganda down my throat about you Aryans. What monsters you are, trying to steal our land, rape our women and murder our children. Even though our communities have always lived side by side. We're the same colour; we speak the same language. The only visible difference between us is our armband: your side red, my side black. And see? I've taken mine off.

LEO

We pray in different churches.

KARL

Does either of them urge us to kill our enemies?

LEO

Ah! Your religion is peaceful eh?

(Taking a book from the table beside his chair)

You're not dealing with idiots here. I know all about the kind of things you believe. Listen to this.

(Reading)

"When ye encounter the unbelievers, strike off their heads, until ye have made a great slaughter among them..." Where does that come from? I'll tell you. Your holy book, chapter 47. A fine treatise on what to do with folk you don't like.

SONYA

Our bible's just as full of war and terror, grandad.

LEO

What do you know about it?

SONYA

Only what I learned at your knee.

(Picking up a bible)

I marked it because it seemed so horrible. "And when the Lord they God shall deliver your enemies before you; you will smite them, and utterly destroy them; and will make no covenant with them, nor show mercy unto them.....But thus will ye deal with them;

you will destroy their altars, and break down their images, and cut down their groves, and burn their graven images with fire.”

LEO

That has to be read metaphorically.

KARL

So it is with our book, sir.

LEO

Ah! but there's a difference. We have learned forgiveness.

MARYA

For our sins.

SONYA

And for our enemies. Then if Karl's an enemy - which he isn't - you should be ready to forgive him.

LEO

That's all very fine in theory. But when you're at war, you don't invite an enemy through your front door.

KARL

Sonya's right, sir. I'm not an enemy. And I'm grateful for my rescue. Without you all, I'd be just another body on the street. Someone on your side would have seen my armband and finished me off. But if I've outstayed my welcome, then I'll be off.

SONYA

You can't leave yet, Karl.. You're too weak.

LEO

Not too weak to impress my granddaughter, obviously.

MARYA

Leo leave the lad alone. Do you think the Hazors have a monopoly on wickedness? Half the world is ready to kill.

KARL

I don't belong in that half, believe me. If our side wins this war, it'll be my chance to see to your safety.

LEO

If his side wins the war, it'll be the end of us.

A burst of gunfire

MARYA

There go the guns again. Wish we knew what's going on.

SONYA

I'll go and look.

MARYA

Don't be so silly.

LEO

(to SONYA)

You'll do no such thing.

(To KARL)

Why don't you go?

SONYA

No Karl.

KARL

Why not?

SONYA

You don't move well enough yet.

KARL

I'll be okay.

LEO

Of course he'll be okay.

KARL

Wait here everyone. I'll be back soon to report.

KARL leaves.

LEO

'Wait here everyone'. As if we had a choice. He's trying to take charge already. See if I'm not right. I wouldn't put it past him to go look for his comrades and lead them into town. It's what I'd do in his shoes.

The firing stops.

SONYA

(Peering through a window)

It's dark outside.

LEO

Anyway there's nothing we can do about it. I'm going to bed.

MARYA

Help me clear away, will you Sonya?

LEO

I'm a miserable bastard at times. My bones ache, my bladder doesn't always keep its contents, and I'm in full decline. None of that matters though. What hurts is that an old man has no value to anyone. Not to himself, because his own light is dying, and not to the young who think age is a form of blindness and experience a shackle on the imagination. You all think you know more than me.

MARYA

Nonsense Leo. You're tense, that's all.

LEO

See what I mean? I'm tense. I'm a drunk. Yes. I can see you when my back's turned, raising your eyes to the heavens, as if putting up with me were worse than life under the Hazors. I remind you, in case you've forgotten...

MARYA

That this is your house. What's left of it. And if it weren't for you we'd be out on the street.

LEO

Am I so predictable?

MARYA

We're grateful, you know that Leo. But we're tired now. We should try to get some rest while it's calm outside. By the way I've a surprise for you.

LEO

I'm not sure I want a surprise.

MARYA

Drinking chocolate.

LEO

Where did you get it?

MARYA

Sonya found it this morning in one of the ruins. Didn't you Sonya? A whole tin, unopened. I'll bring you a cup in bed.

LEO

I'll drink it with a drop of vodka. We should all go to bed. You too Sonya. Chocolate. Well, well. It's certainly a long time since we've seen chocolate in this house.

MARYA

(Calling)

Sonya!

LEO

Come away from that window young lady and say 'goodnight' to your grandfather.

SONYA

What? Oh sorry.

LEO

Worrying about that Karl, are you? He'll take care of himself, don't you worry.

SONYA

Good night Grandad.

LEO

You don't mind my grumbles, do you?

SONYA

Of course not.

LEO

My ray of sunshine.

Leo exits.

MARYA

(Calling)

I'll be right in with your chocolate. You'll be wanting a cup too, Sonya.

SONYA

And Karl.

MARYA

I'll leave his in the pot to keep warm.

SONYA

He said he was coming straight back.

MARYA

You really like that boy.

SONYA

Is there any point in liking someone when we're all killing each other?

MARYA

Don't talk like that.

SONYA

Then you don't mind?

MARYA

What is there to mind?

SONYA

Nothing.

MARYA

If I had the choice, I wouldn't pick him for your husband, if that's what you mean. He's not one of us. Heaven knows what your father would say if he were here. I wish we'd never seen him that day in the street.

SONYA

He would have died.

