

WHEN JOHNNY COMES MARCHING HOME

by
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Based on *Three Sisters* by Anton Chekhov

SCENE ONE

CHEBUTIKIN'S voice is heard.
Projections highlight some of the text
in the blackout.

CHEBUTIKIN

(Recorded Voice)

I often wonder what would happen if I were to start life again, though conscious of all I've done in this life. I think most people would, first of all, try and avoid repeating themselves, to at least try and create for themselves a different environment for themselves. I'd love an apartment with flowers and lots of light, streaming in through the windows.

Lights up tight on CHEBUTIKIN as Mr. Mansfield, the Majority Leader of the Senate, addressing the floor.

CHEBUTIKIN

Mr. President, one week ago yesterday, a young constituent of mine, an Army First Lieutenant, was to have ended his tour of duty in Vietnam. He was a West Point graduate, an honor student in high school, a National Merit Scholarship semi-finalist, president of his student council and a three year sport letterman. He graduated from the Military Academy near the top of his class, served on the honor committee, and following graduation completed a course in Ranger training. In every respect, this young Montanan had every right and every reason to live.

A chorus begins to sing.

CHORAL VOICES

AS I WENT DOWN TO THE RIVER TO PRAY
STUDYING ABOUT THAT GOOD 'OL WAY
AND WHO SHALL WEAR THE STARRY CROWN?
GOOD LORD, SHOW ME THE WAY!

Lights up on ACTOR ONE, now as Mr. Mansfield. During this, the lights reveal the DANCER. A funeral dance, a dance of prayer. She will be joined by the other dancers as the speech and song continue, and the dance will build the room into the living room of the Three Sisters

ACTOR ONE

On March 15, just four weeks before his tour was to end, this young Montanan was killed. He was not a victim of combat. he was not a casualty of a helicopter crash or a jeep accident. In the early morning hours of March 15, the First Lieutenant from Montana was "fragged" to death as he lay sleeping in his billet at Bien Hoa. He was murdered by a fellow serviceman, an American GI. "Fragging" so I have been advised by the Secretary of the Army, refers to the use of a fragmentation grenade in other than a combat situation by one person against another to kill or do bodily harm.

Lights come up on ACTOR TWO, now as Mr. Mansfield. During this, the Sisters join the dance as the stage is finishing being set up.

ACTOR TWO

The questions that arise from such actions are profound indeed. What failure of order within our Armed Forces, may I ask first of all, has produced the kind of atmosphere that resulted last year alone in 209 "fraggings"? Even more important: what has caused this rather widespread and total disregard for human life and limb among our American soldiers? And what can be done about it?

CHORAL VOICES

OH SISTERS LET'S GO DOWN
LET'S GO DOWN, COME ON DOWN
OH SISTERS LET'S GO DOWN,
DOWN IN THE RIVER TO PRAY
AS I WENT DOWN IN THE RIVER
TO PRAY
STUDYING ABOUT THAT GOOD 'OL
WAY
AND WHO SHALL WEAR THE ROBE
AND CROWN,
GOOD LORD SHOW ME THE WAY
OH BROTHERS LET'S GO DOWN
LET'S GO DOWN, COME ON DOWN
OH BROTHERS LET'S GO DOWN
DOWN IN THE RIVER TO PRAY

CHORAL VOICES

AS I WENT DOWN TO THE RIVER
TO PRAY
STUDYING ABOUT THAT GOOD 'OL
WAY
AND WHO SHALL WEAR THE STAR
AND CROWN?
GOOD LORD, SHOW ME THE WAY!
OH FATHERS LET'S GO DOWN
LET'S GO DOWN, COME ON DOWN
OH FATHERS LET'S GO DOWN,
DOWN IN THE RIVER TO PRAY
AS I WENT DOWN TO THE RIVER
TO PRAY
STUDYING ABOUT THAT GOOD 'OL
WAY
AND WHO SHALL WEAR THE ROBE
AND CROWN?
GOOD LORD, SHOW ME THE WAY!
OH MOTHERS LET'S GO DOWN
LET'S GO DOWN, COME ON DOWN
OH MOTHERS LET'S GO DOWN,
DOWN IN THE RIVER TO PRAY

As the song and speech ends, the Sisters are left alone on stage in the world of the Three Sisters. OLGA looking out a window, MASHA reading a book, IRINA finishing getting ready for her party.

OLGA

(Overly tragic)

The fifth of May. A year ago father died.

(To Irina, overly cheerful)

Happy Birthday!

(Picking up the tragedy again)

I remember how cold it was last year. I thought I would die with him, and you had fainted. So it's been a year. And you're wearing white, life is easy, your face shines...

Pause.

IRINA

I remember. I remember the funeral - and all the guns - the salute. And the rain. How heavy the rain was.

OLGA

It's been eleven years since Father moved us from Moscow. At this time of year, I remember Moscow being all in bloom, it's warm, bathed in sunshine. It's been eleven years, but I remember it as if we left yesterday.

MASHA begins to whistle.

OLGA

Don't whistle, Masha.

Pause. MASHA stops whistling. Quiet on stage.

OLGA

All day and all night I'm at the school, giving lessons. I always have a headache. I feel that I've already grown old. The last four years teaching at the high school, I feel like I go out every day, drop by drop in strength and youth. And every day, drop by drop one dream strengthens and grows...

IRINA

Go to Moscow. Sell the house, finish everything where - to Moscow!

OLGA

Yes! To Moscow!

MASHA begins whistling.

IRINA

Brother is likely to be a professor, and he still doesn't want to live here. The only one who does...

She side eyes MASHA, who continues reading and whistling.

OLGA

MASHA will come to Moscow for the whole summer, every year.

IRINA

God willing, everything will be arranged.

(Looking out a window)

What beautiful weather today! I don't know why I'm so happy! This morning, I woke and remembered I was the birthday girl - suddenly, I felt joy, and remembered our childhood, when Mother was still alive...

OLGA

You're shining today. You seem unusually beautiful. Masha, too.

MASHA stops whistling.

OLGA

I...I am older, thinner. But today I'm free, I'm home, and I do not have a headache from those girls at the high school. I feel younger than yesterday. I'm twenty-eight, but...it seems to me that if I had gotten married it would have been better.

TUZENBACH enters.

TUZENBACH

(To Salty in the other room)

Such nonsense you speak, I'm sick of it.

(Seeing the Sisters)

I forgot to mention - our new battery commander Vershinin will be by later today.

OLGA

Oh! That will be lovely.

IRINA

Is he old?

TUZENBACH

(Laughing)

No, no - she's thirty at the oldest.

IRINA

Is she an...interesting person?

TUZENBACH

Yes...well, she has a husband, mother-in-law, two daughters. Her second marriage. Everywhere she visits, she speaks of them. The husband is...something else - he says some bombastic things, philosophizes, and often attempts suicide. Apparently to spite his wife. I would have left him long ago - but she...she only complains and suffers endlessly.

CHEBUTIKIN enters. He approaches IRINA with an expensive piece of jewelry. Expensive, but not necessarily attractive.

IRINA

Doctor, darling, what are you doing?

TUZENBACH

(laughing)

I told you.

MASHA

Doctor, you have no shame.

CHEBUTIKIN

My dear, you are the only good that I have in this world. For you, I would spare no expense. I'll be sixty soon. I'm old, lonely, miserable...I have nothing good except for this love for you, if it weren't for you, I would have died long ago.

IRINA

But such an expensive gift!

CHEBUTIKIN

(Angry, fighting tears)

Expensive gifts...well...

He backs away and begins moving towards the exit.

CHEBUTIKIN

(A tease)

Expensive gifts...

He exits out into the hall.

CHEBUTIKIN

(From offstage)

Oh. Hello!

He sticks his head back into the room.

CHEBUTIKIN

There's a cute Colonel in the hall.

