

**THE**

**WINTER**

**WAR**

# **THE WINTER WAR**

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**A Play in Three Acts**

**by**

**Park Teter**

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## Cast of Characters

<u>Arvo</u>	Veteran reserve soldier, Helmi's husband, 50
<u>Matti</u>	A logger and reserve soldier, 20
<u>Vaino</u>	A farmer and reserve soldier, 20
<u>Helmi</u>	Former teacher, Arvo's wife, 45
<u>Laila</u>	Former teacher, 45
<u>Nicholas</u>	Schoolteacher, reserve lieutenant, talented dancer, Toivo's close friend, Katrina's fiancé, 25
<u>Toivo</u>	A cripple, talented violinist, son of Urho, close friend of Nicholas and Katrina, 25
<u>Katrina</u>	Nicholas' fiancée, Toivo's close friend, 25
<u>Eino</u>	Schoolboy, 12
<u>Tolonen</u>	Lutheran pastor, 45
<u>Urho</u>	Toivo's father, killed fighting for Reds in 1918 Finnish civil war
<u>Mother of Toivo</u> (unnamed)	Left when Toivo was born and not seen since
<u>Dancers</u>	
<u>Schoolchildren</u>	
<u>Finnish soldiers</u>	
<u>Russian soldiers</u>	

# PRELUDE

*At the end of November, 1939, Finland has rejected territorial demands made by the Soviet Union, and lives in fear of impending war, alone, against its giant neighbor. The play opens near a Finnish village on a winter night, with a dust of snow drifting over snow. An old two-story farmhouse, with an upstairs window in a gable, looms in the dark at the back of the stage.*

*KATRINA enters on skis. She stops.*

KATRINA: Snow blowing over snow. Are we no more than this? Tiny, fragile, brief, and innumerable, scurrying across the night, hurrying from nowhere to nowhere . . . what's the difference between a snowflake and a soul?

What does it matter if our boys' blood spills red in all this white? Warm blood will, in minutes, freeze.

And will, in a few months, melt again.

Blood and snow together will in April water the fields and forests of Finland, and then all will be green again. But what if Nicholas is not here in the Spring? What if Nicholas is not here watching the geese alight on the lake, inhaling the fumes of fresh-plowed earth, plucking violets to arrange in my hair? What if Nicholas in the Spring is . . . NOT!

A million Aprils will never thaw a world where Nicholas is not.

Yet, whether war comes or not, there was a world before Nicholas, and there will be a world after Nicholas. The stupidity . . . the stupidity of it all! What lunatic, what criminal lunatic, created a world where a Nicholas, like a snowflake, appears and disappears?

Is that why men fight wars? Do they kill each other because they can't kill God?

*(Katrina scoops up a handful of snow and kisses it. Then with a finger she scrapes a flake from her lip. She speaks to it.)*

Linger, Nicholas, linger. There have been enough wars. One more will accomplish nothing. The snow will come, the snow will go, and all the blood of all the boys of all the nations of all the ages will not change that. Don't spurt your blood into a drift of snow. I'm warm, Nicholas. I'm warm. Die in me.

There is no other victory. We'll win, we'll win, we'll win, we'll win with one kiss, my brave boy, with one embrace, one thrust of you into me . . . .

*(In the upstairs window of the farmhouse a match is struck. A candle is lit. KATRINA, startled, looks up. A violin begins to play a Finnish waltz in a minor key, Mandschurian Kukkulooilla ("The Hills of Manchuria"). This tune is hereafter referred to as the "Theme Waltz.")*

KATRINA: Toivo! So you can't sleep either.

*(KATRINA listens. Then she unfastens her skis and begins to waltz in the snow. Suddenly she stops.)*

Oh, Toivo. Can you, with your music, drive war away?

Can you stop guns and tanks and planes with your violin? Can your fiddle drive back an army?  
Can you melt the ice in warriors' hearts? Can you make killers dance?

Mad Toivo, you can. Magical Toivo, you can.

You could make the dead dance.

*(A whirlwind stirs the snow into a column that sways as if dancing. KATRINA is startled, then delighted. She waltzes with the snow, keeping enough distance to avoid disturbing the wind. The whirlwind dances off stage. KATRINA stops to watch it, then turns to TOIVO'S window.)*

I must have known you would play tonight. That must have drawn me here. Did you call me here?  
Silly boy, did you call me from my sleep?

Or am I dreaming?

Play, Toivo. Play!

*(KATRINA waltzes in the snow as the curtain closes. Then the music fades.)*

# ACT I

*The interior of a one-room country school. Double doors at rear center stage; windows on each side of doors. Single doors right and left, front stage. Left rear, a large, old-fashioned woodstove. Right rear, a small stage with curtains pulled back.*

*MATTI and VAINO enter, carrying firewood. MATTI builds a fire in the woodstove. VAINO stacks folding chairs, then begins to sweep.*

MATTI: Ya know, Vaino, the savages in America used to dance before they went to war. Does that make us savages?

VAINO: We're not sure there'll be a war.

MATTI: The Russkies mean business. It could start tomorrow. Unless God answers your prayers.

VAINO: God is testing Finland.

MATTI: A test! Is that why we're back in school?

The army takes over the dance hall, so we dance in the school. Do you suppose there's a lesson in that?

VAINO: A lesson?

MATTI: It takes me back to schooldays. *(Pauses, remembering)* What are we doin' here, Vaino. How come we're back in school? I'm about to start killin', and here I am back in school. Like I'm a child again.

VAINO: Maybe that's the lesson — that we're all children. All God's children.

MATTI: The Russians, too? Are the Russians God's children?

VAINO: The Russians have rejected God.

MATTI: Are you sure it's not the other way around? Yeah, I think it's the other way around. God rejected our big brother Russia when he saw beautiful little Finland. So big brother Russky's gonna beat the shit outta little brother Finn. Tell me, Vaino, does God love Finland more than Russia?

*(VAINO, accustomed to being baited by his friend, ostentatiously ignores the good-natured provocation. MATTI takes a new tack.)*

There are so many Russians, and Finland is so small. Where will we ever bury them all?

VAINO: We'll stack 'em like cordwood.

MATTI: They'll be thick as forest trees.

VAINO: And we'll be as clever as forest mice. We're small, but we're at home in the forest.

MATTI: Mice? We'll be lice.

VAINO: Lice?

MATTI: Right! We'll sneak through the forest like lice in a hairy armpit. We'll drive 'em crazy.

*(MATTI digs into his armpit and pulls out an imaginary louse and addresses it.)*

Wouldn't that be bliss, Little Soldier — to dwell in a Russky armpit? *(sighs)* All my life I've dreamed of being a louse in a Russian armpit.

VAINO: Better than a slave in a Russian labor camp.

MATTI: If only we had weapons.

VAINO: The battalion got a shipment of rifles this morning.

MATTI: Rifles! Against tanks and planes! Pop! Pop! Pop! Ping! We might as well use snowballs.

VAINO: That's what Toivo said.

MATTI: Yeah. But Toivo meant it.

VAINO: Toivo's crazy.

MATTI: Maybe. But thanks to Toivo we're having a dance tonight. Think of it, Vaino. Tomorrow we'll dance to Russian artillery, and tonight we'll hop to Toivo's fiddle.

VAINO: It wasn't just Toivo. Nicholas, too.

MATTI: The whole Russian army couldn't keep Nikko from dancin'. Ya know, I've seen him dancin' alone in the woods in a blizzard. Leapin' like a deer. You'd think all those swirling snowflakes was his corpse (*sic*) da ballet. He shoulda gone to the ballet.

VAINO: I'm glad he'll be leading our platoon.

MATTI: I'm glad he insisted on this dance. Nikko and Toivo. What a pair. And Trina. If I had a woman like Trina, I'd never stop dancin'!

*(With a look of rapture, MATTI spins waltz steps with an imaginary TRINA.)*

VAINO: Pastor Tolonen was furious. He wanted to call a prayer meeting.

MATTI: Pastor Tolonen thinks God is our ally.

VAINO: Don't you?

MATTI: I'll take any help we can get. God. The Devil. Hitler. The English. Even the Swedes. But this (*MATTI takes a vodka bottle from the pocket of a coat on a peg. He raises the bottle.*) ya know, is the only ally I trust. (*Takes a taste*) Hey, Vaino, remember when Toivo lit those firecrackers in his coat pocket? It was hanging right here.

VAINO: Teacher nearly shit her pants.

MATTI: We'll all shit our pants when those tanks start popping their fireworks. Here.

*(MATTI offers the bottle to VAINO, who shakes his head. MATTI takes a gulp.)*

Whah! That would stop a tank.

*(MATTI takes another swig, screws on bottle top, then imitates a drunk, staggering and shaking the bottle at an imaginary enemy.)*

Come on you Rushkie bastards. No one can shtop a drunken Finn!

VAINO: Sure. We'll throw our empty bottles at the tanks.

MATTI: Like christening a ship. If only we had champagne. We could pop champagne corks at the tanks. That'd stop 'em for sure. If you was a Russky tank driver and you saw a Finn hop out from behind a tree to spray champagne at you, wouldn't you stop in your tracks? (*MATTI imitates a soldier shooting champagne.*) Do you think the French will send champagne?

VAINO: If we can hold out for a month, other countries will send help.

MATTI: Other countries? They'll supply us with words. Whole armies of words.

VAINO: They'll know that we're fighting for freedom. Not just Finland's freedom. Freedom itself.

MATTI: That's exactly what they'll say. And, ya know, they'll say we're heroes. Little Brother Finland fighting Big Brother Russia. While all the world cheers. The world needs heroes, Vaino, and Finland is going to supply them.

*(MATTI slumps into the last unstacked chair.)*

Look at us. You and me. A farmer and a logger. Sneaking through the woods on our skis hunting Russian peasants, you and I are going to make headlines in Berlin, London, New York, Tokyo, Timbuktu . . . .

VAINO: *(Finally losing his temper)* If that's the way you feel, dammit, then why are you going to fight?

MATTI: You know damn well why I'm going to fight. If there ever was a just war, this is it. *(Pause)* But I'd rather dance!

*(MATTI jumps up and does a few schottische steps with an imaginary girl, whom he kisses.)*

I'd rather dance than be a hero.

*(HELMI, followed by LAILA, has entered from the double doors in the midst of VAINO's outburst, to which she listens with hands on hips. Both women are middle-aged. HELMI is hefty; LAILA is slender, an aging beauty. A folded Finnish flag is draped over HELMI's shoulder.)*

HELMI: When are you two heroes going to sweep the floor? The children's party starts at four, and you two --

*(HELMI marches to MATTI and sniffs his breath.)*

oooff!