MARYA

Are you coming?

SONYA

I'll prepare Karl's bed. He'll be back soon.

MARYA

Don't be too long. And don't forget to douse the light. You can leave one candle burning.

MARYA leaves. SONYA arranges the bedding on the sofa, then retrieves the cup of chocolate MARYA has prepared for her. She tries to relax but cannot. She paces, approaches the window to peer out, paces again. Finally she sits on the sofa. A momentary stillness. Footsteps. The door opens and KARL enters. He is breathless.

SONYA

Karl. I waited up for you. You must be so tired.

Karl closes the door brusquely.

SONYA (cont'd)

Shhh! You'll wake everyone up.

KARL

Out of breath. Not used to walking.

SONYA

I was so worried.

KARL

Everything's fine. There won't be any more shooting. Not tonight anyhow. Tomorrow may be calmer too.

SONYA

Why? What's happened?

KARL

Is there anything to drink? It's cold outside. I feel a bit weak.

SONYA

Chocolate. I kept it warm for you.

KARL

That's wonderful.

SONYA

What's the matter?

KARL

I'm excited I guess.



SONYA

You're wearing a black armband.

KARL

I put it on when I found out what was going on. I carry both colours with me.

(Taking a red armband from his pocket)

See? The firing was coming from the north edge of town. Instead of approaching directly, I went through the woods at the back thinking I'd be safe that way. When I reached the high road, though, I got a shock. Soldiers everywhere, armoured cars, tanks. They didn't seem to be going anywhere, just milling around. I turned to get away, but a guard had spotted the movement and yelled at me to stop. Of course, I had to obey. He came up and stuck his machine-gun in my ribs. "Where's your colour, soldier?" he asked. I tried to see what armband he was wearing, but it was too dark. I had the black one in my right pocket and the red one in my left. "It's in my pocket," I said. "It fell off." I was trembling I can tell you. "Show me," he said. What was I to do? I couldn't refuse. Then another guard came up with flashlight and I saw the armband. Black. What a relief. They wanted to know what I was doing there, so I told them I'd been injured - and was on my way back to my unit. They talked to me then, and I found out everything. Your side is two or three streets further back. Retreating I think.

SONYA

God have mercy on us.

KARL

It's good news. If it goes on like this, there'll be peace soon. At least round here.

SONYA

We'll be killed.

KARL

Don't be silly. Hazors aren't savages. You know that. We kill enemies in battle, not civilians.

SONYA

I'll wake my mother. And grandad.

KARL

No need for that. Everything's quiet now.

SONYA

What are we going to do?

KARL

Nothing. You'll stay here.

SONYA

That sounds like an order.

KARL

Of course it isn't. But it's my best advice. If you try to run you'll be stopped for sure. And then who knows? You're young and beautiful. And there are happy soldiers around. Here you'll be safe. I can protect you.

SONYA

You're not a happy soldier?

KARL

Only if you make me so.

SONYA

What do you mean?

KARL

You know there's something between us.

SONYA

No I don't.

KARL

Call it chemistry. Whatever. You can't deny it, can you? I've spent hours thinking about being alone with you, lying on the sofa when I couldn't walk, watching you move around me, cooking or cleaning.

SONYA

I was taking care of you.

KARL

At first, I was too weak even to reach up and touch you. And then, when my strength began to return, not daring to, being tortured by...I shouldn't speak in this way but now there's nothing to stop us.

SONYA

Karl this isn't the time.

KARL

You know what I mean, don't you?

SONYA

No. Yes, in a way.

KARL

I knew it. So come to me.

SONYA

No. Not now.

KARL

You can't refuse me. Don't even try. You want me as much as I want you. Come here.

SONYA

You're crazy.

KARL

Kiss me. That's all I ask..

SONYA

My mother will hear.

KARL

One kiss.

SONYA

How can I? Your comrades may be here tomorrow, ready to take us away.

KARL

There's nothing to fear. I'll tell them you're on our side. Forget the outside world. This is our moment.

SONYA

We're not on your side, Karl. Later, perhaps when this is all over, we can talk like friends.

KARL

Please Sonya. Don't you want to kiss me?

SONYA

Not like this.

KARL

Don't make me beg.

SONYA

It's not a question of begging. Alright then. Just one.

They embrace.

KARL

Careful. My arm still hurts. That's good. Don't tell me you didn't enjoy that.

SONYA

I must go now. My mother...

KARL

Didn't you say she's asleep? Another kiss.

SONYA

We'll wake her up.

KARL

Not if you're sensible and keep quiet.

SONYA

Sensible?

KARL

Take your clothes off.

SONYA

What?

KARL

I said take your clothes off.

SONYA

I can't do that.

KARL

Do as I say.

SONYA

Is that the price of your protection?

KARL

I want you, that's all.

SONYA

And I'm not allowed to refuse, is that it?

KARL

I'm a soldier in a time of war. I have to shoot and be shot at. Think of me that way. If I seem fierce, violent even, the war has made me so. Sooner or later I'll be sent back to the front. I may be dead in a week.

SONYA

How can I think of this when my family's in danger?

KARL

Look at me. Are you shy? It's all right. I'll blow the candle out. Come to me. You're so beautiful. Enough of torture. I need you. And I know you need me too.

He closes on Sonya.

SONYA

No Karl. I don't want it like this.

KARL

Don't say that. If you make a sound there'll be no chance for any of us. Whisper. Say yes to me, Sonya. I want to hear it.