TUZENBACH

(Moving towards the hall)

That would be Vershinin.

CHEBUTIKIN makes way for VERSHININ to enter before he exits. A drum beat begins, growing in intensity and intricacy of rhythm as the scene progresses.

TUZENBACH

Lieutenant Colonel Vershinin! Welcome.

VERSHININ

I'm glad to finally be here.

IRINA

Sit down, please. We're very pleased to have you here.

VERSHININ

I'm glad to finally be hear that. You three sisters - I remember, three girls. Individually I can't say that I remember you...but your father, Colonel Prozorova and his three girls...that, I remember well. Oh, how time flies!

TUZENBACH

Vershinin comes to us from Moscow.

IRINA

From Moscow? Are you from Moscow?

VERSHININ

Yes. When your father was a batter commander there, I was an officer under him.

(to Masha)

Your face I seem to remember...

MASHA

And I have...

(She really sees her for the first time)

Oh...

The drum beat breaks into something more substantial as lights quickly shift off the scene and up on ACTOR THREE, now as Mr. Mathias, the Acting Minority Leader, addressing the Senate.

ACTOR THREE

I thank the distinguished majority leader for yielding. Mr. President, I would venture that today the majority leader has, in a sense, made history, because for the first time to my knowledge, he has surfaced the world "fragging" on the Senate floor.

The choral singing resumes as dancers appear and make slight adjustments to the set. The SISTERS and VERSHININ join the dance, and we see the seeds of Masha's crush on Vershinin re-emerging in this dance. As the set moves, it will remain the living room, but something will be different.

Lights are also up on ACTOR ONE, now as Mr. Mathias.

ACTOR ONE

In all the lexicon of war there is not a more tragic word than "fragging" with all that it implies of the total failure of discipline and the depression of morale, the complete sense of frustration and confusion, and the loss of goals and hope itself. I join the distinguished majority leader in his resolve and determination to see this evil, and all the other evils that blight the spirit of man that have sprung from the miasmic swamps and bogs of Vietnam, be terminated with an end to this tragic war.

CHORAL VOICES

AS I WENT DOWN TO THE RIVER
TO PRAY
STUDYING ABOUT THAT GOOD 'OL
WAY
AND WHO SHALL WEAR THE STARRY
CROWN?
GOOD LORD, SHOW ME THE WAY!
OH SINNERS LET'S GO DOWN
LET'S GO DOWN, COME ON DOWN
OH SINNERS LET'S GO DOWN,
DOWN IN THE RIVER TO PRAY
AS I WENT DOWN TO THE RIVER
TO PRAY
STUDYING ABOUT THAT GOOD 'OL
WAY
AND WHO SHALL WEAR THE ROBE
AND CROWN?
GOOD LORD, SHOW ME THE WAY!

As the dance, song, and speech end,
everyone settles back into the Three
Sisters.

IRINA

Lieutenant Colonel Vershinin. From Moscow.

VERSHININ

(Indicating each in turn)

You're Olga. Masha. And Irina, the youngest.

A silence. A little awkward.

OLGA

So...you're from Moscow...

VERSHININ

I am. I studied and began my service in Moscow...I served
there for a long time, finally getting a battery here. Your
father has remained in my memory.

IRINA

We think we'll be back in Moscow by the fall. We were born
there. On Basman Street.

MASHA

(Suddenly alive)

Now I remember! Remember, Olga, we'd say: "Love Major."

(to Vershinin)

You were in love with someone and we all teased you...

(Laughs)

Here, here, Love Major.

VERSHININ

Yes, I was called the lovesick Major. I was still young, I
was in love. Now, that is not it.

IRINA

Masha, why are you crying?

MASHA

I'm not. Where in Moscow did you live, Major?

VERSHININ

At Old Basman.

OLGA

Where we lived.

VERSHININ

I also lived on German Street once. They called me the German in the barracks. There's a bridge near there, I loved the sound of it. The water under the bridge. It made me feel...lonely...sad at heart.

(Pause)

How wide, and rich that river. A wonderful view.

OLGA

Yes, but it was always cold on it. Cold and all the mosquitos...

VERSHININ

What can you do? Here there is a healthy, good, Slavic climate. The forest, a river...and birch. Cute, modest birches. I love them more than all the trees. It's good to live here. Except the train station is twenty miles away - and no one seems to know why.

SALTY

(Entering the room)

I know why.

Everyone turns to face him.

SALTY

If the station was close, it would not be far away. If it is far, than it is not close.

Awkward silence. Salty leaves.

OLGA

(to Vershinin)

Now I remember you!

VERSHININ

I knew your mother.

CHEBUTIKIN

God rest her soul.

IRINA

Mom was buried in Moscow.

OLGA

In Novodevichy...

MASHA

Imagine, I'm starting to forget her face. I'm forgetting her. Soon we'll all be forgotten.

VERSHININ

Such is our fate, nothing can be done. What seems serious, significant, very important - the time will come when it will all be forgotten, or seem unimportant.

Lights up on ACTOR THREE, now as Mr. Hughes, a senator.

ACTOR THREE

Mr. President, will the distinguished majority leader yield?

Lights up on CHEBUTIKIN, now as Mr. Mansfield, and choral singing begins anew.

CHEBUTIKIN

I am happy to yield to the Senator from Iowa.

CHORAL VOICES

AS I WENT DOWN TO THE RIVER
TO PRAY,

ACTOR THREE

I want to commend the distinguished majority leader on his statement. If I heard correctly, he said that in the past year, according to the Pentagon, there have been 209 of these incidents?

CHORAL VOICES

STUDYING ABOUT THAT GOOD 'OL
WAY
AND WHO SHALL WEAR THE STARRY
CROWN
GOOD LORD, SHOW ME THE WAY!

Dancing begins, which underscores the senselessness of the loss of life, and the stage is again changed.

CHEBUTIKIN

209, for calendar year 1970.

CHORAL VOICES

OH, SISTERS, LET'S GO DOWN

ACTOR THREE

And those that are recorded, I would presume are basically domiciliary type incidents, rather than on the battlefield?

CHORAL VOICES

LET'S GO DOWN, COME ON DOWN
OH SISTERS LET'S GO DOWN

CHEBUTIKIN

That is right.

CHORAL VOICES

DOWN IN THE RIVER TO PRAY

ACTOR THREE

So, in effect, we have no real knowledge, probably, of what the total number of these incidents of assassination might be, if they did take place in battle?

CHORAL VOICES

AS I WENT DOWN IN THE RIVER
TO PRAY
STUDYING ABOUT THAT GOOD 'OL
WAY
AND WHO SHALL WEAR THE ROBE
AND CROWN

CHEBUTIKIN
The Senator is correct.

CHORAL VOICES
GOOD LORD, SHOW ME THE WAY!

CHORAL VOICES
OH BROTHERS, LET'S GO DOWN
LET'S GO DOWN, COME ON DOWN
OH BROTHERS, LET'S GO DOWN
DOWN IN THE RIVER TO PRAY

BLACKOUT.

SCENE TWO

IRINA crosses in carrying a duffle bag.
She's waiting for the bus to take her
to boot camp.

SALTY crosses in, also with a duffle
bag.

They're quiet for a while, IRINA
playing on her phone. He looks like
he's playing on his phone, but he's
really noticing her.

SALTY
Is this the bus to Columbus?

She continues playing on her phone. Not
ignoring, she just didn't notice him.

SALTY
Georgia? Columbia, Georgia?

IRINA
What's that?

SALTY
This bus...uh...it's for Columbus, Georgia?

IRINA
Yes. Or at least, I hope so.

SALTY
That's where you're headed, too?

IRINA
Assuming this is the right bus.

SALTY
What for? I'm stationed at Fort Benning.

IRINA
No kidding? Me too. Or at least, reporting for basic.