*(HELMI turns to LAILA)*

Laila, open a window, before we go up in flames.

*(VAINO takes the flag from HELMI's shoulder)*

VAINO: Let me hang this.

*(HELMI snatches flag back, and snatches broom with which MATTI has begun to sweep.)*

HELMI: Beat it. We'll finish up here. You two need your beauty sleep before the dance.

*(HELMI waves broom at MATTI and VAINO with mock ferocity. MATTI turns as he scurries out behind VAINO.)*

MATTI: No wonder we don't fear the Russians!

*(HELMI stands on a chair to hang the flag on the left rear wall. LAILA sets up a step ladder and starts hanging blue and white paper streamers.)*

LAILA: *(To herself)* Tonight it's streamers. Tomorrow, bandages.

*(LAILA wraps a white streamer like a bandage around her forehead. Then pulls it down over her eyes.)*

And always, always, the blindfold.

HELMI: *(gaily)* Did you see the snowball fight?

LAILA: Snowball fight?

HELMI: After school. The girls ambushed the boys. Katrina organized them.

LAILA: And Nicholas, where was he? Where, in the midst of battle, was our dancer?

HELMI: The first victim. Trina pounced on him from behind, and stuffed a mittenful of snow down his neck.

LAILA: Think of it, Helmi. These are our schoolteachers. If only all teachers were like Katrina and Nicholas. When I was a teacher I was too prim and proper to play like that.

HELMI: Bullshit! You just wish you were the one to jump Nicholas.

LAILA: Not to stuff snowballs down his shirt!

HELMI: Not you. You'd stuff his snowballs in your mitten!

LAILA: I'd melt his icicle.

*(LAILA adopts a dreamy, distant look. She sighs. Starts down the ladder, then pauses halfway.)*

Not Nicholas, anyway. Toivo.

HELMI: Toivo! I nearly forgot the best part. In the midst of the battle Toivo appeared from behind the church with an army of the littlest brats, all on skis. They swooped down the hill,

dumped snow on the big kids — boys and girls — and sped away with Toivo in the lead, whooping like a red Indian.

LAILA: He really is a miracle. Think of it! A cripple who can ski like the devil.

HELMI: The devil himself, that's Toivo!

LAILA: He'd organize a snowball fight in Hell. (*LAILA likes the image.*) Yes, I can see it. Can't you? Toivo handing out snowballs to all the little devils in Hell.

HELMI: Ah, well. Soon it will be Hell. And it won't be snowballs.

LAILA: No, Helmi, it won't be snowballs. If only it could be. Imagine a world where Russian lads and Finnish lads met in the wood for a snowball fight.

HELMI: Hey, don't leave out the girls! I'd fix some of those Russkies.

LAILA: The whole left flank!

HELMI: Flank, Hell! I'd envelop the center. (*HELMI slaps her thighs.*) What they call a "pincer maneuver." (*HELMI clamps her thighs together.*)

AH!

(*LAILA gets down from the step ladder, folds it, carries it to the wall, slumps down the wall to sit on the floor, puts her head in her hands.*)

LAILA: Oh, Helmi, they're just children. Poor boys. (*LAILA starts to cry.*) At least Toivo doesn't have to go.

HELMI: But he is going. Didn't you know?

LAILA: Toivo's going? But . . . But . . .

HELMI: As a stretcher bearer. He arranged it with Colonel Lahti. He's been learning first aid. He even has a mannequin to practice on.

LAILA: I don't believe it. No. I can't even imagine it. Toivo hates war. Hates war! You know he has never forgiven his father for . . .

HELMI: His father was a hero. Urho was a hero.

LAILA: Urho was a hero who left a motherless boy to --

HELMI: Urho wanted a better world. A better world than the miserable one he knew. A better world for his boy, for all boys, for all children. You, you of all people, Laila, know that.

LAILA: So Urho fought with the Reds. He left little Toivo so his crippled, motherless child could grow up in a Socialist paradise. Crazy dreamer. They were all crazy dreamers pursuing visions of paradise. Half of them drunk on vodka and the other half drunk on utopia. Urho and his Bolshevik buddies. And look what the Bolsheviks did where they did win. Thanks to Reds like Urho, all Russia is a prison. And now Stalin wants little Finland, too. It's your damned heroes who make the world not better, but bitter. Bitter, bitter, bitter . . .

*(HELMI goes to LAILA and puts her arm around her.)*

HELMI: Laila, Laila. You're still, after so many years, bitter.

LAILA: Oh, Helmi, Urho was my better world. He was my whole world. He was my dream, my utopia. And I meant nothing to him.

HELMI: You were his dearest friend.

LAILA: Who wants a goddam friend! *(LAILA sobs.)* We could have been insanely happy. The stupid idiot. He married a clump of yellow curls. And what did she give him? A crippled baby. Then she ran away. She ran away!!

HELMI: She wasn't strong. But she gave him Toivo. Gave all of us Toivo. We've all raised him together. He belongs to all of us. *(HELMI gestures at the decorated room.)* Who but Toivo would insist on a children's party and a dance on the eve of war? Get all us grim Finns hopping! He must have gypsy blood.

LAILA: And now Toivo, too, is going to war. As a stretcher bearer. Think of it! A cripple will carry home cripples! Not on a stretcher. On a sled. Is that why Arvo made him his special ski boot and so patiently taught him to ski? So he could pull his crippled friends home on a sled? Can you picture it?

I can still picture Toivo pulling Katrina to school on a sled, trotting on all fours, barking like a malamute. Do you remember? And now he'll pull --

HELMI: The world's always been insane, Laila. There's no way to change that.

LAILA: Yes there is. THERE IS! Dance. If only we never stop dancing, there'll be no time for war. Toivo knows that. Toivo and Nicholas. If only every soldier would play like Toivo or dance like Nicholas.

*(LAILA stands up and takes HELMI in her arms, hums a waltz, and they dance . . . . NICHOLAS, in a bear costume, bursts through a side door, seizes HELMI from behind and pins her arms.)*

NICHOLAS: At last I've got you!

*(TOIVO bursts through the double doors in a bear costume, holding a violin like a tommy gun aimed at the ladies.)*

TOIVO: Nobody move! *(TOIVO searches the room as if for hiding men.)* All right, you two, take off your clothes.

*(LAILA starts a slow, seductive, mock strip-tease, dropping a shoe, then a handkerchief . . . . HELMI breaks free from NICHOLAS, seizes a poker beside the stove, brandishes it at NICHOLAS)*

HELMI: Naughty Bear! Come here and dance with me, or I'll give you a spanking you won't forget.

*(ARVO, a hearty 55-year-old man, enters from the other side door, carrying an accordion case.)*

ARVO: Hah! You two puppies after my women again?

NICHOLAS: Women? You have TWO women?

ARVO: You think this frail kitten *(ARVO points at hefty HELMI)* is enough woman for me?

HELMI: Woman enough for an old fart like you, this pair of teddy bears, and the Third Battalion.

LAILA: Come on, Arvo, give us a tune.

ARVO: That's why I'm here with my magic machine, *(ARVO pats his accordion case)* to make you go 'round and 'round.

*(ARVO takes the accordion from its case, starts a lively waltz. TOIVO puts his violin on the stage and dances, clumsily, with LAILA. HELMI grabs, and dances with, NICHOLAS. KATRINA enters from double doors, struggling with a puppet stage.)*

KATRINA: Hey, you clowns. You can dance tonight. We've got to get ready for the children's party.

*(NICHOLAS, TOIVO, and ARVO carry the puppet stage and put it down in front of the classroom stage.)*

KATRINA: No, put it on the stage. That way Nikko and I can stand behind the curtains while we work the puppets.

TOIVO: And where shall we stand for whom the world is a stage?

KATRINA: On your head, silly bear.

*(TOIVO tries a headstand, and topples with exaggerated clumsiness. He shakes his paw at KATRINA)*

TOIVO: Now I know. The world is upside down. Oh, woe that ever I was born to set it right.

KATRINA: I thought you were Shakespeare, Toivo. Now you're Hamlet.

TOIVO: Author, Actor, Audience . . . and now --

*(TOIVO reaches for his violin and bow, flourishes his bow like a magic wand at each of the others)*

and now, director.

*(Still lying on his back, thumping a hind paw, TOIVO plays and sings:)*

Dance, dance, wherever you may be,

I am the lord of the dance said he.

And I'll lead you all, wherever you may be,

I will lead you all in the dance, said he.

*(The others do not dance. LAILA goes to stare out the window, with her back to the audience, takes out a handkerchief, and wipes her eyes. ARVO watches LAILA. HELMI tries to dance with NICHOLAS, but he guides her to the puppet stage, which they lift from the floor to the classroom stage. KATRINA laughs at TOIVO, but then looks sad, then turns away.)*

*(TOIVO struggles to his feet, then pulls off the bear head.)*

TOIVO: Phew, it's warm work, being a brute.

KATRINA: Better a brute than a hunter.

TOIVO: Ah, so you like my puppet play?

KATRINA: I love it. The children will, too.

*(LAILA turns from the window, trying to smile.)*

LAILA: What nonsense did you write this year, Toivo?

TOIVO: Nonsense? I only write the truth.

KATRINA: The truth is the greatest nonsense.

TOIVO: It's the truth, all right. The hero is a skunk!

HELMI: What's a "skonk?"

TOIVO: It's a wild animal that lives in the forest in North America. A skunk is a mammal about the size of a housecat, has black fur with a white stripe down its back, and a bushy tail. When it is attacked, it lifts its tail and sprays an overpowering stink.

ARVO: The children won't know what a skunk is.

KATRINA: The play explains. Toivo even concocted an evil-smelling spray that the skunk aims at the audience. The puppet has a perfume-sprayer under its tail. The kids will go wild!

ARVO: Hey, let's use it on the Russkies.

KATRINA: The skunk saves a doe and a fawn from a hunter. The hunter kills the stag and then pursues the stag's wife and child and is about to kill them when the skunk lifts his tail and . . . .  
*(KATRINA holds her nose)* Phew! Wait till you smell it!

NICHOLAS: The skunk is in love with the doe, but the doe, well, she is grateful to the skunk for rescuing her and saving her child. The doe thinks the skunk is brave and beautiful and kind, but you see . . . she can't . . .

TOIVO: The doe's delicate snout rules her frail heart.

HELMI: Does the stinking skonk finally win the doe?

ARVO: Never mind who wins. The children will lose if we don't let these two rehearse their lines. Come on, we'll all hear the story from the children after the play.