SONYA

I can't, Karl.

KARL

Kiss me again. Yes. Say it.

SONYA

(Whispering)

No. Yes. No, no.

KARL

You said yes.

SONYA

No I...

KARL

Put on those red shoes tomorrow. The ones you found.

SONYA

What for?

KARL

They'll be a sign that you're mine.

SONYA

My mother will notice.

KARL

That's what I want. That everyone should know.

SONYA

Know what?

KARL

That you love me. That I love you.

SONYA

It can't be love. It's too soon.

KARL

Once we're together, nothing matter any more. Nothing.

SONYA

You don't believe that and neither do I.

KARL

War makes it so.

SONYA

War's not an excuse for anything. It gives hope and then takes it away.

KARL

In my arms you'll be safe. I promise.

Blackout.

**ACT II****Scene 1**

Bare Stage. EUGENE and KOSTYA pause on their journey. Intermittent shelling and gunfire.

EUGENE

There's the town down below. Our house is just behind the main square. You can almost see it from here.

KOSTYA

You must be excited.

EUGENE

It's been more than six months. I didn't miss them so much at first. Matter of fact I was glad to get away. Too many arguments. Marya was getting fed up with my moods. And I was tired of seeing her every day, I suppose, of doing and saying the same things, over and over. Not that I don't love her. But I never got used to the fact that I'm a failure, and it's too late for me to do anything about it. I've failed her, and I've failed Sonya too. I was supposed to be a university professor or an engineer like my father. Didn't make either.

KOSTYA

They surely don't care about things like that.

EUGENE

I care. I see myself in Marya's eyes. We don't even live in our own house. It belongs to my uncle Leo and he doesn't let anyone forget it. Marya doesn't say anything. She's a peacemaker. Anything to keep the family together.

KOSTYA

Aren't you?

EUGENE

A peacemaker? Maybe in theory. Except that I got into ranting and complaining. Blaming her I guess, for what I've become.

KOSTYA

They're shelling the town.

EUGENE

Bastards. I never thought the Hazors would get this far. The guns are on that hill. Over there. See? We'll have to skirt round and wait for dark. Now I feel a need to say sorry and ask for forgiveness.

KOSTYA

(Misunderstanding)

What for?

EUGENE

If one of those shells hits the house I may never see her again. Or Sonya. Suppose the Hazors are already there? Do you think they'll let my family survive?

KOSTYA

Surely they won't...

EUGENE

They won't behave any better than we do. We're all savages at heart.

KOSTYA

You're saying there's no difference between us?

EUGENE

We're on our side and they're on theirs.

KOSTYA

Is that all?

EUGENE

There are two kinds of peoples in the world. The tolerant who think one god is as good as another and any path will do to travel through life. And the fanatics who think there's only one path and one god. Fanatics are the trouble-makers, the ones ready to kill anyone who disagrees with them.

KOSTYA

The Hazors.

EUGENE

Right. That's why we're fighting them.

KOSTYA

What about us?



EUGENE

We're fanatics too. There'll only be one winner in this war.

KOSTYA

What about people who don't believe anything?

EUGENE

It's not human to have no beliefs.

KOSTYA

Maybe it's better.

EUGENE

Maybe.

KOSTYA

Anyway, I'm going to see my girlfriend if I can get to her.

EUGENE

You'll regret it.

KOSTYA

Why should I? At heart don't we all dream of living in peace, side by side?

EUGENE

Reality treats everyone in the same way, dreams or no dreams. We cry for peace; but that doesn't stop us making war. We're taught to love, but our lives are filled with violence. It's in our blood; and there's nothing we can do about it.

KOSTYA

If we had the will we could put our weapons down and refuse to fight.

EUGENE

Is that what you did when we entered those Hazor villages back east? Conducted yourself like a peace loving gentleman did you?

KOSTYA

I could have behaved better, I admit.

EUGENE

You said it. War does strange things to a man's principles, son. Best not to think too much about it. Hide it, even from yourself.

KOSTYA

So you wouldn't blame the Aryans if they took your wife and daughter?

EUGENE

I wouldn't blame them. No. I'd just kill them. And so would you, Kostya. So would you.

They trudge off.

## Scene 2

Leo's house. LEO in his chair, inebriated but not incapacitated. KARL enters from the yard.

LEO

Oh, it's you. Where are the women?

KARL

They went to look for firewood.

LEO

Winter's coming on. Perhaps it'll be my last.

KARL

Sorry?

LEO

Sorry, he says. Why didn't you go with them? Don't you know it's dangerous out there? You've a firearm. Men are supposed to protect women. Don't they teach that in your culture?

KARL

I'd be more of a burden to them than a help. I still can't carry anything. They'll be alright. There's no fighting.

LEO

You're fit enough for other things though, isn't that right? I may be old but I don't miss much. And what I don't see, I guess. Let me tell you something. No man can hold a woman. She'll be with you while it suits her. But when somebody else comes along, a good-looking Aryan, you won't stand a chance. She'll be off. *La donna e mobile.*

KARL  
Qual piu al vento.

LEO  
Educated by god!

KARL  
By the same god.

LEO  
Women will do what they want. And no man can stop them. One day they're in your arms. The next...you get my drift. That's what happened to me. My wife ran off with someone else. A Hazor too. All a man can do is drink and try to forget.

KARL  
I'm sorry.