SALTY

(Offers his hand)

Michael Duncan Bennett. But everyone calls me Salty.

IRINA

(Small laugh)

Oh yeah? Why's that?

SALTY

Hang out with me at Fort Benning and you'll find out.

Lights immediately up on ACTOR ONE.
Drum beat begins.

ACTOR ONE

On April 19, 1775, the American Revolutionary War began. The United States would suffer 8,000 casualties in combat.

The DANCER appears, moving to the beat of the drum.

ACTOR TWO and ACTOR THREE appear.

ACTOR TWO

Northwest Indian War: 1,000 plus casualties.

ACTOR THREE

Quasi-War: 20 casualties.

ACTOR ONE

First Barbary War: 35 casualties.

ACTOR TWO

Chesapeake-Leopard Affair: 3 casualties.

ACTOR THREE

On June 18, 1812, the War of 1812, fought between the United States of America and England, began. The United States would suffer 2,260 casualties in combat.

Dancers join and the scene is shifted back to the Living Room during their dance.

ACTOR ONE

(Cue: Affair: 3 casualties)

Nuka Hiva Campaign: 5 casualties.

ACTOR TWO

Second Barbary War: 4 casualties.

ACTOR ONE

First Seminole War: 47 casualties.

ACTOR TWO

First Sumatran Expedition: 2 casualties.

ACTOR THREE

Black Hawk War: 47 casualties.

ACTOR TWO

Second Seminole War: 328 casualties.

ACTOR THREE

Cayuse War: 40 casualties.

ACTOR ONE

Rogue River Wars: 190 casualties.

ACTOR TWO

Yakima War: 32 casualties.

ACTOR THREE

Third Seminole War: 26 casualties.

ACTOR ONE

Second Opium War: 12 casualties.

ACTOR THREE

Coeur d'Alene War: 36 casualties.

The scene shifts to the living room.
VERSHININ sits on a couch. MASHA
enters, on a phone.

MASHA

(On the phone)

Okay. So you think three days? Okay. Be safe.

She hangs up. She's quiet, in her own
world. VERSHININ respectfully sits
quietly.

MASHA

I'm sorry. He's going out on patrol. I'm sorry.

VERSHININ

Why are you sorry?

MASHA

Because you don't want to hear about him.

VERSHININ

I want you to be able to talk to me about what's on your mind. He's your husband. He's in danger. I get that.

MASHA sits down on the couch. Perhaps a little closer to VERSHININ than might be considered proper.

MASHA

But still. I shouldn't burden you with it.

VERSHININ

Hey.

(Rubbing her back)

I'm here. I'm here for you. I'm here to help you with that burden.

They sit quietly. MASHA allowing, and enjoying, VERSHININ'S touch.

The moment is broken with the call of a drill Sergeant. The cast falls in line.

TUZENBACH enters, inspecting the troops. He pauses at IRINA.

TUZENBACH

Soldier. What's your name?

IRINA

Irina, sir.

TUZENBACH

Well, Irina, do you think this is going to be easy?

IRINA

No, sir.

TUZENBACH

Then why are you here?

IRINA

Because it's not going to be easy, sir.

A grind breaks across TUZENBACH'S face. SALTY definitely notices this.

TUZENBACH

Good answer.

CHEBUTIKIN

I LOOKED OVER JORDAN, AND WHAT DID I SEE
COMING FOR TO CARRY ME HOME?

TUZENBACH

(Back to the group, in commanding officer mode)
My name is Tuzenbach. I am your commanding officer. From Salty, your Sergeant, you will receive many orders from me. Some of those orders will be simple, and you will understand why they are being given. Some of those orders will seem contradictory, or unplanned, or unthought out. In both instances, you must follow these orders without question. They are meant to keep you alive.

CHEBUTIKIN

A BAND OF ANGELS COMING AFTER ME,
COMING FOR TO CARRY ME HOME.
SWING LOW, SWEET CHARIOT
COMING FOR TO CARRY ME HOME
SOMETIMES I'M UP, SOMETIMES I'M DOWN

CHORAL VOICES

COMING FOR TO CARRY ME HOME

TUZENBACH

Our goal here at Fort Benning is to train you...

CHEBUTIKIN

BUT STILL MY SOUL FEELS
HEAVENLY BOUND

TUZENBACH

...so that you never lose sight of one thing: the orders you have been given.

CHORAL VOICES

COMING FOR TO CARRY ME HOME

TUZENBACH

Those orders are created and given in order to accomplish the priorities of your unit, your army, and your country. And our ultimate priority: bringing you and everyone you're standing here with home safely.

CHORAL VOICES

SWING LOW, SWEET CHARIOT
COMING FOR TO CARRY ME HOME,
SWING LOW, SWEET CHARIOT
COMING FOR TO CARRY ME HOME

TUZENBACH

Sometimes you might be told to go right, when left looks like your safest exit.

CHEBUTIKIN

THE BRIGHTEST DAY THAT I CAN SAY

TUZENBACH

And by you going left, that might get you out of the situation safely.

CHORAL VOICES

COMING FOR TO CARRY ME HOME

TUZENBACH
And while you get out safely,
because you went left instead
of right...

CHORAL VOICES
WHEN JESUS WASHED MY SINS
AWAY

TUZENBACH
...three of the people
standing here with you get
killed.

CHORAL VOICES
COMING FOR TO CARRY ME HOME

TUZENBACH
And when you're told to pull
a trigger, you pull that
trigger. Because if you
don't, the enemy will. And
while their bullet might miss
you, it will hit your fellow
soldier standing next to you.

CHORAL VOICES
SWING LOW, SWEET CHARIOT
COMING FOR TO CARRY ME HOME
SWING LOW, SWEET CHARIOT,
COMING FOR TO CARRY ME HOME

TUZENBACH
While you may think you know
better than I do,

CHEBUTIKIN
IF YOU GET THERE BEFORE I DO,

TUZENBACH
The burden of your lives and
the success of our missions
is squarely on my shoulders.

CHORAL VOICES
COMING FOR TO CARRY ME HOME

CHEBUTIKIN
TELL ALL MY FRIENDS I'M COMING THERE TOO

TUZENBACH
And that is not a
responsibility I take
lightly. If you follow
orders, then we will find
success. If you don't - the
cost of failure is far too
high.

CHORAL VOICES
COMING FOR TO CARRY ME HOME.
SWING LOW, SWEET CHARIOT
COMING FOR TO CARRY ME HOME,
SWING LOW, SWEET CHARIOT,
COMING FOR TO CARRY ME HOME

TUZENBACH
Dismissed.

The lights change. The drum beat
begins.

ACTOR TWO
On April 25, 1846, the Mexican-American War began. The United
States would suffer 1,733 casualties in combat.

The DANCER appears. A dance of
senseless death.

MASHA

Dakota War of 1862...

ACTOR ONE

...also known as Little Crow's War...

MASHA

...between 70 and 113 casualties.

VERSHININ

Snake Indian War: 30 casualties.

ACTOR THREE

On April 12, 1861, the Civil War began. Between the Union and the Confederacy, 214,938 soldiers would be killed.

SALTY

(Cue: Snake Indian War: 30
casualties)

Indian Wars: 919 casualties.

CHEBUTIKIN

Red Clouds War: 126 casualties.

ACTOR ONE

On April 25, 1898, the Spanish-American War began. The United States would suffer 385 casualties in combat.

OLGA

(Cue: Red clouds War: 126
casualties)

Modoc War: 56 casualties.

ACTOR TWO

Great Sioux War: 314 casualties.

VERSHININ

Nez Perce War: 134 casualties.

ACTOR THREE

On June 2, 1899, the Philippine-American War began. The United States would suffer 1,020 casualties in combat.

MASHA

(Cue: Nez Perce War: 134
casualties)

Bannock War: 12 casualties.