*(ARVO, who knows that NICHOLAS and KATRINA want to be alone, herds the others out the double doors, and closes them as he goes out.)*

KATRINA: It's Toivo's funniest play yet. But you know, Nikko, it's sad, too. It's so sad it makes me want to cry. The poor skunk . . .

NICHOLAS: We're all sad now, Trina. Everything makes me want to cry. I can't forget for five minutes.

*(KATRINA glides into NICHOLAS' arms.)*

KATRINA: Six minutes, maybe?

*(KATRINA and NICHOLAS kiss.)*

NICHOLAS: Not now, Trina. The children will be here soon.

KATRINA: We have an hour.

NICHOLAS: You know we have to rehearse.

KATRINA: All my life has been a rehearsal for right now.

*(KATRINA drags NICHOLAS onto the schoolroom stage and draws the curtains behind them. The lights dim until the stage is dark.)*

*A spotlight gradually illumines TOIVO, downstage left, in the forest, sitting on a stump.*

*TOIVO is tuning his violin. He tests it, then plays a few bars of the THEME WALTZ (The Hills of Manchuria). He stops, holds his violin at arm's length, studies it, addresses it.*

TOIVO: Why can't I love you more than a woman? Your voice is sweeter. Your skin is smoother. Your curves are . . . your curves . . .

What's in a curve? Why should a curve — a curve! — drive me wild?

Not this curve, *(TOIVO caresses the edge of his violin.)* you ignorant slab of wood. The curve of Katrina's thigh.

Oh, God, if I could once do this to her thigh! *(TOIVO strokes the violin with a slow, feather touch.)* Just once. I'd die.

Why? What idiocy? Why is meat better than wood? You, wooden wench, are centuries old and still beautiful. And the Italian meat that made you, where is it now? And where will Trina's meat be tomorrow? That thigh will slacken, sag, shrivel, rot, and you *(TOIVO shakes the violin)* you, my heartless whore, shuddering in the hands of strangers, will keep your lovely shape.

Shape. *(To violin)* I'll show you shape.

*(TOIVO unties and takes off the boot and sock of his deformed foot.)*

Here, whore, kiss my foot.

*(TOIVO tips the violin to his foot for a kiss.)*

Nothing wrong with that shape, is there? Here, look at this.

*(He takes off his other boot and sock.)*

Is this more beautiful?

*(TOIVO pulls his normal foot toward his face, imitating a baby; he wiggles his toes, plays with his toes.)*

Why, if every other foot were like this one,

*(He grabs and shakes his deformed foot, then addresses the normal foot.)*

you, you five-toed freak, would be ugly. Five toes! What could be more ridiculous!

Is beauty in the eye of the beholder? Then ugliness is in the eye of the beloved.

To love and be ugly. That is hell.

And so I fiddle in Hell.

*(With an exaggerated expression of rapture, TOIVO plays his deformed foot with the bow as if the foot were a violin. He switches to his violin and plays a theme from the first movement of Brahms' violin concerto.)*

I'll put out Hell's fires with angels' tears.

*(More Brahms)*

Of course she loves Nicholas. Don't I love him too? There's no better man in Finland. And, to me, he's more than a brother. Dear, Dear Nicholas . . .

But he's not crazy. Trina, Trina, he's not crazy. How can you, my crazy Trina, love a man who is merely strong, beautiful, kind, brave, graceful, generous, loving . . . but not crazy?

Only I am as mad as you. Only you are as mad as I.

All other women are dull, dull, dull, dull, dull.

*(He seizes the violin and plays a discordant theme from Stravinsky's Petrouchka.)*

There's a caged hawk staring out through your eyes, and only this crippled fiddler can see it. Oh, if my hands could open your cage, how you'd soar.

*(Plays theme from Chaconne of Bach's partita No. 2 for solo violin)*

Oh, I could make you soar. Soar, swoop, glide, plummet, rise, soar! I could kiss your trembling throat (kisses throat of violin) . . . I could stroke your silk hair (strokes violin strings) . . . I could make your legs thrash (shakes violin) . . . I could . . . .

Oh . . . Is it now? . . . Now? Trina, are you thrashing, now, in ecstasy, in ecstasy . . . . Are you crying out . . . . Are you, are you . . . Lost? (TOIVO breaks down, shaking with sobs.)

*(Lights fade on TOIVO as light gradually resumes in classroom. KATRINA emerges between curtains, pinning up her hair. She stops to listen. NICHOLAS steps between the curtains. KATRINA touches his arm.)*

KATRINA: Listen. *(Faintly, the Theme Waltz is heard.)* Do you hear it?

NICHOLAS: *(Listens, then smiles sadly)* He's out by the old pine.

KATRINA: So far? We couldn't hear him from that far.

NICHOLAS: That's where he is. I know.

KATRINA: He is playing, then, with all his heart. *(She listens.)* Nicholas, it's as if he's calling out. It's as if he's . . . .

NICHOLAS: Did you hear that? The children are coming. Hurry!

*(NICHOLAS turns on a spotlight that illumines the puppet stage, then he and KATRINA slip behind the curtains of the classroom stage. The children, herded by HELMI, LAILA AND ARVO, pour into the room and, after some restless scurrying, settle on the floor in front of the puppet stage.)*

NICHOLAS: *(From behind the curtains)* Hah! Hah! Hah! There's not a greater hunter in all the forest, and today I will track down the great white stag . . .

*(Light fades on classroom, spotlight resumes on TOIVO.)*

TOIVO: A stage upon a stage upon a stage. The puppets speak, but the voices are Nicholas and Trina. Their voices are only voices, the words are mine. And my words are only words, the feelings are . . . the feelings are the writ of . . .

*(TOIVO looks up and shakes the violin at God.)*

Oh, you bastard, if I could climb these puppet strings I'd bite the hand that dandles me. I'd bite you so you'd never play with puppets again.

I'd sink my teeth in your wrist until you scream for mercy. No, I'd not stop there. I'd break your beautiful legs. I'd gouge your gloating eyes. I'd tear off your deaf ears. I'd rip out your lying tongue. Then I'd drag you down to earth to limp, back and forth, back and forth, in a cage.

A cage on wheels. You'd be my circus freak. Like a caged beast cowering before a showman's whip, you'd tremble at my fiddle bow. And I would drag your cage from city to city and village to village until every cripple in the world has spit on you.

Every cripple. And who is not a cripple?

I'm the lucky one. It is only my body that is crippled. Think, bastard, of all the crippled souls, all the stooped, bent, hunched, dwarfs that bow and kneel to you, think of all the crippled souls that worship their torturer!

I'd bring them to their feet. They'd rise up to watch you limp and grimace and pace your cage and shake your bars and rattle your chains . . . while I fiddle.

I'd make you dance. I'd make you smile. I'd make you bow to the mob. I'd make you kneel. I'd make you pray. I'd make you pray for forgiveness. I'd make you give thanks. Thanks for the crumbs thrown to you. Thanks for the spittle in your eye.

Then, then, I'd weep for you, poor cripple.

No, not yet. There's one torture more. You must love and not be loved. And when you, miserable cripple, see me with your love in my arms, then I will lend you my fiddle. Then you shall play for us. (*Shakes his violin at God*) Play, you ape, play! Play, you damned cripple, you miserable damned cripple.

Oh, yes, you are the crippledest cripple of us all. Though I cannot hold Katrina, yet I can love her. But you . . . you can't even imagine, you can't even imagine her thighs squeezing . . . squeezing juice you don't have from meat you lack.

To have no body at all. No body . . . the ultimate cripple! Oh, cripple, is that why you make me play? As Nicholas holds her for me, must I sing to her for you?

(*TOIVO plays measures from Theme Waltz.*)

Every tune I play is a call to her. Every note I play is a cry to her.

Is it a cry from you? (*Listens to God*) You are silent.

And so am I. I can never tell her. I can never tell anyone. No one knows, no one will ever know, how I love Trina.

If she knew how I love her, she could never be with me without feeling sad because she cannot return my love. Since she could never love me as I love her, it would hurt her to know how I love her.

And so I show my love by not showing my love.

I say it in every tune I ever play, but never in words.

And that silence, that silence, is my greatest symphony, the discord and harmony of my absolute love.

(Theme Waltz in background. Music and light fade.)

**End of Act I**

# ACT II

*The Schoolroom. HELMI, LAILA, and KATRINA are cleaning up dishes and silverware from the children's party, straightening flowers, stretching sagging streamers.*

HELMY: Somebody forgot his mittens.

KATRINA: Those are Eino's. I'll drop them at his house on my way home.

LAILA: *(Slumps onto the edge of the school's stage. To KATRINA:)* It's only yesterday that Helmi and I were teaching our brave soldiers here. Just as you and Nicholas are teaching the little children now. And those big children going to war — they're still only children — were here, learning to spell, to add, to subtract, to find Manchuria on a map . . . and forgetting their mittens.

HELMY: *(Pulls down a world map over the blackboard.)* Nicholas. *(She beckons to an imaginary pupil.)* Nicholas, come show the class where Manchuria is. Nicholas! What is that in your pocket? EEEE! A snake! Nicholas!

LAILA: That was Toivo's idea. And the grasshoppers. Do you remember the plague of grasshoppers?

KATRINA: That was my idea. I caught them and filled the jar and put it in the closet. Then Toivo let them loose. You made Toivo and Nicholas stay after school. You never knew who was the head of the mafia.

HELMY: Of course we knew. Those boys were your slaves.

LAILA: They still are.

KATRINA: If Nicholas were my slave, he wouldn't go to war.

HELMY: No. The three of you would run away to Manchuria.

KATRINA: War is the real running away. War is the real cowardice.

HELMY: You sound like Toivo.

KATRINA: Toivo's right.

HELMI: Then why is Toivo going to war?

KATRINA: (*Shocked, confused.*) What do you mean? Toivo's no soldier.

LAILA: He's going as a stretcher bearer. "I'm going to keep Nicholas from doing anything stupid." That's what Toivo says.

KATRINA: (*Horried*) When did Toivo say that?

LAILA: When we left you and Nicholas to rehearse the puppet show. I tried to persuade Toivo not to go to the front. That was his answer. "Nicholas can't help being brave," he said. "So he needs a coward like me to keep him out of trouble."

HELMI: Toivo keep Nicholas out of trouble? There's a switch!

LAILA: This time, Helmi, it's big trouble. Too big for our brave little boys. Can you see our little boys playing with real guns?

KATRINA: (*To HELMI*) Toivo said that?

LAILA: He said he was going to make sure Nicholas comes back in one piece.

KATRINA: In one piece.

LAILA: Toivo said that he made Major Lahti promise he could stay with Nicholas' platoon. He said Lahti owes him a favor.