LEO  
No need. Private grief doesn't account for much. Will you have a drink with me? Don't turn me down. It's the last bottle in the house. From now on we'll have to get it on the black market. Your health.

KARL  
And yours.  
(Drinking)  
It's good.

LEO  
Best Polish.

Long pause.

LEO (cont'd)  
The best.

KARL  
It's gone very quiet over the last 24 hours. Maybe it's over.

LEO  
What do you mean?

KARL  
The fighting. At least around here.

LEO

That can only mean one side has retreated. We'll see whether it's yours or ours.

KARL

Either way it won't matter.

LEO

It'll matter to me.

KARL

We don't have to take revenge on each other.

LEO

You're still naive enough to be an idealist. That's why Sonya's smitten with you.

KARL

I don't flatter myself...

LEO

Cut it out. You're fucking her, aren't you?

Loud banging at the door.

LEO (cont'd)

What the hell is that? The girl's wouldn't knock. Don't stand there. Go see who it is.

Before KARL reaches the door, it bursts open to reveal Private ANTON SEMYON, rifle in hand. Behind him Major BORIS PAVEL. Both men are uniformed and wear black armbands.

SEMYON

Who are you? Stay put? Don't move. I'll trash the first man who moves. No matter who it is. Understood? State name and rank. What's that? Both of you are dead meat.

PAVEL

Semyon.

SEMYON

Sir!

PAVEL

It's alright. Calm down.

Sir!  
SEMYON

Lower the gun.  
PAVEL

Sir, they might be armed.  
SEMYON

You needn't worry. Nobody's armed. Except with a bottle.  
LEO

Don't believe it, sir. These people can't be trusted. Major Spelnik was killed that way  
sir. They did it when his back was turned.  
SEMYON

Semyon.  
PAVEL

Sir!  
SEMYON

Check the house.  
PAVEL

Sir!  
SEMYON

SEMYON disappears. We hear him kick open other doors.

I apologize for the over enthusiasm of my adjutant.  
PAVEL  
(To LEO)  
You live here?

As you see, we're reduced to the cellars.  
LEO

Yes. I'm the main house does seem to be a bit of a mess.  
PAVEL

Thanks for reminding me.  
LEO

SEMYON re-emerges carrying a second rifle.

SEMYON

Look what I found, sir! 'No weapons', they said. I'll give 'em no weapons.

PAVEL

Whose is this rifle?

LEO

Not guilty.

PAVEL

You're both under arrest.

KARL

It's mine.

PAVEL

And who are you? A soldier obviously. Everyone of your age is a soldier. What are you doing here? Why didn't you retreat with the other cowards of your tribe? Or did you hope we wouldn't notice you if you sat here quietly? Where's your armband. Took it off?

SEMYON

Shall I take him outside, sir?

PAVEL

Perhaps, in a moment or two.

SEMYON

We don't take prisoners, see. Unless they're VIPs.

PAVEL

That'll do, Semyon.

LEO

Go on. Save your skin. Tell him who you are.

KARL

I'm Hazor. Lieutenant Muti sir. I was injured and they brought me here.

PAVEL

When did this happen?

KARL

A few weeks ago. When we first tried to take the town.

PAVEL

Date?

KARL

May 1st.

SEMYON

We were in that battle sir.

PAVEL

Unit?

KARL

Third infantry.

PAVEL

Where are your papers?

KARL

In my jacket sir.

SEMYON

Careful sir. He might have a concealed weapon in his pocket. May I sir?

KARL

Inside pocket.

SEMYON finds the papers and hands them to PAVEL.

PAVEL

Lieutenant Muti. I'm Major Pavel.

SEMYON

(Suddenly impressed)

Private Semyon sir. Congratulations on your survival.

KARL

This house took me in. I would have died in the street if not for them. They risked their lives to save me. If their own army had found out...

Who is 'they'?

PAVEL

Mr. Hosek.

KARL

That's me.

LEO

His niece and her daughter.

KARL

Where are these women?

PAVEL

They went to look for firewood.

KARL

Courageous of them. Though a little foolhardy, wouldn't you say?

PAVEL

We didn't know you'd taken the town. The shooting stopped yesterday.

LEO

Your so called army had had enough. Melted away into the night. That's the difference between those who know what they're fighting for, and those who merely go through the motions. What are the names of these women?

PAVEL

Mrs. Marya Hosek and Sonya.

KARL

Semyon.

PAVEL

Sir!

SEMYON

Go and find them. They may already be in custody. Say they belong to Major Pavel.

PAVEL

Sir!

SEMYON



LEO

Belong?

Semyon leaves.

PAVEL

And while we wait, Lieutenant, you can show me my quarters. I'll be billeted here for the next few days.

LEO

Give him my room.

PAVEL

Thank you Mr. Hosek.

(To KARL)

You seem to have struck lucky, Lieutenant. A household of two women and an old man.

KARL

I think so sir.

KARL and PAVEL leave to inspect Leo's bedroom.

LEO

(Mimicking)

'I think so, sir'

(To himself)

You think so, do you? The spoils to the victors. When Joshua conquered the Amorites, he turned the men into fertilizer and the girls into concubines. That's how you destroy a people. Raping women is a soldier's privilege. And when all the little bastards come to light nine months later, you call them Ishmael and send them away. Sometimes I used to dream of it myself. Those mysterious Hazor women who would sit so still in class shrouded in veils and never saying anything. Too old for that now. And anyway the chance has gone. We lost. We'll have nothing to show for the life we lived. Won't be the first atrocity in history, of course. Nor the last. But I'm finished here. Nothing I can do.