CHEBUTIKIN

Ute War: 15 casualties.

ACTOR TWO

Ghost Dance war: 35 casualties.

Lights shift us back into the Three Sisters living room. TUZENBACH stands, IRINA sits on the couch.

TUZENBACH

What do you think?

IRINA

A lot. I don't like this, and I don't like Salty. He speaks nonsense...

TUZENBACH

He's a strange man. I feel sorry for him - he also embarrasses me, but I feel more sorry for him than I do embarrassed for me. I think he's shy...when I'm alone with him, he's very intelligent and affectionate - but out in public he's rude, a real fire eater. Let me be near you. What do you think?

(Pause)

You're twenty years old, I'm not yet thirty. How many years have we left? A long, long series of days full of my love for you...

IRINA

Don't tell me about love.

TUZENBACH

(Not listening)

I have a passionate thirst for life, work. This thirst in my soul has merged with love for you, IRINA, and, as if on purpose, you are beautiful, and life seems so beautiful! What do you think?

IRINA

You say life is beautiful. Yes, but what if it just *seems* like that? Life was beautiful, for my sisters and I, and then life drowned us like weeds. It is not necessary.

(She touches him, tender, she wants to do this more, but reminds herself)

We must work, work. That is why we are unhappy and look at life being so bleak. We were born from people who despise work, and yet that is our fate.

Salty enters, carrying a notebook.

SALTY

Tuzenbach -

(Noticing IRINA)

Oh, hello.

A moment.

IRINA

I should be going.

(to TUZENBACH)

Thank you. For...good night.

She leaves.

SALTY

I wondered what was keeping you. It's after nine already.

TUZENBACH

I said it's after nine.

TUZENBACH

I looked for you earlier, but the men said you were busy. I was in no rush. She stopped by to see me.

SALTY says nothing.

TUZENBACH

What?

SALTY

Nothing.

(Looking at the notebook)

Today, out of boredom and having nothing to do, I picked up this old notebook - old university lectures, and I felt...funny...I thought, oh my God, I am a sergeant in the Army. I'm a sergeant, and the most that I can hope for is...to be a sergeant! Me, a sergeant who dreams every night that I was a professor at Moscow University, a famous scientist, the pride of Russia.

(A moment)

You sit in Moscow, in a huge dining room, you don't know anyone and no one knows you...but at the same time you don't feel like a stranger. But here, you know everyone, and everyone knows you...and yet...you feel like a stranger, an absolute stranger, a stranger, and entirely alone.

(A moment)

I should go.

TUZENBACH

Of course. Be healthy.

SALTY leaves. TUZENBACH tries to settle back into comfort. He's restless.

The lights change. The drum beat begins.

TUZENBACH

On April 6, 1917, the United States entered World War 1. The United States would suffer 53,402 casualties in combat.

The DANCER appears. Continues the dance of senseless death.

ACTOR ONE appears.

ACTOR ONE

Boxer Rebellion: 68 casualties.

ACTOR THREE appears.

ACTOR THREE

The United States Occupation of Nicaragua: 90 casualties.

ACTOR TWO appears.

ACTOR TWO

On December 7, 1941, the United States entered World War 2. The United States would suffer 291,557 casualties in combat.

More dancers join the DANCER. The scene changes somehow, though we remain in the living room.

ACTOR ONE

(Cue: Nicaragua: 90 casualties)

Mexican Revolution: 120 casualties.

ACTOR THREE

Occupation of Haiti: 10 casualties. The American Expeditionary Force Siberia: 150 casualties.

ACTOR ONE

(Cue: Haiti: 10 casualties)

On June 25, 1950, the Korean War began. The United States would suffer 33,686 casualties in combat.

ACTOR TWO

(Cue: Force Siberia: 150
casualties)

The Cold War: 32 casualties. Bay of Pigs: 4 casualties.

ACTOR THREE

(Cue: Cold War: 32
casualties)

On November 1, 1955, the Vietnam War began. The United States would suffer 47,424 casualties.

ACTOR ONE

(Cue: Bay of Pigs: 4
casualties)

Beirut Deployment: 256 casualties. Persian Gulf Escorts: 39 casualties. The Gulf War: 149 casualties.

ACTOR TWO

(Beirut Deployment: 256
casualties)

On October 7, 2001, live conflict in the Afghanistan Theater of the War on Terror began. In the ongoing conflict, the United States has suffered more than 1,700 casualties.

ACTOR THREE

On March 20, 2003, the Iraq War began. The United States would suffer 3,527 casualties in combat.

The lights bring us back into the Three Sisters living room.

MASHA and VERSHININ enter.

MASHA

I don't know.

(Pause)

I don't know. Of course, habit means a lot. Maybe in other places this isn't the case, but here in our city the most honest, noble, and educated people are the military.

VERSHININ

I would like a drink. I could drink some tea.

MASHA

(Looking at Vershinin's
watch)

We soon will.

I was married when I was eighteen years old, and I was afraid of my husband because he was a teacher, and I had just barely finished my courses! At the time he seemed to me so terribly scientific, smart, and important. Now...he does not, unfortunately.

VERSHININ

Ah...I see...

MASHA

Civilians in general are so rude. They're not accommodating and they're not educated. I suffer when I hear a man is not being polite. When I'm among my fellow teachers, I just suffer.

VERSHININ

Yes...but it seems to me there is no difference between a civilian and a member of the military. At least in this city, they're all so uninteresting. It's all the same! If you listen to the local intelligentsia, civilian or military, all you'll hear is that he's tortured by his wife, the house has worn him out, the horses have worn hm out...Russian men have such a supremely sublime and peculiar way of thinking, but why don't they actually think about their own lives? How come?

MASHA

How come?

VERSHININ

Why be tortured by your husband and children? And why let your wife and children be tortured by you?

MASHA

You're a little out of sorts today.

VERSHININ

Maybe. I haven't eaten today. My daughter is a little sick, and when my girls get sick, I become seized with anxiety, and guilt because they have such a father. Oh, if you say him today! What a jerk! We started fighting at seven this morning and at nine I slammed the door and left.

The drum beat begins. Same as under the casualty figures.

A pause.

VERSHININ

I shouldn't talk about it. Not to you...

Pause. The drum beat ends.

MASHA

Shortly before father's death there was a sound in the pipes exactly like that.

VERSHININ

Are you superstitious?

MASHA

Yes.

VERSHININ

It's strange. You are a wonderful, wonderful woman. Gorgeous, wonderful! It's dark, but I see the sparkle of your eyes.

MASHA

(Moving away)

Easy now...

VERSHININ

I love, love, love...I love your eyes, your movements that I dream of...you're a gorgeous, wonderful woman!

MASHA

(Laughing softly)

When you talk to me like that, I laugh. For some reason. Though I'm afraid. Don't say it again, I beg you...

(In a low voice)

And yet, you say, you do not care...

(Covers her face with her hands)

I do not care. Go on, talk about something else.

IRINA and TUZENBACH enter.

TUZENBACH

I have a triple surname. My name is Baron Tuzenbach-Crown-Altschauer, but I'm Russian Orthodox, like you. The German in me left me very little, unless impatience and stubbornness count. I see you home every night. And every night I will escort you home, for the next ten, twenty years, I'll -

(Seeing MASHA and VERSHININ)

Oh. Hello.

IRINA

Here I am. Home, finally.

(Sitting)

I'm so tired. I need rest.

TUZENBACH

When you come to the office, it seems so small -

IRINA

I'm tired. I don't want to talk about the telegraph.

MASHA

(to TUZENBACH)

You've lost weight...and you look younger...you almost look like a person.

TUZENBACH

That's from the haircut.

IRINA

I need to get another job. The telegraph is not for me. It's not what I wanted, what I dreamed about. Labor without poetry...without thought...