KATRINA: More likely he got Lahti drunk.

HELMI: Toivo always finds a way to get what he wants.

KATRINA: Always?

(*KATRINA goes to the window and looks out. Without looking back at HELMI and LAILA, she tells them:*)

I can finish up here. You two get ready for the dance.

HELMI: You're right. It will take me an hour to get into my girdle. And it will take Princess Laila here two hours to put on her lipstick. (*HELMI takes LAILA'S arm and goes to the door.*)

LAILA: (*Turns in doorway*) Katrina . . .

(*HELMI, aware that KATRINA needs to be alone, jerks LAILA out the door.*)

KATRINA: (*Turns from the window, toys with a bouquet of paper flowers.*) So, Toivo, you'll bring him back in one piece. Yes, Toivo, make sure he doesn't lose a leg. Make sure he can still dance.

Will you, stretcher bearer, take your violin?

Yes, Toivo, you'll stop bullets with your violin. You'll play so sweetly, the bullets will turn to tears. You'll make the Russian army dance. You'll bring the dead to life. You'll make this war a holiday ball.

A Masquerade Ball. You, fiddler, see through all our masks.

And you, fiddler, behind your mask, who are you?

(*She sings.*) "I am the Lord of the Dance, said he." Yes, little cripple, lead us all, wherever we may be.

Yes, dear friend, yes, you'll bring my Nicholas home to me. "In one piece!" But before you go, Toivo, tell me . . . tell me . . . .

Tell Me? What am I saying? What do I want you to tell me?

You've always told me everything.

Haven't you? How many times you've opened your heart to me. Your father. Your mother. All your orphan's dreams. The woods. The snow. The water lapping at the shore. And now, the war. Everything that stirs your magic soul. Everything that makes your fiddle laugh and weep and rage and soar . . . and soar.

Everything? No. No, there's something more.

(*KATRINA is surprised by a discovery, a slow realization.*)

Something more . . . something you've never put into words. But now . . . I hear it.

I've never heard it before. But it was always there, wasn't it. What is it Toivo, that you hide even from me?

Last night, when I saw the candle in your window and heard you play . . . and today, when I heard you before the puppet show . . . playing by the old pine, Nicholas said . . . I wanted to cry. I felt as if . . . it's crazy, I know, but I felt as if you were calling to me. To me.

(*TOIVO enters. Each is surprised to see the other. They freeze — stare at each other — for a brief moment's shock of awareness. Then, fumbling for composure, they start to speak at the same time:*)

TOIVO: I wanted to practice a bit before the others arrive . . . .

KATRINA: I was just cleaning up after the children, and . . . .

*(TOIVO crosses the room to a desk, where he rummages through sheet music. To KATRINA:)*

TOIVO: I left my music here.

KATRINA: *(To TOIVO)* The children loved your puppet play. *(To herself, as she turns to straighten flowers that really do not need straightening:)* What is wrong with me. Look. *(She hold a flower.)* Look how my hand is shaking.

TOIVO: *(To himself)* Why can't I tell her? What if I never come back? No one will ever know. The world will go on and on and no one will ever know. Not one other soul. Surely I have a right to tell one, one soul. And there is only one to tell. And now, if ever, is the time . . .

KATRINA: *(Accidentally knocks over a vase of flowers; it breaks)* Oh, look how clumsy I am. *(She starts to cry.)*

TOIVO: *(Hastens to pick up the pieces)* It's only a vase, silly.

*(They both pick up the same piece, and stop, and look at each other. TOIVO with a fingertip catches a tear on KATRINA's cheek.)* It's only a vase. I can mend it.

KATRINA: You can mend it, Toivo?

TOIVO: *(Grabs KATRINA'S hand)* Trina, Trina, I . . . I . . . I have to tell you . . . I . . . I . . .

*(NICHOLAS bursts in, ducking snowballs that fly through the door.)*

NICHOLAS: Help! Help! They're after me! *(NICHOLAS turns to TOIVO and KATRINA.)* Hey, Toivo, call off your army. *(NICHOLAS shouts through the door.)* I surrender! *(NICHOLAS slams the door. He turns to KATRINA.)* Well, Trina, did you break the vase on his thick skull? *(To TOIVO:)* Did you deserve it?

*(ARVO enters with his accordion in its case. He recognizes an awkward situation.)*

ARVO: Toivo, *(ARVO puts down his accordion, picks up a chair and puts it on the stage.)* give me a hand. We should warm up before the mob arrives.

*(TOIVO helps ARVO set the stage with chairs and music stands. ARVO starts to play a jitterbug tune.)*

ARVO: Dance, you dummies.

*(ARVO gestures to TOIVO to join him. They play together. NICHOLAS and KATRINA start an awkward jitterbug. A guitarist enters and joins the band. Then a flute player. The drummer arrives, and NICHOLAS breaks off dancing to help him carry in and set up the drums. HELMI enters and watches. The piece ends and ARVO pulls a flask from his hip pocket. He takes a swig and passes it to TOIVO, gesturing for him to pass it to others.)*

ARVO: This music box needs some oil.

HELMI: I'll oil you, you rusty wind-up toy. *(Waves at other musicians)* A waltz!

*(As the band strikes up a lively waltz, HELMI drags ARVO from the stage and starts to dance with him. LAILA enters. She starts to waltz with NICHOLAS. An ugly young man (fat, or too tall, or with a scarred face, or whatever) enters and tries to fade into the wall, but KATRINA takes him in her arms to dance. MATTI, VAINO and others enter and gradually fill the room. When the waltz ends, ARVO calls for a polka. The dance begins. The lights fade, to indicate the passage of time. The band plays a few bars of one dance, and then another, and then another — polka, schottische, waltz, hambo — with brief pauses between them, and the crowd dances, drinks, gossips. All this in shadowy light. Then ARVO calls the band to a halt. Full lights resume.)*

ARVO: And now, ladies and gentlemen, a performance by one of our immortals. He could make Nijinsky look like a galumphing bear. He could have danced with the Bolshoi. But tonight he's here for us. The great Nicholas! *(ARVO waves for the crowd to make an open space. NICHOLAS, grinning, bows.)* And to set him hopping, the violinist who could make Paganini sound like a screeching crow, the virtuoso who could have stunned Vienna, Paris, London, Berlin . . . with his magic violin, the great Toivo! *(ARVO bows to TOIVO, who shakes his violin bow at ARVO.)* What will it be, Toivo? Sleeping beauty?

TOIVO: Stravinsky. From L'Histoire du Soldat. The Story of the Soldier.

*(NICHOLAS puts his arm around TOIVO's shoulder, takes his violin, and plucks its strings.)*

NICHOLAS: *(To TOIVO, while toying with the violin strings:)*

I am your puppet,

These are my strings.

I only dance to give you

Wings.

*(TOIVO plays and NICHOLAS dances. When they finish, ARVO steps forward.)*

ARVO: And now the voice of our angel. The voice that could have silenced Jenny Lind. The voice that could still a storm, melt the Arctic, soothe a savage breast, break a million hearts. The great Katrina!

*(With no modesty, KATRINA jumps onto the stage, grabs the microphone and, with the band playing, belts out the lively Finnish folk-song and dance, Raatikoon. The crowd quickly takes partners and performs the dance. They end with a cheer for KATRINA.)*

KATRINA: And now, Toivo and I have something special.

*(TOIVO is surprised — this had not been planned — but he quickly hides his surprise. Katrina whispers in his ear. TOIVO plays a few bars of Villiruusu ("Wild Rose"), then he is poised. KATRINA sings and he accompanies. TOIVO realizes that KATRINA is replying to what he never said. Tears fall down his cheeks, but he smiles and plays in rapture. At her gesture, he repeats part of the melody solo, then they repeat it together. For a moment, after the song, there is total silence. Before the applause can begin, ARVO, who is aware that something is happening with KATRINA and TOIVO, starts a polka and waves at the crowd to resume dancing. NICHOLAS pulls KATRINA from the stage and they spin into the crowd. TOIVO nods to ARVO and slips out the door. ARVO does not pause in his playing, but his eyes follow TOIVO. Lights dim and the band and dancers again perform a medley. While they dance in dim light and faint music, the spotlight illumines TOIVO under a streetlamp, with snowflakes falling.)*

TOIVO: *(Catches a snowflake in his palm)* How brief. Beautiful crystal. Like no other. Gone. A drop. *(TOIVO licks his palm.)* A bit of spit. *(He spits into the snow.)* And where are you now, snowflake? *(He stirs the snow where he spit.)* Where, beautiful crystal, are you now?

And where, Toivo, will you be tomorrow? Tomorrow is war.

And when is now? Where is now? *(He catches in his palm another snowflake and speaks to it.)* Katrina, beautiful Katrina, sing to me. *(He puts his palm to his ear.)* So brief, your song.

Did I hear it? Did I hear your song?

Oh, yes. Yes. YES!

It's etched into my soul, recorded in my turning heart, and round and round and round I'll go to hear your song again, again, again, forever. It's scratched into forever, a scar on eternity, a tune that will endlessly echo in the spinning black that glints with stars, the circling cosmos that exists, exists, only to record your song. And when the stars go out, stars as brief as these flakes of snow *(He grabs several flakes of falling snow.)* your voice, your throat, your hair, your eyes, will echo still in my . . . will echo still in my . . .

What shall I call it? Heart? Spirit? Soul? Such syllables are trash compared to this . . . this . . .  
(*He reaches for another snowflake and watches it melt in his palm.*) this meat.

(*With his left hand he holds up his right hand to his eyes and gives it a shake.*) Meat. This meat can make music. Whatever or whoever made the infinite stars can not, can not, make music like this meat.

What a funny place for a musician to dwell. In a hut made of meat. A king is at home in his castle, a Lapp is at home in a tent, but what, what on earth, is a Toivo doing in here? (*He points to his own chest. He raps his chest with his fist.*) Knock, knock. Knock, knock. Toivo, are you home?

Oh, Yes. I'm here. I'm here!

Nothing is more amazing. I am.

Nothing is more amazing. This fact (*He pinches his arm.*) this fact . . . It's so amazing that all else fades, like these snowflakes, into nothing. I am.

And she is. She is. Amazing. Amazing. Amazing. There is another. Katrina IS.

(*A wind stirs the falling snowflakes.*)

Dance, snowflakes, dance. (*The wind gusts and the falling snow races away.*)

A storm is coming.

(*The spotlight fades; normal light and sound resume in the school. TOIVO enters, picks up his violin and joins the band in the final bars of a dance.*)

*Suddenly the main doors fly open with a rush of blown snow as Eino, a boy about 12 years old, bursts in and shuts the door behind him. The band and the dancers stop.*)

EINO: It's on the radio. All reserves have to report to their units tomorrow.