He drinks.

**Scene 3**

Bare stage,

EUGENE

These are the outskirts. Seems calm enough.

KOSTYA

Fighting must have moved on.

EUGENE

Help me with this armband. Yours comes off too. Keep it in your pocket.

KOSTYA

Why?

EUGENE

Do as I say. There are two roads into town. They separate at this fork. We'll each take a different route, just to make sure. I'll take left, you take right. Here. I wrote down our address for you. And a sketch map on the other side. Our house is on the corner. See? You'll find it easily enough. If you can't get to the house, make your way back here and try the other route. I'll be doing the same.

KOSTYA

What if we run into Hazors?

EUGENE

Steer clear. But if they get you, tell them your armband fell off.

KOSTYA

If I get there first...

EUGENE

Yes?

KOSTYA

Nothing.

EUGENE

They'll be there, God willing. Tell them I'm on my way.

KOSTYA

I'll be off then.

EUGENE

Wait.

KOSTYA

What is it?

EUGENE

It's nonsense, I know. But now we're so close, I feel somehow further away, as if some force were pushing me in the opposite direction. I dreamed about it last night. That we'd arrived together, arm-in-arm, as comrades. And I was telling you about Marya's cooking, and about how we were going to eat like caliphs. But when we got to the front door and my hand reached out to knock, I found the door had moved a little further off. And I couldn't quite reach it. I took another step and tried again. But the same thing happened. And so it went on, always receding, always closed. I tried calling, but my voice had packed up. And from inside the house there was no sound at all. What I'm trying to say is, if I don't make it, see what you can do to look after them.

KOSTYA

Of course. But you will make it.

EUGENE

Yes. We'll meet there for sure.

They embrace and part.

#### Scene 4.

Leo's house. Major PAVEL sits in Leo's armchair, LEO in an upright chair at the table, KARL on guard at the door, armed with his rifle. We HEAR footsteps outside, then an attempt to open the door.

SONYA (O.S.)

The door's stuck.

PAVEL

Who's that?

MARYA (O.S.)

Let me try.

LEO

It's what remains of my family.

(To KARL)

Let them in, can't you?

MARYA (O.S.)

It's bolted.

SONYA (O.S.)

Karl, Grandpa, it's us.

KARL

Permission to let them in, sir.

PAVEL

Get on with it lieutenant.

KARL unbolts the door. MARYA and SONYA enter carrying bags of firewood.

SONYA

We had a such a time getting back.

MARYA

What's going on?

SONYA

Karl?

PAVEL

I apologize for surprising you. My name is Major Pavel. I am billeted in this house for the time being.

SONYA

You're Hazor.

PAVEL

No need for alarm.

SONYA

The town is yours. We know that. Your troops are everywhere.

KARL

We worried you might have been caught.

MARYA

They're arresting all the men. We're not so important. We slipped through the back streets.

SONYA

Why are you carrying a gun?

KARL

It's my job. I'm under orders now.

PAVEL

No one's going to shoot you. Provided you follow certain procedures. We're not here to harm women, are we lieutenant?

KARL

Certainly not, sir.

MARYA

Are you alright Leo?

LEO

Well as can be expected under the circumstances.

PAVEL

I sent my adjutant off to find you in case you had fallen into the wrong hands. You never know in wartime. And you are both, if I may say so, very attractive women. Do make yourselves comfortable. You're at home, remember?

(Eyeing SONYA)

Red shoes. Hardly the kind of footwear for tramping round town. Where did you get them, my dear? Wearing them to show off your allegiances? Or to provoke perhaps? What do you think, Lieutenant? Either way, I'm surprised you didn't warn her.

KARL

Didn't think of it sir.

PAVEL

Didn't you?

MARYA

She found them when we were looking for firewood. I told her not to wear them.

PAVEL

Found them?

MARYA

In a pile of rubble.

PAVEL

I've always like high heels on a woman. So deliciously impractical.

A sharp rap at the door.

SEMYON (O.S.)

Private Semyon, sir. Request entry, sir.

KARL opens the door.

PAVEL

My adjutant.

SEMYON

Sir, mission unsuccessful sir. Couldn't find them anywhere.

PAVEL

They found their own way here, Private Semyon.

SEMYON

That's why then sir, isn't it? Why I couldn't find them. Thought they'd already had it to be honest sir. Everybody's at the local girls sir. Even the colonel. This must be the most peaceful house around, sir.

PAVEL

Raring to go, are you Private?

SEMYON

I obey orders sir.

PAVEL

Good. You and the lieutenant can start by moving these folk out into the yard. Except the young lady.

(To SONYA)

What's your name?

KARL  
Sonya, sir.

PAVEL  
Can't you speak for yourself.

MARYA  
Of course she can.

LEO  
What do you want with her, Major Pavel?

PAVEL  
Are you asking me for an account?

LEO  
That's right.

PAVEL  
Perhaps I haven't made things clear. You heard what Private Semyon said. This is the only peaceful place in town. Can you imagine what's going on elsewhere? Is it only in our towns and villages that it's acceptable to rape the women, and dispose of the men and children? That's what your lot do to us, isn't that right?

LEO  
If so they should be shot. But one atrocity doesn't give you a licence to commit another.