(A beat)

Something must be done. Yesterday, the doctor and our brother were in the club and lost again. He said our brother lost two hundred rubles.

MASHA

(Indifferently)

What do we do now?

IRINA

Two weeks ago, he lost. In December, he lost. Oh my God, I dream of Moscow every night, I'm like a madman.

(Laughs)

We're moving back in June, and until June there are still...February, March, April, May...almost half a year!

TUZENBACH

The die is cast. You know, Maria, I resigned.

MASHA

I heard. And I don't approve. I hate civilians.

TUZENBACH

Anyway...

(Goes to leave)

I'm not beautiful without the military? I'll work. At least one day in my life I want to work so that I come home in the evening and tumble into bed and fall asleep immediately.

(At the door)

The workers must have slept soundly!

He leaves.

IRINA

We will be in Moscow soon.

MASHA

Happy is he who does not notice summer or winter. I think if I were in Moscow, I would treat the weather with indifference.

VERSHININ

The other day I read the diary of a French minister, writing in prison. With what rapture, rapture, he mentions the birds he saw outside of his prison window, which he never noticed when he was a minister. When he was released, he again did not see the birds. Likewise, you will not notice Moscow when you live in it.

(VERSHININ'S cell phone
buzzes. She checks it.
Quietly.)

My husband has poisoned himself again. I must go. Terribly unpleasant.

(to MASHA)

My dear, nice, good woman...I will see you again soon.

She leaves.

BLACKOUT.

SCENE THREE

The Three Sisters living room.

IRINA moves around the room, tidying up.

SALTY enters.

SALTY

No one's here. Where have they gone?

IRINA

They went home.

SALTY

How fortunate. Are you alone?

IRINA

For the moment.

A pause.

IRINA

Well...farewell.

She goes to leave.

SALTY

The other day I behaved...tactlessly. But you're not like the others, you are high and pure, you have seen the truth. You alone, only you understand me. I love you with a deep, unending love -

IRINA

Farewell!

She tries to leave again.

SALTY

I can't live without you!

(Going for it)

Oh, my bliss. You have luxuries, wonderful, amazing eyes - eyes I have never seen on another woman -

IRINA

Stop, stop it!

SALTY

The first time I actually speak about my love for you, and I'm not on the ground - I'm on another planet!

He goes to kiss her. She pulls away from him and runs from the room.

SALTY

Love can not be, of course. But happy opponents I should not have...should not...I swear to you all the saints, I will kill the opponent.

TUZENBACH enters. He's mad.

TUZENBACH

What the hell happened out there?

SALTY

What do you mean?

TUZENBACH

You hesitated!

SALTY says nothing.

TUZENBACH

We almost got surrounded. A couple of shots would have backed them off.

SALTY

A couple of shots would have gotten us all blown to hell.

TUZENBACH

As it was we almost got blown to hell. A couple shots would have maintained the integrity of the mission.

SALTY

And what was the point of the mission?

TUZENBACH

That doesn't seem like your place, does it, Sergeant?

SALTY

(After a moment)

No sir, it does not.

TUZENBACH

And what is your place, Sergeant?

SALTY

To carry out your orders, sir.

TUZENBACH

What was that?

SALTY

To carry out your orders exactly as given, sir.

TUZENBACH

Good. You could have gotten us all killed.

SALTY

(Unable to help himself)

Because no one ever died in a firefight.

TUZENBACH

What was that?

SALTY

Nothing, sir. I'm glad my mistake didn't cost anyone's life.

TUZENBACH

Me too.

SALTY

But especially Irina's, right?

TUZENBACH

I'm sorry?

Silence.

SALTY

Every day we're closer to going home. I only hope we all get there in one place.

The sounds and alarms of a fire interrupt their confrontation. They run out to investigate.

OLGA enters, followed by MASHA and IRINA. They're in a hurry.

OLGA

Here take this, and this blouse, too. And take this skirt - my God the whole lane has burned down...It's...it's...poor VERSHININ - their house almost burned down. Let them in to spend the night, they can't possibly go home...whole houses burned to the ground - there's nothing left!

IRINA and MASHA run out.

OLGA

What a horror.

Offstage, a voice begins to sing.

ACTOR THREE

AMAZING GRACE! HOW SWEET THE SOUND
THAT SAV'D A WRETCH LIKE ME!
I ONCE WAS LOST, BUT NOW AM FOUND,
WAS BLIND, BUT NOW I SEE.

OLGA steps out to address the audience.

DANCERS appear, underscoring the destruction.

OLGA

We don't talk about it. Sure, we may take a few moments or a whole section in various civic and history classes throughout our primary school education, but we never really focus on what we've truly done. The United Nations has even declared what we have done to be atrocious, and a violation of dozens of treaties that have been signed over the years. But that's just the political.

ACTOR THREE

'T WAS GRACE THAT TAUGHT MY
HEART TO FEAR,
AND GRACE MY FEARS RELIEVED;
HOW PRECIOUS DID THAT GRACE
APPEAR
THE HOUR I FIRST BELIEVED.
THROUGH MANY DANGERS, TOILS
AND SNARES,
I HAVE ALREADY COME;
'T IS GRACE HATH BROUGHT ME
SAFE THUS FAR
AND GRACE WILL LEAD ME HOME.

OLGA

We are a nation of migrants built upon the backs of a horrific genocide committed under the banner of manifest destiny. If God didn't want us to have this country, we say to ourselves, then why did he let us take it so easily? For many, the images of the Cowboys, and the Frontiersman, and the American Army bring up images of sacrifice for the homeland, rugged bravery, and indeed, national pride.

OLGA

Indeed, we see what we did to those native to this land, those who were here first, play out in nations across the world, and we're very quick to point our finger and stand up and say that is not right, that is not to be done. But we don't own our own systematic slaughter of an entire people.

OLGA

We sometimes hear these actions attempting to be justified by saying we were saving the savage, bringing them God. That once they assimilated, and took the Lord Jesus as their savior, then they were saved. But even then they were not. In addition to the abandonment and destruction of their own culture - something I imagine none of us would want done to us - would still not save them from horrific acts of violence. Rape. Murder. Capture and enslavement. Entire villages burned. Even as they assimilated. Even as they accepted Christ. So what was it really for? Land. Power. Manifest Destiny.

ACTOR THREE

THE LORD HAS PROMISED GOOD TO ME,
HIS WORD MY HOPE SECURES;
HE WILL MY SHIELD AND PORTION BE,
AS LONG AS LIFE ENDURES

ACTOR THREE

YEA, WHEN THIS FLESH AND HEART SHALL FAIL,
AND MORTAL LIFE SHALL CEASE,
I SHALL POSSESS, WITHIN THE VEIL,
A LIFE OF JOY AND PEACE

ACTOR THREE

THE EARTH SHALL SOON DISSOLVE LIKE SNOW,
THE SUN FORBEAR TO SHINE;
BUT GOD, WHO CALLED ME HERE BELOW,
WILL BE FOREVER MINE.
WHEN WE'VE BEEN THERE TEN THOUSAND YEARS,
BRIGHT SHINING AS THE SUN,
WE'VE NO LESS DAYS TO SING GOD'S PRAISE
THEN WHEN WE'D FIRST BEGUN.

The DANCERS disappear. OLGA sits on the couch, unsure what to do with herself.

CHEBUTIKIN stands in the doorway. He enters the room. He's not staggering, but he's also not sober.

He sits down next to her on the couch. He takes her hand. She's in her own world and doesn't resist.

CHEBUTIKIN

Olga, my dear - I have often thought...I'd be married to you.

OLGA

What?

She gets up, moves away from him.

OLGA

You're drunk.

He doesn't deny it.

OLGA

For two years you didn't drink...and now...

She leaves. He gets up to follow, but doesn't pursue her very far.

He moves around the room, before settling at the washbasin. He begins to wash his hands.