(*Stunned silence. Then everyone starts talking at once. Pastor Tolonen enters with more blown snow. He surveys the crowd, which falls silent.*)

TOLONEN: Well, it has come. The tragedy we knew was coming. This is a solemn moment. (*He pauses for the truth to sink in, then continues in a pulpit voice.*) This is a time for loved ones to be close. This is a time for reflection. This is a time for putting our hearths, and our hearts, in order. This is a time for prayer. This is no time to dance.

TOIVO: Go to Hell! Go to Hell, where you belong. Now, now, now, now is the time to dance. More than ever, now is the time to dance.

*(TOIVO starts to play a tango. No one dances. He plays with more intensity. Still no one dances. He lowers his violin, then surveys the crowd.)*

Oh, is that what you are made of? You solemn Finns. You solid soldiers. You'll win the war. You'll slaughter those Russian boys. You'll kill them with your somber faces. You'll freeze them with your pious eyes.

They are Stalin's slaves, but you are the slaves of yourselves. Will no one dance? Will no one dance now?

*(TOIVO starts to play Jää Kukkia ("Ice Flowers"). At first no one moves, but this time TOIVO does not stop. He is playing as passionately as if only his music can halt the advance of war. Finally, KATRINA crosses the floor and takes NICHOLAS by the hand. The crowd draws back as she leads him to the center of the floor and they begin to waltz. TOIVO steps down from the stage to be closer to the two dancers. Then KATRINA slips to the side to let NICHOLAS dance alone. He is inspired to improvise a ballet. His graceful performance gradually becomes desperate; he realizes he is going to be killed in the war. As he turns in his dance, he reaches out to others, finally to KATRINA. As if shot, he collapses to his knees. Then he puts his face in his hands, and weeps. TOIVO hesitates only a moment, then resumes the melody, softly. KATRINA'S and TOIVO'S eyes meet. TOIVO looks at NICHOLAS. KATRINA goes to NICHOLAS. TOIVO finishes the waltz.)*

TOLONEN: *(Solemnly, deliberately spoiling everyone's enchantment)* Let us all pray. Our heavenly Father, in this time of tribulation we . . . *(TOIVO starts a rollicking polka tune on his violin.)* Our heavenly Father *(TOLONEN kneels.)* we kneel before Thee . . .

TOIVO: Yes, kneel, you insect. Kneel, bow, scrape, grovel, crawl, creep . . . .

TOLONEN: *(Raising his voice)* Father, forgive this poor child, he . . .

TOIVO: Forgive! Forgive! I'll forgive you, you miserable bug. You more than anyone are the victim of your God. But forgive God? Forgive God? Never!

Never. Never. Never.

TOLONEN: *(Rises and points his finger at TOIVO)* Silence! Silence, blasphemer!

*(TOIVO, with limping stride, slowly, for emphasis, approaches TOLONEN until, inches away, staring into his eyes, he suddenly thrusts his violin next to TOLONEN'S ear and strikes an ear-splitting screech. TOLONEN grasps his ear and rushes to the side of the room. TOIVO points his bow at TOLONEN.)*

TOIVO: It is you, it is the likes of you, that bring this accursed war. (*TOLONEN gestures to the crowd to take note of TOIVO's madness.*) Yes, you. You and all the priests of all the sacred truths of all the world. All your sacred truths are lies. That's why men kneel to them.

For truth men stand. They only kneel for lies.

Kneel. Kneel to your God.

(*TOLONEN, in an involuntary reflex, bends his knees then recovers, hoping no one notices. The crowd is stunned by TOIVO'S unexpected outburst.*)

TOIVO: No? You won't kneel to your God? Then kneel to me. I'm better than your God. Everyone here is better than your God. Look at Nicholas. Look at Katrina. Look at Arvo, Helmi, Laila . . . all of us. Every one of us is better than your God. Even you, Tolo, even you are better than your . . .

TOLONEN: (*Appeals to the dance crowd*) This must cease! How can you all now — now of all times! — listen to this outrage.

TOIVO: Outrage! (*Softly:*) Outrage. There is an outrage. There is an outrage. It is an outrage that Nicholas shall go to war. It is an outrage that Matti (*He points with his bow.*) shall go to war. It is an outrage that Vaino (*points with bow*) shall go to war. It is an outrage that . . .

VAINO: (*Angrily*) No one wants to go to war, Toivo. We're fighting to defend Finland.

TOIVO: (*Contemptuously*) Finland! And if you lived in Russia, you'd fight to defend Russia. If you live in America, you'd fight to defend America. If you live in Patagonia, you'd fight to defend Patagonia!

MATTI: Do you want to be part of Russia, Toivo? Do you want to kneel to Stalin? Do you want to be tortured in one of Stalin's prisons?

TOIVO: Tortured? Do you know what your pastor wears around his neck? And instrument of torture. And what is on the top of his church? And instrument of torture. What is the worship of the cross? The worship of torture. No wonder Christianity gave birth to a Stalin, a Hitler . . . and war after war after war!

TOLONEN: (*Praying loudly*) In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of . . .

TOIVO: Stalin is the real son of God. (*TOIVO looks around at the crowd, most of whom are now glowering and muttering.*)

DANCERS:

Enough!

You've gone too far, Toivo.

Toivo, shut up!

TOIVO: Oh, you know it's true. Inside, deep inside, you know it's true. But you've been kneeling so long that you've buried the truth. That's why you need a Stalin. You need a nightmare to wake you up. Look at that Russian monster and see, there, the shadow of the Stalin inside you.

VAINO: You can't fight, Toivo, so you don't want anyone else to fight.

MATTI: But we're fighting for you, too, Toivo.

TOIVO: Thank you. Thank you, Matti. Now you thank me. Thank me in advance. I'll bring your carcass back on a sled so your father and mother can weep on your rotting meat. Thank me now, Matti, while you still can.

TOLONEN: (*Emboldened by the crowd's growing anger at TOIVO*) You're nothing but a spoiled brat. A baby full of self-pity, wanting to play God. Nothing but an egotist, an inflated egotist, a balloon full of gas, a broken toy that . . .

TOIVO: A toy! No, it is soldiers that are toys. And the pious and the patriotic that cheer soldiers. All of you are toys. Toys of your inner tyrants that wind you up and set you to dance your mechanical dances. Come, who's alive? Who is real? Who will dance with me?

(*TOIVO puts out his arms, looks from face to face. Finally he looks at KATRINA. She looks away. TOIVO looks down. Then he throws back his head.*)

TOIVO: No one will dance with me? No one? You wind-up toys, you're all, all Stalin's slaves already. Stalin has made you into killers, and you pretend that you defend freedom. Free men don't kill.

There are more free men in Stalin's prisons than in all the armies of the world.

I'll dance alone. (to ARVO:) Arvo, a Russian dance.

(*TOIVO hums a waltz from Petrouchka, and starts to dance. ARVO starts to play the Petrouchka waltz. Softly at first, then with growing force. ARVO steps from the stage to the floor to be near TOIVO, as TOIVO limps his grotesque waltz.*)

TOLONEN: (*Strides to the center of the floor*) Look at them. What a fine pair of prophets! A drunk and a madman. Thank God we have real men to defend freedom.

TOIVO: Freedom! What do you know of freedom? Where, where (*TOIVO turns in a circle, gesturing at the others, then at the distance.*) Where can you find a soul more free than me?

TOLONEN: Me! Me! Me! That's all you can think of! Me! Me!

TOIVO: Me! yes, me. That forbidden word. But it is this "me" who will not kill. No me, no real me, needs to kill.

It is when a man's ME is killed that he becomes a killer.

VAINO: It's not us, Toivo, it's the Russians who are killers.

TOIVO: I don't care if the whole human race are killers. I will not kill. I will not do God's murdering for Him. Because I am free. Because I am I.

TOLONEN: Listen to him! I, I, I, I!

TOIVO: Can't you say "I", Tolo? No, of course not. You're not an I. You're an ant in an anthill. A killer ant.

DANCERS:

Toivo, stop it!

What's wrong with you!

Shut up, Toivo!

TOLONEN: Come, dear friends, let us now go to the church. Let us, on this eve of our great sacrifice, remember the sacrifice of our Savior. Let us enter the house of Almighty God to pray to our heavenly Father for His mercy. Not in our childish arrogance, but in his infinite forgiveness, is our fortress. Let us now in our Father's house beseech . . .

TOIVO: Killer, get out of here. Your killers will meet in your church tomorrow, and you can fill them with death. But this is a place of life. This is a place to dance. The world is a place to dance. TO DANCE!

TOLONEN: You'll dance in Hell, Toivo.

TOIVO: Yes! Yes, I'll dance in Hell. Satan will play the fiddle and I shall dance and dance and dance . . .

TOLONEN: *(To the crowd)* My dear people, how can you listen to this?

TOIVO: Get out! *(TOIVO strides up to TOLONEN, playing ear-splitting discord.)* Out! Out!

*(TOLONEN recoils, holding his ears. ARVO, TOIVO'S ally, opens the door. Snow blows in, and TOIVO drives out the pastor. Then TOIVO turns to the crowd, which is stunned, silent,*

*angry. Everyone watches as TOIVO struggles to calm himself. Finally he succeeds. He speaks softly.)*

TOIVO: If I have wounded anyone, I am sorry. Soon I will be bringing the wounded home. *(He looks at each of the young men.)* I wanted you to dance. While you still could.

KATRINA: *(Starts toward TOIVO)* Toivo . . .

*(But NICHOLAS sweeps past her. TOIVO did not hear KATRINA or see her movement toward him.)*

NICHOLAS: Toivo, you were right. Tonight was a night to dance. But tomorrow, it will be a time to fight. Can't you see that?

TOIVO: See? See? Even you, Nicholas, even you cannot see.

NICHOLAS: I see. *(He looks around the room.)* I see people I love. People for whom I will, if I must, give my life.

TOIVO: I'll give my life. But I will not take someone else's life. I will not kill.

VAINO: Is there nothing for which you would kill?

TOIVO: Nothing.

NICHOLAS: *(Angry)* Nothing? And what if a Russian soldier tried to rape Katrina? You'd do nothing? Well, I'd kill. Yes, I'd kill Russian soldiers to prevent that.

TOIVO: You'd commit murder to prevent a rape. A rape that might — *MIGHT* — happen. Do you see it Nicholas? In your imagination, do you see that rape?

NICHOLAS: I see what Russian soldiers have already done.