PAVEL  
I merely wish to interview your granddaughter. Nothing more. Private Semyon get him out of here. And Mrs Hosek too.

SEMYON  
Where to, sir?

PAVEL  
Outside.

LEO  
I want an assurance...

PAVEL  
Out.

SEMYON

Shall I give him some coffee, sir?

PAVEL

Just keep him quiet.

MARYA

Don't you touch him. Or me.

SEMYON

Come on. Out, out, out, out out.

PAVEL

(To SONYA)

I want to talk to you. Muti, help Semyon get those two into the yard.

LEO

You can't do this.

MARYA

Please, Major Pavel.

KARL

Sir, these are good people. They saved my life.

PAVEL

(Suddenly furious)

Saved your life, did they? How interesting. They didn't save my family, did they? When teh Aryans gutted our village. Where are the young men of this family? I'll tell you where they are? Out killing our children, raping our women, and burning our houses. Don't speak to me about what I can and can't do. They saved your life. What's one miserable life among so many deaths. Picked you up off the street, did they? Perhaps they didn't realize you were a Hazor. Aryans don't like Hazors. Now get them out of here.

(To SONYA)

And you. Come here.

SEMYON

You heard the major.

LEO

I'll not take a step under his orders.



Sir, permission to... SEMYON

Do whatever you have to. PAVEL

Right away, sir. SEMYON

SEMYON clubs LEO, then bustles him out of the door leading to the yard.

Why don't you finish the job?. LEO (O.S.)

No. Grandad. No. SONYA

Major, don't do this to us. I know soldiers have needs. We are in your hands. You don't have to hit anybody. MARYA

Obey instructions and nothing will happen to you. PAVEL

Sound of beating outside. A groan.

What's happening to Leo? MARYA

Silence outside.

Oh heaven help us. MARYA (cont'd)

Muti, take this woman outside to the old man. PAVEL

Let me stay here. Take me instead of my daughter. MARYA

You misunderstand my intention. Sonya has nothing to fear. Provided she does what she's told - and you do likewise. Take her out Muti. PAVEL

SONYA

Karl don't let this happen.

KARL

Yes sir. It's okay Sonya. Come Marya.

MARYA

Don't touch me.

(To Sonya)

I warned you didn't I?

SONYA

Karl...

KARL

It's the world we live in.

SEMYON appears at the door.

SEMYON

Sir I gave him some coffee. He's quiet now.

MARYA

What have you done to him?

PAVEL

Now get this woman out of here.

MARYA

I'm not moving, Take me instead major, I'm good at it.

SEMYON drags Marya into the yard.

PAVEL

And keep her quiet.

(To KARL)

You're on guard lieutenant. I don't want to be disturbed.

KARL

Yes sir.

PAVEL

Outside.

SONYA

Karl, don't leave me.

As he approaches SONYA, PAVEL turns his back on KARL. The latter checks his rifle, hesitates, aims it at PAVEL, hesitates.

PAVEL

(Without turning round)

Outside lieutenant if you don't mind. You can have her after me if you don't fancy the mother.

KARL lowers the gun, steps into the yard and closes the door behind him.

SONYA

Karl!

PAVEL

Soft spot for our lieutenant have we? Never mind. It really doesn't matter. An individual's fate has no significance to modern life. It belongs on the dung-heap of nineteenth century liberal romanticism. You've no idea what I'm talking about, have you? Pity. Aryans are so poorly educated. The spoils of victory are mediocre in the main; but after weeks and months of fighting, you take what you can get.

SONYA

You haven't won yet.

PAVEL

Oh I think we have. For the moment at least, we get to write history and you are reduced to whatever we make of you. That's what it means to win and lose. It isn't fair.

Sound of MARYA shouting furiously outside.

PAVEL (cont'd)

But in the long run...That noise.

(Calling)

Muti.

KARL

(Opening the door)

Sir.

PAVEL

Keep the noise down.

KARL

Yes sir.

KARL slams the door.

PAVEL

I do believe that boy's worried about you. But as I was saying, in the long run the earth covers all our action in a blanket of dust. How many young women have become a spoil of war? Can we name any? Andromache, a queen in a fairy tale? Oh yes, she soon got used to it. And so will you Sonya. That's your name, isn't it? Take your clothes off, there's a good girl.

SONYA stands motionless. PAVEL raises his swagger stick and strikes her on the neck.

PAVEL (cont'd)

Did you think I was playing?

SONYA

Yes.

PAVEL

I don't want to have to persuade you.

SONYA begins to take off her shoes.

PAVEL (cont'd)

Not your shoes. Your dress. You can leave your shoes on. That's right. Go on. Let it fall.

(Responding)

Excellent. Good looking for an Aryan girl. Do you know that? Of course you do. Walk over there. Now back again. Very pleasant. Our young lieutenant could hardly have failed to notice. No doubt you seduced him. Did you give him a good time? Fucking slut. Aryan women are all same. No morals. Off we go to your bedroom. Don't be shy. Nobody will mind.

Go on. And make sure you enjoy it. I want to hear you whimper. With pleasure, darling, with pleasure.

SONYA exits followed by PAVEL. Empty stage. We hear SONYA scream. KARL enters from the yard.

KARL

What was that? What in goddamn hell's name is he doing to her? I'll arrest him. Shoot him if I have to. He left his gun here. Semyon's outside. Nobody could stop me.