CHEBUTIKIN

Damn it all to hell...fight...I think I'm a doctor. I'm able to heal all manner of sickness, and yet I know absolutely nothing, forgotten everything I knew, I remember nothing, absolutely nothing. Damn. Last Wednesday, I treated a woman - who died. She died and it was my fault that she died. She didn't need to, it was something I knew twenty-five years ago, but now I don't remember. Nothing. My head is empty. My heart is cold. Maybe I'm not a man, maybe I only pretend that I have arms and legs...and my head...maybe I don't exist at all, but it just seems to me that I walk, eat, sleep.

(Crying)

Oh, if it were not there!

(The tears end)

God knows...every day the conversation at the club: Shakespeare, Voltaire...I do not read, I do not read, I do not read, and his face showed...as if I read. And others, too, like me. Vulgar! Meanness!

And the woman I slew on Wednesday to remember...and remember...and remember...everything...and my heart was crooked, nasty...disgusting...gone...washed down...

CHEBUTIKIN begins to sing as projected images demonstrate that the fight for civil rights in this country is not won.

CHEBUTIKIN

FREE AT LAST, FREE AT LAST
 I THANK GOD I'M FREE AT LAST
 FREE AT LAST, FREE AT LAST
 I THANK GOD I'M FREE AT LAST
 WAY DOWN YONDER IN THE GRAVEYARD WALK
 I THANK GOD I'M FREE AT LAST
 ME AND MY JESUS GOING TO MEET AND TALK
 I THANK GOD I'M FREE AT LAST
 ON MY KNEES WHEN THE LIGHT PASS'D BY
 I THANK GOD I'M FREE AT LAST
 THO'T MY SOUL WOULD RISE AND FLY
 I THANK GOD I'M FREE AT LAST
 SOME OF THESE MORNINGS, BRIGHT AND FAIR
 I THANK GOD I'M FREE AT LAST
 GOIN' MEET KING JESUS IN THE AIR
 I THANK GOD I'M FREE AT LAST

Lights quickly shift to tightly on
 VERSHININ.

VERSHININ

When the fire started, I ran home quickly. It was safe and sound - completely out of danger, but my daughters were standing on the threshold in their underwear, their father nowhere to be seen, but people, and horses, and dogs, running past the house, and my daughters faces filled with anxiety, horror, pleading with me. My heart sank when I saw those faces.

(Pause)

And when my girls were standing by the door in their underwear, barefoot, and the street was red from the fire there was a terrible noise, and I thought it was something that happened many years ago - a suddenly acquired enemy, robbed, the fire lit...in essence, what is the difference between what is and what was? And it will take a little time, two hundred, three hundred years, when our present life will be looked back on with a sneer, and with fear, and it will appear angular, and heavy, and very uncomfortable and strange. Perhaps what it will be is life, what a life!

(Laugh)

I'm sorry...I'm going on and on...I really want to philosophize...I'm in a mood...

(Pause)

Similarly, all sleep. So I say, what is life? You can only imagine...That's like you're in the city now, only in the next generation...more, more, and more, and the time will come when everything will change in your opinion, you will live in your opinion, and then you will become obsolete, the people are people who are better than you...

The lights widen out to reveal MASHA.

VERSHININ

(Laughs)

Today, I'm in a special kind of mood. I want to live a hell of a -

EACH LITTLE FLOWER THAT OPENS,
EACH LITTLE BIRD THAT SINGS,
HE MADE THEIR GLOWING COLORS,
HE MADE THEIR TINY WINGS.

VERSHININ AND MASHA

ALL THINGS BRIGHT AND BEAUTIFUL,
ALL CREATURES GREAT AND SMALL,
ALL THINGS WISE AND WONDERFUL,
THE LORD GOD MADE THEM ALL.

MASHA

THE PURPLE HEADED MOUNTAIN,
THE RIVER RUNNING BY,
THE SUNSET AND THE MORNING,
THAT BRIGHTENS UP THE SKY

VERSHININ AND MASHA

ALL THINGS BRIGHT AND BEAUTIFUL,
ALL CREATURES GREAT AND SMALL,
ALL THINGS WISE AND WONDERFUL

They are on the verge of kissing.
VERSHININ realizes it.

VERSHININ

I should check on my daughters.

She goes without another word.

IRINA enters. The pair sit in silence.

MASHA

How's Olga?

IRINA

Hm?

MASHA

Has Olga gotten any rest?

IRINA

She's just getting into bed. Everyone seems to be accounted for and back home - or at least in a bed they can use for now.

MASHA

Has anyone seen Vershinin's husband?

IRINA

I'm not sure. Why? Is he missing?

MASHA

He just wasn't at home.

IRINA

How is she doing?

MASHA

Annoyed by him, as usual.

A silence.

IRINA

Salty tried to kiss me.

MASHA

He did what?

IRINA

We were alone. He confessed his love, and tried to kiss me.

MASHA

And what did you do?

IRINA

I ran away!

They laugh.

MASHA

Poor Salty...he's such an awkward man.

IRINA

And rude.

MASHA

Sure, but I think he means well.

(A moment)

Does he know about Tuzenbach?

IRINA
What about Tuzenbach?

MASHA
That you two are...

IRINA
What? There's nothing going on.

MASHA
He loves you, you know.

Lights suddenly shift to ACTOR ONE.
ACTOR ONE is the only one to appear,
the other voices in the next section
come from around the theatre, but not
on stage. The VOICE indicates lines
spoken by anyone in the company (I
suggest using them all in a cacophony
of whispers) that aren't ACTOR ONE.

ACTOR ONE
Post traumatic stress disorder.

VOICE A
Shell shock.

VOICE B
Battle fatigue.

VOICE C
Soldiers heart.

ACTOR ONE
Post traumatic stress disorder is the result of a traumatic
event, things that deeply disrupt a persons sense of the
world. Things like

VOICE A
Sexual assault.

VOICE B
Traffic collisions.

VOICE C
Terrorism.

ACTOR ONE
And warfare. While the term post traumatic stress disorder
didn't come about until Vietnam, the condition has been noted
by other names before that.

VOICE A
Shell shock.

VOICE B

Battle fatigue.

VOICE C

Soldiers heart.

ACTOR ONE

The impact of war on a soldiers psyche is something we're only beginning to understand. Research has been limited, and treatment is still experimental. Most people are simply left to deal with the symptoms.

VOICE A

Flashbacks.

VOICE B

Avoidance of memories.

VOICE C

Numbing of memories.

VOICE D

Withdrawal from the life around them.

ACTOR ONE

Assault based trauma increases the risk of someone developing post traumatic stress disorder. Dropping someone in a war zone puts them directly into an assault based situation, a situation that will further increase the chance they will develop PTSD.

VOICE A

Shell shock.

VOICE B

Battle fatigue.

VOICE C

Soldiers heart.

ACTOR ONE

So when we send our soldiers off into battle, we must not do so lightly. In addition to the obvious risk of their lives, we're risking their mental health as well. The costs of war are high, is the battle worth the cost?

The lights shift back to the Three Sisters living room. TUZENBACH sleeps on the couch. IRINA, MASHA, and VERSHININ sit in the room. They've been talking.

SALTY enters.

IRINA

No, please, go away. This is impossible.

SALTY

Why can the Baron be here but I cannot?

VERSHININ

You have to go, really. How's the fire?

SALTY

They say it has subsided. But I want to know why the Baron can stay, and I cannot?

VERSHININ

ALL THINGS BRIGHT AND BEAUTIFUL,

VERSHININ AND MASHA

ALL THINGS BRIGHT AND BEAUTIFUL...

VERSHININ rises.

VERSHININ

(To Salty)

Please, come into the parlor with me.

SALTY

(After a moment)

Okay, I'll go. But I'm afraid the geese do tease...

(Looking at Tuzenbach)

Cheep, cheep, cheep...