TOIVO: Then see yourself, Nicholas. See yourself. You fear that some Russian boy will shove his prick into your girl — *YOUR* — girl, so you'll shove bullets into Russian boys. You'll rape boys with bullets. For Katrina, you'll rape boys. How many? How many Russian boys will you rape, Nicholas? Four, maybe? Forty? Four hundred? Do you know their names? Do you know their parents? Will you collect from the pockets of the boys you rape the photographs of their girl friends?

NICHOLAS: I will kill, if I must, to defend those I love. That's what we're really fighting for. Our women and children. You have no one, but try to imagine someone who does. I cannot do nothing, knowing that Russian soldiers . . . knowing that Katrina . . .

TOIVO: *(With venom)* No one. So I have no one. You *(He looks around the crowd)* have wives, children, parents . . . and I have no one.

*(To Nicholas:)* You have Katrina, and I have no one.

But I tell you, no one loves Katrina as I do. You think you love Katrina, but I tell you no one ever loved, ever loved, as I love Katrina. Does that mean I would kill for Katrina? Kill for Katrina? Is Katrina something to kill for? No. It is because I love that I will not kill. I will not kill because I know what love is. I know what love is because I love Katrina. Because I love Katrina with all my . . . all my . . . *(TOIVO realizes that he has revealed the secret he had vowed never to reveal. He looks around in wild despair.)*

Oh, Damn you all. Damn you all to Hell. *(TOIVO slams his violin to the floor. He looks at it. Then he stomps on it. He grinds it, breaks it with his crippled foot.)*

I'll never play again. I'll never play again.

*(TOIVO stares at his broken violin. Then he picks it up by a broken string. He dangles it like a puppet, making it bob and whirl.)*

TOIVO: *(To the violin)* Dance, Toivo, dance . . . .

*(The Theme Waltz plays, then fades as the lights fade.)*

**END OF ACT II**

# ACT III

## Scene One

*A curtain provides a backdrop of deep forest, deep in snow. The first faint light of day creates a ghostly atmosphere. One by one about 20 ski troops in white camouflage uniforms silently glide across the stage in front of the curtain. (A half-dozen skiers can circle behind the curtain and reappear.) The last two skiers stop. One lights a flashlight, being careful to hide its light with his body from a possible enemy behind him. The other pulls a map from his pocket. They study the map.*

NICHOLAS: *(Pointing to map)* Here we are. Here's the road.

SOLDIER A: We have them surrounded now.

NICHOLAS: If the Third Platoon is in position.

A: We'll soon know.

NICHOLAS: *(Checks his watch)* The next Russian convoy could show up any time now.

A: If only we had a radio.

NICHOLAS: If only we had an anti-tank gun.

A: God damn, it's cold.

NICHOLAS: Must be 30 below.

A: God help the wounded.

*(The sound of small-arms fire is heard offstage. NICHOLAS and A take their rifles from their shoulders. NICHOLAS gestures to A to follow, and they ski offstage. Explosions of artillery shells are then heard. There is a loud scream of agony, followed by moans. Then an offstage voice shouts:)*

Stretcher bearers! Stretcher bearers! Stretcher bearers!

*(The sound of firing fades, and the curtain is raised. The stage setting that was behind the curtain is the inside of a log bunker. Several soldiers are asleep on bunks. MATTI, VAINO and three other soldiers are clustered around a woodstove.)*

MATTI: They're inside my cast. The fuckers are inside my cast! *(He claws futilely at his bandaged arm.)*

VAINO: What's inside your cast?

MATTI: The whole Russian army. *(He plucks a louse from the edge of his cast.)* Got one! *(He holds it up between his thumb and finger.)* Ah! Look how beautiful she is. Look at her dance. And she loves me. Think of it, Vaino! *(With mock rapture)* Oh, how she loves me. And I shed my blood for her.

But tomorrow I'll be gone and she'll find another. The whore. When she finds rapture between the legs of another, will she remember me?

SOLDIER B: Kill her now, Matti, then she'll be faithful unto death.

SOLDIER C: Let her live. She's a hero just like us. She does to us what we do to the Russkies.

MATTI: A soul mate. At last I've found a soul mate! *(To the louse:)* Do you have an immortal soul? Hey, Vaino, do lice have immortal souls?

VAINO: Shut up.

SOLDIER D: Send her soul to heaven, Matti. To lice heaven.

MATTI: That's where she came from. Lice heaven is inside my cast.

SOLDIER B: Then where is human heaven?

C: Inside Nurse Lahtinen's pants.

B: Vaino, where is human heaven?

VAINO: Heaven is everywhere, for those who dwell in the heart of the Lord.

MATTI: This (*He gestures around the bunker.*) is the heart of God?

B: It's God's armpit.

C: Then we must be God's lice.

MATTI: Well, this is MY louse. (*To the louse:*) You're forgiven for your sins, redeemed from a life of iniquity. You fucker, go to heaven. (*He tears the louse into two pieces, and hold each half between the thumb and forefinger of each hand.*) Hah! Now I know how God feels. (*He claws at his cast.*) Damn! His buddies are staging a counter-attack!

C: Try vodka.

MATTI: That's my religion. (*He pours vodka down the top of his cast, then jumps up and screams.*) Jesus! (*He clutches at the cast and hops around.*)

B: You got 'em drunk now, Matti.

D: They're having a drunken brawl.

MATTI: They're having a ball. (*He dances frantic polka steps.*)

C: Pass the bottle, Matti, before you fall and break it.

MATTI: (*He passes the bottle, then digs at the edge of his cast.*) Hah! I've got another. A prisoner!

D: Give him to me. I'll interrogate him.

MATTI: You interrogate him. I'll torture him.

D: (*To the louse:*) What is your unit?

MATTI: (*Pretending to speak for the louse.*) The human race.

D: What are you fighting for?

MATTI: Justice. Freedom. Peace.

C: Kill him.

MATTI: (*He crushes the louse with a fingernail, then holds up the corpse and addresses it.*) Now you are a hero.

B: Give him a medal.

C: Give him a funeral parade.

D: Wrap him in a flag and send him to his mother.

VAINO: I'm sick of this. I'm sick of your cynicism. For two months we've fought the Russians. And we're beating them. Tiny Finland beating giant Russia. Slaughtering them. The whole world is calling us heroes.

B: It's true. I heard on the radio that Uruguay sent a message of support.

MATTI: Uruguay!

B: And some English bigshot compared us to the Spartans at Thermopylae. He said that in Finland it's a Thermopylae every day.

C: What's a Thermopeelay?

D: A hot, sloppy fuck.

VAINO: Thermopylae was a battle in ancient Greece. A platoon of Greeks held off an Asiatic horde. They all died, but they saved Western civilization.

C: Is that the battle where the guy ran the first Marathon?

D: That, idiot, was the battle of Marathon. Didn't you learn anything in school?

MATTI: In school we learned that heroes save civilizations. Right, Vaino?

B: If the Greeks saved civilization, how come we're in this piss?

VAINO: "Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty."

MATTI: For Christ's sake, Vaino, no sermons. We know why we're fighting. And we'll go on fighting. Just don't preach to us.

*(TOIVO enters, but is not noticed by VAINO.)*

VAINO: You should thank God that you are alive.

TOIVO: And should we thank God, Vaino, that Arvo is dead?

MATTI: Toivo! *(Pause)* What did you say? Arvo's dead?

TOIVO: They bombed the supply depot. Arvo was cut in half.

MATTI: Arvo. Ah, my God.

TOIVO: Matti. Listen. Nikko got it in the guts. I've got him on a sled out there.

MATTI: For God's sake, bring him in.

TOIVO: No. I've got to get him to the hospital. As fast as I can. But I need food.

VAINO: Here. *(He reaches under a bunk and pulls out a parcel.)*

MATTI: But Vaino, that's your mother's birthday package. We'll give Toivo . . .

TOIVO: *(He takes the parcel from VAINO.)* Thanks, Vaino. *(He grabs VAINO'S shoulder.)* Thanks. *(TOIVO turns to the others.)* Nikko has a chance, but I have to hurry. Keep warm.

MATTI: I'm going with you. We'll get there faster.

TOIVO: You're needed here. You know that.

MATTI: I'll send Lehto.

TOIVO: You're already too few. And the attack could come tomorrow.

MATTI: Fuck tomorrow. We've got to get Nikko back.

TOIVO: I know, Matti. I'll get him back.

MATTI: Damn you, Toivo, I'm not going to . . .

VAINO: *(Puts his hand on MATTI.)* Toivo's right. Let him go.

MATTI: *(Wrestling with himself. To VAINO:)* You're crazy. *(To everyone:)* You're all crazy. *(He slumps onto a bunk.)*

VAINO: *(As TOIVO goes out the door into the night.)* God go with you.

TOIVO: *(He hesitates, then goes out. A moment later he reopens the door.)* Vaino. Thanks. *(TOIVO searches for words, finally he says to VAINO:)* Good Luck. *(Exits)*

MATTI: Do you think he'll make it?

VAINO: If anyone can, Toivo can.

B: God knows he's been lucky so far. He's always in the piss.

C: Did you see him in that swamp? He pulled out four wounded. It's a miracle those machine guns didn't slice him like salami.

D: Sometimes I think he wants to get himself killed.

MATTI: He wants to live now. He'll get Nikko back if its the last thing he does.

C: It's ten kilometers.

A: He must have done 20 already . . .

MATTI: I should have gone with him. Vaino, why'd you stop me? Why, Vaino?

VAINO: He had to do this alone.

MATTI: Why, for Christ's sake? What made you think he could do it alone?

VAINO: He has faith.

MATTI: Faith? Is my hearing fucked up? You, Vaino, are telling me that Toivo has faith!

VAINO: More faith than all of us.

MATTI: Faith in the Devil!

**Close Curtain**

**End of Scene One**

## Scene Two

*The curtain reopens in a small open space in the forest, an opening the size of the stage, which is ringed in white birches. Snow is drifted against the tree trunks and almost hides 10 frozen bodies of Russian soldiers in white camouflage uniforms. A wind is sighing in the branches. TOIVO, on skis, enters right, pulling NICHOLAS, wounded and wrapped in a blanket, on a sled. The sound of artillery is heard from the left. TOIVO stops and listens.*

TOIVO: Hear that? We're cut off.

NICHOLAS: We can try north of the lake.

TOIVO: Yes, but not until dark. *(He takes off his pack, leaning it against a tree.)* Not until dark.

NICHOLAS: If we don't keep going, we'll freeze.

TOIVO: My exercise wouldn't keep you warm.

NICHOLAS: If you freeze, neither of us will get back.

TOIVO: You're freezing already, aren't you. Damn you, why did you say nothing.

NICHOLAS: What did you want me to say?