If I save her, that will be something; even if the rest of her family maybe won't make it. I'd have to get her away, of course. Where would we go? Shooting a commanding officer's not so simple either. If Semyon found out, he'd have to report it. That would be the end of me. Firing squad. Unless I shoot him too. He deserves it, that's for sure. But killing two of our own, in cold blood? Even if I escaped with Sonya, how could I live on knowing that I'd murdered my own comrades? The crime would never let me go. I'd drag it around for the rest of my life like a broken leg. Maybe that's why I didn't do it earlier, when I had the chance. It's one thing to do your best for the innocent. But to do the enemy's work? At least if I let things rest, nobody will know what happened here. The major will see to that. We'll have the story to ourselves.

SONYA (O.S.)

You bastard!

KARL

Her voice again. She's a good girl after all. She doesn't deserve this. None of us do.

SEMYON appears at the door.

SEMYON

Sir.

KARL

Get out.

SEMYON

But sir, I have to report.

KARL

I said get out. Major's order. Out.

SEMYON

Sir.

KARL

And close the door behind you.

SEMYON leaves.

KARL (cont'd)

At least I had her first. He can't take that away from me. Maybe it's love. I don't know. How are we supposed to know what we feel?

PAVEL appears, rearranging his dress.

PAVEL

Ah Lieutenant. Waiting our turn are we. The bitch struggled a bit at first. I don't mind telling you. Had to be sharp with her. She's quiet now though. Your turn. Off you go

KARL

Thank you sir, I don't think I will.

PAVEL

Nonsense. Get in there and do your stuff. Don't tell me you haven't been after her. She certainly wasn't a virgin. And she's ready and waiting for more.

KARL

Still I'd rather not, sir.

PAVEL

Rather not? I'm not interest, Lieutenant, in whether you'd rather not. I'm ordering you to take that girl and screw the ass off her. We can't afford any innocent parties in these matters, can we? You understand? We're in this together.

KARL

All the same, I'd prefer to stand down on this, sir. You can rely on my discretion.

PAVEL

You misunderstand, Lieutenant. I'm not giving you a choice. If you refuse, I shall have to take action against you. Give me your gun.

KARL hesitates.

PAVEL (cont'd)

That's an order.

KARL hands over his rifle.

PAVEL (cont'd)

I have no evidence, except for your own word, that you're not a deserter. Private Semyon and myself found - or should I say caught - you living here in very commodious circumstances. Why weren't you with the army? You could be court martialed. I could even take you out and shoot you myself. You follow me?

KARL

Yes.

PAVEL

Sir.

KARL

Yes sir.

PAVEL

But I'm content to give you the benefit of the doubt if you're willing to take it. All you need to do is get in there and fuck this girl. Will you do it or not?

KARL

I suppose I will sir, yes.

PAVEL

Take your rifle. If you can't get it up, it makes good substitute. They can't get enough anyway, these Aryan girls. And enjoy yourself Lieutenant. This is one time in a man's life he can get to be his real self. A fucking savage.

A knock at the yard door.

KARL

It's Semyon sir. I told him to stay in the yard.

PAVEL

Off you go Lieutenant. Semyon will have to wait his turn.

KARL exits. Repeated knocks at the door.

PAVEL (cont'd)

What is it?

SEMYON enters.

SEMYON

Sir. I'm sorry to interrupt sir.

A shot from the "bedroom".

PAVEL

For heaven's sake.

A second shot.

SEMYON

Shall I take a look sir?

PAVEL

No.

SEMYON

I can handle it sir, I'm used to dirty jobs.

PAVEL

Leave it Private Semyon. What did you want?

SEMYON

The woman outside sir. I'm afraid I was a bit too hard on her sir. She didn't take it well. I mean...

PAVEL

I didn't hear that Private Semyon.

SEMYON

Sorry sir, I'll speak louder.

PAVEL

I don't require a report.

SEMYON

Right sir. Just the bare bones.

PAVEL

Shut up and close that door. Listen to me. It's alright. Stuff happens in wartime. Nothing we can do about it. Keep the events in the yard to yourself this time. I don't need to know about them. Just make sure they don't occur again.

SEMYON

Yes sir. I certainly will.

PAVEL

War crimes have a nasty habit of showing up unexpectedly later in life. I don't say what you've done necessarily qualifies as a crime. We're all under pressure after all. But others might not agree.

SEMYON

No sir.



PAVEL

So when I say ‘not another word about it’ you understand that I’m protecting you, Private Semyon.

SEMYON

Yes sir, I’m grateful sir. But I didn’t mean anything. Just wanted to quieten them down. If they’d cooperated....

PAVEL

That’s enough. We can’t billet here any more, can we? Not with the mess outside.

SEMYON

No sir. I’ll see to it at once. There’s not much available in this town, what with all the shelling. But I’m sure I’ll be able to find something.

PAVEL

We’d better leave straight away.

SEMYON

What about Lieutenant Muti, sir?

PAVEL

I sent him on a special mission. He won’t be back.

SEMYON

Very good sir.

SEMYON opens the main door for PAVEL .

SEMYON (cont'd)

Sir.

PAVEL

Thank you Private Semyon. Close the door behind you and don’t look back.

They leave. We HEAR the sound of departing footsteps. Silence. Then more footsteps draw near. Several knocks at the door. The door opens.

**Scene 5**

KOSTYA enters

KOSTYA

(Calling in a loud whisper)

Anyone here? Eugene? Mr. Hosek? It's okay. I'm a friend.