IRINA avoids looking at SALTY as he exits with VERSHININ.

IRINA nudges TUZENBACH awake.

TUZENBACH

(Waking)

I'm tired, but...brickyard...I'm not delirious, and in fact, will soon begin working in a brick factory...

(to Irina)

You are so pale, beautiful, charming...But you're unhappy with life...come with me, let's go to work together!

MASHA

Baron, get out of here!

TUZENBACH

(Laughing)

Oh. You're here? I didn't see you.

(Kissing Irina's hand)

Good bye. I'm going. I look at you now and I remember how once upon a time, on your name day, you were cheerful, happy, talking about the joys of labor, and dreaming of a happy life! Where did she go?

(Kisses her hand)

You have tears in your eyes. Go to bed. Dawn is here and the morning begins...If I was allowed to give my life for you...

MASHA

Baron, go away.

TUZENBACH

(Laughing, getting up)

I'm going!

He leaves.

MASHA

He's obsessed!

IRINA

I'm a distraction. Nothing more.

MASHA

I don't think he feels that way.

SALTY

(Off-stage)

He's going to get us all killed.

MASHA

And I know he doesn't feel that way.

She exits. IRINA follows. SALTY and CHEBUTIKIN enter.

CHEBUTIKIN

How?

SALTY

His decision making is blinded by his feelings for her. He's making decisions that protect her at the expense of the rest of us.

CHEBUTIKIN

And you don't want her protected?

SALTY

That's not what I'm saying. His job is to complete the missions he's given.

CHEBUTIKIN

(A laugh)

No, your job is to complete the missions he's given.

SALTY

Exactly. He's putting us in harms way. We're a couple of weeks from going home. What's the point?

CHEBUTIKIN

You're sure that's what this is about?

A moment.

SALTY

What else would it be about?

A moment. CHEBUTIKIN sizes him up.

CHEBUTIKIN

Nothing, nothing. Just don't do anything you might regret.

SALTY

I'm completely in control of myself.

SALTY leaves. CHEBUTIKIN lays down on the couch.

MASHA and IRINA enters.

MASHA

You asleep, Doctor?

She nudges him.

CHEBUTIKIN

(Waking, smiles, taking her hand)

My dear Masha, my dear Masha...

IRINA

She's tired. Give it a rest.

CHEBUTIKIN

I'll go...I love you, my one -

MASHA drops his hand. She's angry.

CHEBUTIKIN

(Laughs, takes her hand
again)

No, really! Honestly. You're amazing. I am pleased, I am satisfied, I am satisfied!

MASHA

And I am tired, I am tired, I am tired! It's outrageous!

OLGA enters at the sound of yelling.

MASHA

I'm talking about our brother. He mortgaged the house and took all the money for his wife. But the house doesn't just belong to him, it belongs to the four of us! If he were a decent man, he'd know that.

CHEBUTIKIN

And what do you want, Masha? What Andrew has done has been done...

MASHA

I don't need anything, but I resent injustice.

(Pause)

You should go.

He kisses Masha on the cheek.

CHEBUTIKIN

You're tired. You should rest.

He leaves.

OLGA looks at her sisters. MASHA sits on the couch.

IRINA

(Crying)

Where? Where has it gone? Where is it? Oh, my God, my God! I forgot everything...I forgot...I have it all mixed up in my head...I don't remember...Italian window or ceiling...that's all forgotten, but life goes away and never comes back...never, never, never shall we go away to Moscow...I see that now.

OLGA

(Frightened)

What are you saying? Sweetheart!

IRINA

I'm unhappy. I can't work, I won't work. Enough, enough! A telegrapher working in the city government and I hate, I despise everything they give me to do...I was twenty-four when I wen to work there, and it's been so long...my brain is dry...I've grown thin, I've lost my looks, I've grown old and I have nothing, nothing, no satisfaction, and time goes on, and it marches further and further away from the beautiful life getting closer and closer to the abyss. I'm desperate, I'm desperate! And as I'm alive, I have not killed myself, and I still don't understand.

OLGA

Don't cry, my girl, don't cry...I suffer.

IRINA

I'm not crying, I won't cry...rather...

OLGA

If you want my advice...marry the Baron.

IRINA

I kept waiting to move to Moscow, where I would meet my present, my future - it was what I dreamed about...But it turned out to be nonsense, all nonsense...

They sit quietly, OLGA holding IRINA. MASHA moves closer and joins them. The Three Sisters hold onto each other as the world spins out of control around them.

MASHA

I want to repent, dear sisters. My soul yearns. So long as you and no one else, never...

(Silence)

I love Vershinin.

OLGA immediately stands and moves away.

OLGA

I won't listen to nonsense.

MASHA

Olga...love - this means that my fate...and she loves me...It's all scary...

(Reaches for IRINA)

Somehow we live our lives, that one of us will...it seems that all of this is old, and all that is clear has happened before, and yet no one knows a damn thing, yet everyone must decide for himself...

A voice from offstage begins to sing.
As they sing, the sisters dance a dance
of reconciliation.

ACTOR TWO

NOBODY KNOWS THE TROUBLE I'VE SEEN
NOBODY KNOWS MY SORROW
NOBODY KNOWS THE TROUBLE I'VE SEEN
GLORY HALLELUJAH!
SOMETIMES I'M UP, SOMETIMES I'M DOWN
OH, YES, LORD
SOMETIMES I'M ALMOST TO THE GROUND
OH, YES, LORD
ALTHOUGH YOU SEE ME GOING 'LONG SO
OH, YES, LORD
I HAVE MY TRIALS HERE BELOW
OH, YES, LORD
IF YOU GET THERE BEFORE I DO
OH, YES, LORD
TELL ALL-A MY FRIENDS I'M COMING HOME
OH, YES, LORD.

BLACKOUT.

SCENE FOUR

Lights up on the Three Sisters living
room.

IRINA

(From off-stage)

Olga, who was that knocking on the floor?

OLGA

(From another side of the
stage, but off)

The doctor. He's drunk.

IRINA

What a restless night.

(Pause)

Olga!

(Entering)

Have you heard? They're taking the brigade from us. They've
been transferred away.

OLGA

(From off-stage)

That's just a rumor.

IRINA

We'll be alone...Olga!

OLGA

(Entering)

What?

IRINA

I respect and appreciate the Baron. He is a great man. I'll marry him, I agree. But let's go to Moscow! I beg you, let's go! There is nothing better than Moscow in the world! Let's go, Olga! Let's go!

They embrace.

SALTY

(From off-stage)

Are you kidding me?

IRINA and OLGA exit as TUZENBACH enters, followed by SALTY.

TUZENBACH

What?

SALTY

We're going out on patrol?

TUZENBACH

Those are our orders.

SALTY

No, our orders are to keep this location secure.

TUZENBACH

And part of our security protocol is to patrol. Do you have a problem with that?

SALTY

With all due respect, sir -

TUZENBACH

Oh I think we're way past that, Salty.

SALTY

We're going home in two weeks. Two. Weeks. And you want to send us out?

TUZENBACH

I want us to complete our mission as we've been instructed to do.

SALTY

There's nothing to be gained here. You're just putting us in harms way.

TUZENBACH

I don't like the risks any more than you do, but this is a war zone, and we know there are risks. There are also risks in us just sitting in camp. If we go out on patrol, we're at least pro-active about the risk.

SALTY

If we go out on patrol the odds of one of us not making the trip home increases, and you know that.

TUZENBACH

I have my orders. I have given you yours. Prepare the troops.

SALTY considers saying more.

Lights immediately switch to the DANCER. The drum beat begins. The dance is very free.

Lights up on ACTOR THREE.

ACTOR THREE

Proclamation 2425 - Selective Service Registration. September 16, 1940. From the President of the United States of America, Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

The DANCER begins to become more and more bound. ACTOR ONE appears, as do a few more DANCERS.