TOIVO: Your feet. Is it your feet? *(TOIVO starts to take off his parka.)* You should have told me.

NICHOLAS: Don't be an idiot. Without your parka, you'll freeze in no time.

TOIVO: No. I'm getting into the blanket with you. While we wait for dark, we'll keep each other warm. But first I'm going to wrap your feet in my parka. It is your feet, isn't it?

NICHOLAS: Keep each other warm. Toivo, all our lives we've kept each other warm.

TOIVO: First, I've got to rub your feet. Try to get some circulation. *(TOIVO starts to unwrap the blanket. Then he notices a dead soldier almost buried in the snow.)* Ah! What's that? A dead Russkie. *(He kicks snow off a corpse. He kicks the corpse.)* Stiff as a log. *(He brushes off more snow.)* Well, Ivan, you won't need these warm clothes in Hell. *(He starts to fumble with the parka.)* Hey! Here's another. *(He looks around and sees the other nine half-buried*

*corpses.*) A whole squad of them. No need to freeze now, Nikko. We'll wrap ourselves in raiment from the Workers' Paradise. *(He takes off his mittens to unbutton the corpse's parka, but has difficulty. He turns to NICHOLAS.)* You still got your bayonet?

NICHOLAS: *(He tries to sit up. Moans. Lies down.)* On my left side.

TOIVO: *(He lifts the blanket and pulls a bayonet from its sheath. He holds it up and looks at it.)* Look at this prick. Just the thing for a strip-tease. Can't you see it? The pretty thing bumps and grinds around the stage, cutting off her clothes with a bayonet. *(He does a limping dance in the snow, flourishing the bayonet, as he pretends to cut off a blouse, a garter, a brazier, panties . . .)*

NICHOLAS: Toivo, for once in your life! We're not on stage.

TOIVO: Not on stage? You're losing your mind.

NICHOLAS: I'll lose my foot, if you don't hurry.

TOIVO: To work, knife. You were made to butcher. But now you will tailor.

*(TOIVO slices a parka up the front, then rolls the corpse over and yanks off the parka. He does the same thing with two other corpses. He piles the parkas on Nicholas, but leaves one foot uncovered. He pulls the blanket off that foot, then takes off the boot and socks and starts to rub the bare foot.)*

NICHOLAS: Toivo. Toivo. You've got to listen to me.

TOIVO: Forget it. I don't want to hear more of your nonsense. I've told you, you'll never persuade me to leave you to freeze.

NICHOLAS. But now you can wrap me in all those parkas. They'll keep me warm. You can come back with help. You know you can get through if you go alone. You'll never get through dragging me. There is only one rational choice. Leaving me here is the only hope for both of us.

TOIVO: Even if you can keep warm, you need a doctor. As soon as we can get to one. There's no way on God's earth I'm going to leave you here. *(TOIVO replaces socks and boot, puts that foot under the blanket and parkas. He takes off the other boot and socks and rubs the other foot.)*

NICHOLAS: If you don't go, we'll both end up like those Russians. If you do go, I'll go with you. I'll go with you in the only way I can. I'll always be with you Toivo. My body is not going to make it. But my spirit . . . that you can carry with you.

TOIVO: It's too heavy. I can't carry that.

NICHOLAS: My spirit's lighter than snowflakes. It will dance back. And then, whenever you fiddle, I'll be there dancing.

TOIVO: *(Starts to cry)* You bastard! Enough! I'm taking you back so you WON'T haunt me. *(He rubs faster.)*

NICHOLAS: Toivo. If you won't do it for me, do it for Katrina.

TOIVO: Idiot. *(He addresses an imaginary KATRINA.)* "Well, you see, Trina, Nikko told me to leave him to freeze to death and come back myself to be with you. May I have the next dance?" *(Bitterly, to NICHOLAS:)* Idiot!

NICHOLAS: You're the idiot. Try, for once in your life, to be rational. If I'd been killed, you would go back. And you would go back without any guilt. And Katrina would . . .

TOIVO: *(While he puts the sock and boot back on Nicholas' foot, then covers it with blanket and parka)* Shut up. I'm getting you back. Do you understand? I'm going to fiddle for your children. Your children, Trina's children, are going to dance to my tunes.

NICHOLAS: Toivo, for God's sake, listen to me. At the dance, before we left, when you said . . . when you . . .

TOIVO: That subject is closed. *(He puts the bayonet under Nicholas' nose.)* Shall I cut out your tongue? *(Suddenly, TOIVO's anger turns to grief.)* You know, now, that I love Trina. You know, now, that I have always loved Trina. I can't help that. I can't help that.

But there is one thing I can do. I can get you back to her. Can't you understand? I must get you back to her. I love you both. You must allow me to love you both. In the only way I can. Don't try to take that away from me. It's all I have. It's all I have. Please, please, Nikko, don't take away my one chance to show my love. *(He tenderly touches Nikko's cheek with the bayonet.)* I'm going to get you back

*(TOIVO studies the bayonet. He starts to smile, ruefully at first, then mischievously. He uses the bayonet as a fiddle bow with an imaginary fiddle. He starts to hum the Theme Waltz. He sticks the bayonet into a tree trunk and reaches into his pack. He pulls out a violin case, opens it, and takes out a white violin.)*

White for camouflage. All is camouflage, now. *(To the violin:)* Even you, my love? Even you? *(He starts to play the Theme Waltz.)*

NICHOLAS: The Russians will hear you.

TOIVO: Yes. And weep. Their bullets will turn to tears.

NICHOLAS: You're crazy.

TOIVO: Anyone who is not crazy is insane.

NICHOLAS: Anyone who is not crazy is insane? (*NICHOLAS gropes for a new way of seeing things.*) Maybe you're right, Toivo. God knows this war is insane.

Go ahead and play, Toivo. Yes. (*with growing conviction*) Yes, let the Russians hear you. Let the whole world hear you, Toivo.

TOIVO: No more camouflage. It's camouflage that kills. It's camouflage that drives us to war. (*He plays the Theme Waltz with full volume.*) I'll bring the dead to life. (*He plays over one of the corpses he did not strip.*) Do you hear me, Ivan? Ivan Ivanovitch, do you hear me? (*He plays as he talks.*) Dance, Ivan, Dance! (*A few bars of a Russian dance tune*) Come on, you miserable serf, you are free at last. Dance! (*TOIVO bends over the corpse and looks at his face.*) Nicholas, he's just a boy. A child! (*To the corpse:*) Poor child. Did your mother know where you went to play? Go home to your mother, Ivan. (*He bends over and, holding the dead face as a mother would hold a hurt child, gives him a tender kiss.*) It's only a scratch, little Ivan. Don't cry. And get up out of that snow before you catch cold. (*TOIVO, with a struggle, lifts the corpse, which is frozen still, drags it to a birch tree, and props it against the tree trunk. He plays the Russian dance tune.*) Dance! Dance!

(*Slowly the corpse begins to stir. Slowly it begins to dance.*)

TOIVO: You see, Nicholas?

(*The Russian dances with growing passion, Cossack style. At the end he leaps high with a shout.*)

RUSSIAN ONE: HEY! (*He pants and puffs, and what TOIVO saw as a child is clearly middle aged and overweight.*) Hey, Toivo, what took you so long?

TOIVO: The Russian army, making a nuisance of itself.

ONE: You crazy Finn. It's not Russia you're fighting. You're fighting the whole world.

TOIVO: The whole world thinks we're heroes. Tiny Finland fighting giant Russia.

ONE: Heroes! That's why you, Toivo, are fighting the whole world. Ten thousand years of heroism. That's what you're fighting against. It's not little Finland against giant Russia. It's little Toivo against the human race. (*"ONE" starts to dig in a snowdrift.*)

TOIVO: I'll win, too. I'll make the human race dance. Even these clowns (*He sweeps his bow at the dead.*) Even these poor children.

ONE: *(Pulls an accordion from the snowdrift.)* It's time, Toivo, that you had an ally.

TOIVO: Arvo! Arvo!

ARVO: Arvo. Ivan. What's the difference. *(He starts to play a waltz.)* Get these other heroes on their feet. They're just resting from their last drunken dance. That one *(He points to a corpse.)* Get that one first.

*(TOIVO drags the corpse to a birch tree and props it up. He steps back and starts to play. Slowly the corpse stirs, then begins to dance.)*

TOIVO: Well, Sergei Sergeivitch. Isn't this more fun than killing?

RUSSIAN TWO: *(Woman's voice)* Speed it up, Toivo. You've lost your touch.

TOIVO: Helmi!

HELMI: Do I look like some Cossack cadaver? *(She throws off her parka, revealing her dress from the dance.)* Now, get me a partner. *(She points to another corpse. Toivo props it against another birch tree.)* Wake him up, Toivo. *(TOIVO resumes playing. ARVO follows him on the accordion.)*

*(RUSSIAN THREE stirs, starts to dance slowly. HELMI grabs him and signals to TOIVO and ARVO to speed up. As they do so, the couple whirls in a waltz.)*

RUSSIAN THREE: Oooph, Helmi. I'm out of breath.

HELMI: For once in your life, you old windbag.

THREE: I haven't danced since schooldays.

HELMI: You were a good dancer then. *(To TOIVO:)* You didn't know this old windbag when he was almost human. *(She tears of his hood and pulls open the parka at the throat to show a pastor's collar.)* It's your old friend Pastor Tolonen, Toivo. Even Tolo. You can make even Tolo dance again. He's been frozen for twenty years, and now you've got him dancing.

*(TOLONEN does some dancing leaps, then spins away with HELMI. TOIVO looks at ARVO. ARVO shrugs. TOLONEN stops at another corpse.)*

TOLONEN: This one, Toivo. For twenty years I've been dying to dance with her.

TOIVO: Then die no more, Tolo. A thousand deaths is enough. *(TOIVO drags another corpse to another birch tree and props it up.)*

TOLONEN: Play something sweet, Toivo. Something tender.

*(TOIVO plays an air from Gluck's Orpheus and Eurydice. Suddenly the corpse kneels at TOIVO's feet and throws its arms around his knees.)*

RUSSIAN FOUR: *(Woman's voice)* Urho! Urho! Urho! I've looked everywhere. Everywhere. Urho! *(She sobs.)* Urho. *(She clutches Toivo's legs and buries her head in his thighs.)*

TOLONEN: Laila thinks you are your father, Toivo. She thinks you are your own father.

TOIVO: *(To RUSSIAN THREE, now recognized as LAILA.)* Laila. Laila. It's just me. It's only me, Toivo.