(Pause)

For sure this is the place. Terrible ruin on top. Must have been hit by a shell. Its on the corner just as Eugene said. He can't have arrived yet.

(Looking around)

Cosy. They're still be living here.

(Approaching the stove)

Chocolate. A touch of luxury. It's warm. They can't be far.

(He finds a cup and pours)

They won't mind if I help myself. Perhaps they went to find food. They'll be lucky to get any with all those Hazor soldiers around. Take the milk out of your coffee those bastards.

(Noticing the made up bed on the sofa)

A bed in the living room. Not much space down here I guess.

(Spots a family photograph in a frame)

Must be the family. There he is. Eugene. I knew this was the right place. He looks quite a bit younger.

(Reading)

'To my husband on his birthday from his loving wife'. Only two years ago. That's the war for you. It's aged him. This must be his daughter, Sonya. She's a knockout, no doubt about it. A good fuck. You can tell by the look in her eyes. The pout. Look how she's posing. Showing off her nipples. They don't know what they do to us, these women.

(Pause)

Wonder where they are. I hope the Hazors haven't taken them. Eugene would be devastated. Come to think of it, if they find me here, I won't stand much chance. Maybe Eugene didn't get through. I had no trouble, but that doesn't mean a thing. Don't fancy going back to find him though. Not until dark anyway. I'll look around.

(He opens the door leading to the yard, goes out for a few seconds and then reappears, slamming the door behind him)

I feel sick. Who the fuck could do something like that? They've been here. We're too late. What else did they do? What about the girl? Is anyone here? Of course not. What's the matter with me?

KOSTYA checks his revolver and runs off in the direction of SONYA's bedroom. Footsteps. EUGENE enters, exhausted.

EUGENE

Anyone in? Hello? It's me, Eugene. Come and get me for god's sake. I need a drink.

KOSTYA reappears, gun in hand.

KOSTYA

Eugene.

EUGENE

You beat me to it. I had a hell of a time getting here. The Hazors were everywhere. We've had it. The house is a ruin too. At least the basement survived. I figured they would move down here. Where is everyone? Aren't they looking after you? What's going on? Put that gun away.

KOSTYA

Let's go Eugene. We can't stay here.

EUGENE

What are you talking about? This is my home. What's left of it. Where's the family?

KOSTYA

They're not here.

EUGENE

They'll be back soon, I've no doubt. The place looks lived in.

KOSTYA

Eugene...I

EUGENE

What the hell's the matter with you?

KOSTYA

Can we just go?

EUGENE

Something's happened. Where's my wife? Tell me where my wife is.

KARL is paralyzed.

EUGENE (cont'd)

Don't stand there gaping. Say something. Have you looked around?

EUGENE makes for SONYA's room.

KOSTYA

Don't Eugene.

EUGENE

What's in there? Let me go.

He rushes out towards SONYA's room. We HEAR a cry of 'SONYA'. Then he reappears onstage.

EUGENE (cont'd)

Where's my wife? Where's my wife?

He follows KOSTYA's gaze towards the yard door, opens it, looks out and then returns.

EUGENE (cont'd)

You found all this?

KOSTYA

Yes.

EUGENE

That's what comes of your fucking stupid ideas about peace and harmony. See what it brings? You think that lot care about humanity? Human rights? What do they know of your ideals? There's only one thing they'll ever understand. Marya. Sonya my little girl. Where's my little girl? That's how I used to call her when I came home from work. Where's my little girl? I remember the first time she answered me. "Here I am daddy," "Here I am Daddy". No you're not sweetheart. Not any more you're not. What am I going to live for. Live? You call this living? You call this life?

KOSTYA

I'm sorry Eugene.

EUGENE

You're sorry. Don't be anything. Nobody needs sorrow. I know what to do.

He rushes off to the bedroom again and returns immediately with Karl's rifle. Then he picks up his own.

EUGENE (cont'd)

These are all I need.

KOSTYA

Where are you going?

EUGENE

I'm going to kill me some Hazors. As many as I can get.

KOSTYA

Don't be a fool. They'll gun you down in no time.

EUGENE

Sure they'll get me in the end. But I'll take a few with me.

KOSTYA

You can't bring your family back.

EUGENE

That's right. So I've nothing to lose. And god will thank me.

KOSTYA

There's no such god.

EUGENE

Then I'll play god for an hour or two.

KOSTYA

You've gone mad.

EUGENE

What's mad? What's sane? Words, Kostya. Just words.

KOSTYA

What about all this? What about your...we have to bury them.

EUGENE

Burn them. Burn everything Kostya. And say a prayer for all of us. I'll never be back here. Neither will you. Burn it all. Burn it. And then go and kill somebody.

EUGENE runs off. KOSTYA goes to the door as if to detain him, but gives up. He looks towards the yard door, then towards the corridor leading to SONYA's bedroom.

He approaches the stove, searches around and finds various items of food which he stuffs into his pockets, and a box of matches. From the top pocket of his own jacket, he retrieves a black armband which he pins to his left arm. He takes an oil lamp from the table and empties the fuel on the sofa bed. Finally, he stands at the entrance door, ready to leave. He takes a match from the box but his hands are shaking. His first attempts to strike a light fail. Finally one bursts into flame. He tosses it into the room and exits rapidly, closing the door behind him. A flash of light. Then darkness.

END