LAILA: Then where's your father? Where's Urho? He's here somewhere. I can see him so clearly. I can see him as if he'd never, as if . . . He must be here. *(She looks around, looks at each of the three remaining corpses that have not had their parkas taken. She points at one of them.)* That one, Toivo. There's your father.

*(TOIVO stops playing. He stares. He shrinks back. Then he throws himself at the corpse, thrusts it up against a birch tree. He studies the face, which is half hidden by a hood.)*

ARVO: Play, Toivo. You must play.

TOIVO: *(He tries to play, but puts down his bow before striking a note. He tries again, but only a screech comes out.)* I can't. Arvo, you play. I can't.

ARVO: You must.

*(TOIVO, slowly at first, then with more sureness, finally with passion, plays the Theme Waltz. The corpse begins to dance. It stops. TOIVO plays a few more notes, then stops. They stare at each other.)*

URHO: Toivo. My little Toivo. My little Toivo. *(URHO rushes to TOIVO and tries — as if TOIVO were still a child of four — to toss him into the air. Then he steps back and studies TOIVO.)*

URHO: Little Toivo . . . A soldier now. You've become a soldier. Oh, Damn, Damn, Damn. Not a soldier. Not my Toivo. Not a soldier.

TOIVO: Not a soldier, father. A musician.

URHO: Not a soldier? A musician? Oh, Toivo, Toivo. Wonderful, wonderful, wonderful. A musician. *(URHO sees the others for the first time.)* Arvo! Helmi! Tolo! Tolo . . . you're a pastor? I can't believe it. And Laila. Oh, Laila, Laila.

LAILA: It's been a long time, Urho.

URHO: I was a fool. Such a fool.

LAILA: No, Urho. You were, you still are, our hero.

URHO: Damn all heroes to Hell. I should have been a musician. No. A dancer. A dancer.

ARVO: Then dance, fool. Dance.

*(ARVO starts to play a schottische. TOIVO joins him with the fiddle. HELMI takes TOLONEN as partner. URHO takes LAILA. They dance the schottische in a circle. URHO stumbles over a corpse. He looks down.)*

URHO: Here, son. Here. *(He gestures at the corpse.)*

*(TOIVO props the corpse against a birch tree. He begins to play the Theme Waltz. The corpse stirs, then begins to dance. It dances up to Urho, and they waltz together. Urho stops. He speaks to his partner:)*

This is Toivo. This is our Toivo. *(He tenderly pulls back her hood. To TOIVO:)* Toivo, this is your mother. Your mother, Toivo.

TOIVO: Mother? *(A long pause, then, to his mother:)* Mother?

*(URHO takes the violin from TOIVO. He plays Jää Kukkia ("Ice Flowers"), the waltz to which NICHOLAS had danced his solo ballet at the village dance. MOTHER takes TOIVO as her partner, and leads him in the dance. He dances with no limp. She spins him free, and TOIVO dances as NICHOLAS had danced in his solo ballet . . . but without the desperation. Suddenly TOIVO stops.)*

TOIVO: I can dance! I can dance. *(He looks at his mother. Then at each of the others, ending with ARVO. Then he looks at NICHOLAS.)* Nicholas! I can dance!

NICHOLAS: You've always danced, Toivo.

TOIVO: You don't know. You don't know.

NICHOLAS: There's one more, Toivo. *(He points to the last clothed corpse.)*

TOIVO: *(He starts toward the corpse, then stops.)* Nicholas. I can't.

ARVO: There's one more, Toivo.

*(TOIVO looks at his father. URHO nods. TOIVO looks at his mother. MOTHER nods. TOIVO drags the corpse to a birch tree at center upstage and props it against the trunk. He steps back. After a long pause, he starts the Theme Waltz. A shot rings out. TOIVO*

*recoils and drops the violin. He holds up a bloody hand and stares at it. Another shot rings out. TOIVO quickly, with his uninjured hand, straps on his skis. The other figures return to the trees, prop themselves stiffly against them, pull up parkas and hoods and look again like Russian corpses. TOIVO bends over NICHOLAS, pulling his parka over his cheeks. NICHOLAS seizes TOIVO'S wounded hand and kisses it. TOIVO starts to pull the sled. He pulls NICHOLAS offstage. Soon a Russian soldier, then other soldiers, ski into the clearing from upstage center. They see their frozen comrades propped against trees.)*

FIRST SOLDIER: Damned Finns.

SECOND SOLDIER: This is their idea of a joke.

THIRD SOLDIER: Well, this time the joke is on them.

FOURTH SOLDIER: Wait. *(He picks up the white violin. He looks bewildered. He plucks a string, then sees the bow. He picks up the bow and tries a few notes, a phrase from the Theme Waltz. The last corpse nods. The Russian soldier is startled, then confused.)* No. Not a joke.

FIRST: A dance, I suppose.

FOURTH: *(Looks at the tracks in the snow. Then at the corpses.)* Yes. *(Bewildered. Hesitant.)* Yes. *(With dawning recognition)* Yes. A dance!

SECOND: Crazy Finns.

THIRD: We'll make them dance.

*(THIRD beckons to the other soldiers, and they ski offstage following the sled tracks of TOIVO and NICHOLAS, but the FOURTH soldier lingers. He plays a few bars from the Theme Waltz. The last corpse stirs. The soldier stops playing and the corpse halts. The soldier plays a few more bars, and the corpse takes a few dance steps, but again the soldier stops and the corpse freezes in place. From offstage, the voice of a comrade:)*

FIRST: Ivan! Ivan! Hurry Up!

*(The FOURTH soldier looks at the immobilized corpse. He throws down his rifle, bows to the corpse, and stuffs the violin and bow under his parka. He skis offstage after his comrades. A moment later a shot is heard. Then another.)*

NICHOLAS: *(From offstage)* Toivo! TOIVO! *(Then silence)* Toivo! *(Silence)*

*(The lighting dims. The Theme Waltz plays softly. The stage becomes dark, then faint light resumes. It is early the next morning. KATRINA enters on skis stage right. She has been*

*following the tracks left by TOIVO and NICHOLAS as they approached the clearing. KATRINA stops at the edge of the clearing.)*

KATRINA: Colonel Lahti said that they would probably try to go north of the lake. And these tracks. One skier and a sled. It must be them. *(She notices that the snow in the clearing in front of her has been stirred up by many tracks.)* What is this? A fight? *(She looks around and sees the corpses of frozen Russian soldiers propped against the birch trees.)* What on earth? *(She goes up to a corpse. Then another. Then another.)* What madness is this? *(She examines the snow tracks.)* Were you dancing? *(Then it dawns on her.)* Dancing. Yes, dancing. It's Toivo. Only Toivo would ever . . . *(She looks at the corpses and the tracks. She is certain now.)* Toivo, you were here. Crazy Toivo, I know you were here. *(Shouts)* Toivo! *(Louder)* Toivo! Toivo! *(She listens for an answer.)* Nicholas! Toivo! Nicholas! Toivo! *(She listens again. Silence. She goes up to the corpse that was ARVO.)* Speak, you crazy Russian. Speak. Where is my Toivo? Where is my Nicholas? Speak! *(Silence. KATRINA grabs the corpse's parka and shakes the corpse.)* Speak, you Russian idiot. Where did they go? Which way? *(She shakes the corpse again. She loses her grip and it falls in the direction in which TOIVO and NICHOLAS left. She notes the direction, then sees the tracks of the sled exiting stage left. She says to the corpse:)* Yes. The sled tracks. But look, more skiers. From that direction. *(She looks upstage, where the Russians had entered.)* And then they continue in the same direction as the sled. Were they pursuing? Are they Russians? Oh, no. Oh, no. No! *(She hastily skis after the tracks.)*

*(The wind sighs in the trees. The SEVENTH CORPSE bends over and picks up a handful of snow, makes it into a snowball, and throws it at the fallen ARVO. ARVO jumps to his feet and fires a snowball back. Soon all the corpses are having a childish snowball fight, ducking behind trees and jumping out to throw. Suddenly the SEVENTH CORPSE holds up both hands. All stop and listen. They hasten back to their pre-fight positions. KATRINA slowly enters on skis at stage left.)*

KATRINA: Only their bodies. Only their frozen bodies. My Nicholas. My Toivo. Frozen together. Holding each other. They held me. Nicholas in his arms. Toivo in his soul. They still hold me.

Oh, I'm so cold. So cold.

White and cold. A flake of snow, that's all I am. *(She takes off a mitten and catches a falling snowflake in her palm.)* How brief. Beautiful crystal, like no other. Gone. Brief as Nicholas. Brief as Toivo. And look at this forest, full of snow. Billions of crystals, each one different from all the others. Like people. Different. Each one. *(She catches a flake and speaks to it.)* Nicholas, melting again at my touch. *(She catches another flake and speaks to it.)* Toivo, can you hear me? If I tell you now, if I tell you now, will you . . . Toivo, don't go yet . . . *(She cries. Then she takes off her skis.)* I'll stay here. You were here. You were alive here. *(She sits down and idly picks up a mittenful of snow. Then she notices that she has picked up a snowball. She looks*

*around. Then she jumps up and picks up one snowball after another until she has an armload.)*

These weren't here. These weren't here when I first came. *(She looks at the corpses. None of them move.)* Toivo! Toivo! *(Screams)* Toivo! *(Silence)* Toivo, hear me. *(Silence. She sobs.)* Toivo, Toivo . . . *(She gets control of herself.)* Listen, you rascal. Listen to me. You have to play. Do you hear me, my scoundrel? I know you are not dead. You are only hiding. You were always hiding. So was I. Well, I'm not hiding anymore. No more hiding.

I'm going to dance, so, Toivo, tune your fiddle. *(She starts a slow waltz.)* Come on, Toivo, what are you waiting for? *(She keeps dancing.)* Here, Toivo, here. *(She takes off her scarf and throws it into the air.)* Play, Toivo, play! *(She dances faster, and takes off and flings away her cap.)* No more camouflage. *(She takes off her parka.)* Play, you devil, play! *(Faintly, the sound of a violin playing the Theme Waltz.)* Yes, Toivo, play! *(She dances faster and the music becomes louder and faster. The dance and the music become more passionate, and as she dances Katrina strips herself naked. The music stops suddenly. In TOIVO's voice there's a moan of joy and agony.)* Play, Toivo, play! *(The SEVENTH CORPSE steps forward, bows, and holds out its arms for a dance. KATRINA, terrified, shrinks back. Then she seizes the corpse for a dance. The Theme Waltz resumes, and the couple, KATRINA naked, the SEVENTH CORPSE shrouded in its white camouflage uniform, waltzes.*

*The lights slowly fade. The stage is dark and then, in the dark, the music ends.*

**The End**