ACTOR ONE

Whereas the Congress has enacted and I have this day approved the Selective Training and Service Act of 1940, which declares that it is imperative to increase and train the personnel of the armed forces of the United States and that in a free society the obligations and privileges of military training and service should be shared generally in accordance with a fair and just system of compulsory military training and service.

The dance almost seems to pause as the lights come up on the Three Sisters living room. The drum continues underneath, perhaps it slows, but the rhythm continues.

CHEBUTIKIN sits reading the newspaper. MASHA sits with him.

She opens her mouth to speak. Thinks better of it.

Starts again. Says nothing.

CHEBUTIKIN

What is it?

MASHA

Nothing, nothing...

A pause.

MASHA

Did you love my mother?

CHEBUTIKIN

Very much.

MASHA

And did she love you?

CHEBUTIKIN

(After a pause)

That I do not remember.

They return to their silence.

MASHA

Something happened yesterday near the theater; everyone's talking about it, and I don't know what it is.

CHEBUTIKIN

It's nothing. Nonsense. Salty began to find fault with the Baron, who lost his temper and insulted him, and in the end Salty challenged him to a duel.

(Looks at his watch)

It's almost time, too.

(Laughs)

Salty fancies himself a poet. Joking aside, this is his third duel.

MASHA

Don't let them. You can't. He might kill the Baron.

CHEBUTIKIN

The Baron is a good man, but one Baron more, or one Baron less - does it matter? Let them! It's all the same!

He leaves and MASHA follows.

Lights move us back to the DANCERS.
Bound, the drum comes back up to tempo.

ACTOR TWO

It shall be the duty of every male citizen of the United States, and of every male alien residing in the United States who, on the day or days fixed for the first or any subsequent registration, is between the ages of twenty-one and thirty-six, to present himself for and submit to registration.

ACTOR THREE

America stands at the crossroads of its destiny. Time and distance have been shortened. A few weeks have seen great nations fall. We cannot remain indifferent to the philosophy of force now rampant in the world. The terrible fate of nations whose weakness invited attack is too well known to us all. We must and will marshal our great potential strength to fend off war from our shores. We must and will prevent our land from becoming a victim of aggression.

The DANCERS finish a transformation from bound dancing into soldiers during the next speech.

ACTOR ONE

Our decision has been made. It is in that spirit that the people of our country are assuming the burdens that now become necessary. The congress has debated without partisanship and has now enacted a law establishing a selective method of augmenting our armed forces. The method is fair, it is sure, it is democratic - it is the will of the people.

The DANCERS and ACTORS clear, the lights shift, and MASHA and VERSHININ are left alone on stage together.

VERSHININ

Everything has its end.

(Looks at her watch)

The city gave us breakfast. There was champagne, the Mayor spoke. I ate and listened, but my soul was here with you.

(Looks around)

I'm used to you.

MASHA

Will we ever meet again?

Pause. She doesn't know how to answer.

VERSHININ

My husband and daughters will continue living here for the next few months; please if anything happens -

MASHA

Yes, yes, of course. Don't worry.

(Pause)

In the city of tomorrow there will no longer be any war, everything will be a memory, and of course, we'll start a new life...

(Pause)

Nothing goes our way. I don't want to be boss and yet I am. I want to be in Moscow, and yet I am not.

VERSHININ

Well, thank you for everything. Forgive me...I'm sorry, don't think badly of me.

She touches her face. Tender.

VERSHININ

(Laughs)

Life is hard. It seems to many of us dull and hopeless, but still, you have to admit, it is becoming clearer and easier, and apparently, we're not far from the time when it will become quite clear.

(Looks at her watch)

It's time, it's time. War has filled mankind's entire existence, and once it is outlived it will leave a huge empty space with nothing to fill it; humanity is looking for passion.

(Pause)

Add hard work to education and the formation of hard work.

(Looks at her watch)

I really must go.

MASHA

Goodbye.

They stand awkwardly. Unsure how to say goodbye. They settle into a hug. VERSHININ leaves, MASHA watches her go before heading in the opposite direction.

IRINA and TUZENBACH enter, walking together.

IRINA

It's such a clear day.

(Pause)

The city will be so empty tomorrow.

TUZENBACH

Honey, I'll be right back.

IRINA

Where are you going?

TUZENBACH

I need to go to the city for a bit...to say goodbye...to some comrades.

IRINA

Why are you so scattered today?

(Pause)

What happened yesterday? At the theater?

TUZENBACH

(Impatient)

I'll be back in an hour.

He kisses her hand.

TUZENBACH

I've loved you for five years, and I still can't get used to it. You seem more and more beautiful every minute. I'll take you tomorrow, and we will work, we'll be rich, my dreams come to life. You will be happy. There's just one thing...you don't love me.

IRINA

I so want to love you. All my life I've wanted to love. I've dreamed of it for a long time, day and night, but my soul is a locked piano and the key has been lost.

(Pause)

You look troubled.

TUZENBACH

I didn't sleep last night. In my life there is nothing wrong, just those lost, key moments that torment my world and don't let me sleep at night.

(Laughs)

What nonsense. What silly little things sometimes take on a life of significance, suddenly, for no apparent reason. You still laugh at them, you think they're trifles, and yet you go and you feel that you have no power to stop them.

Let's not talk about it. I'm having fun. For the first time in my life I see these firs, makes, birches. What beautiful trees. What a beautiful life.

(A moment)

I have to go, it's nearly time. That tree is withered away, but it stays together, swinging with the others in the wind. So it seems to me, that if I die, I will still participate in one way or another. Farewell, my love...

He kisses her.

IRINA

I'll go with you!

TUZENBACH

No! No.

He starts to go. Turns back.

TUZENBACH

Irina!

IRINA

What?

TUZENBACH

(Not knowing what to say)

I didn't have coffee today. Would you get me some?

IRINA exits. The drum begins to grow louder and louder. DANCERS fill the stage, swirling with movement. Amidst this, TUZENBACH straightens himself up, and slowly marches himself up stage, where he will wind up facing SALTY. As he arrives, the drum beat breaks, the DANCERS fall, and we:

BLACKOUT.

SCENE FIVE

The Three Sisters living room.

MASHA, OLGA, and IRINA are together.

CHEBUTIKIN enters.

CHEBUTIKIN

Olga!

OLGA

What?

(Pause)

What?

CHEBUTIKIN

Nothing. I don't know how to tell you...

He whispers in her ear the news that
the Baron has been killed.

OLGA

No...

CHEBUTIKIN

Yes...a story...I'm weary, I'm worn out, I don't want to talk
about it.

(Angrily)

However, all the same!

MASHA

What happened?

OLGA

(Hugging IRINA)

A terrible day...I don't know how to tell you...

CHEBUTIKIN

The Baron has just been killed.

IRINA

(Softly)

I know.

CHEBUTIKIN

I'm tired...too tired to weep...
WHEN JOHNNY COMES MARCHING HOME AGAIN
HURRAH! HURRAH!
WE'LL GIVE HIM A HEARTY WELCOME THEN
HURRAH! HURRAH!
THE MEN WILL CHEER AND THE BOYS WILL SHOUT
THE LADIES THEY WILL ALL TURN OUT
AND WE'LL ALL FEEL GAY
WHEN JOHNNY COMES MARCHING HOME

MASHA

They're moving away from us,
one by one. Good. We're left
alone to start our lives
again. We have to live...we
must live...

CHEBUTIKIN

THE OLD CHURCH BELL WILL PEAL
WITH JOY
HURRAH! HURRAH!
TO WELCOME HOME OUR DARLING
BOY
HURRAH! HURRAH!

IRINA

The time will come when
everyone knows why things are
the way they are, there will
be no secrets as to why we
suffer...but in the meantime
we must live...we have to
work, just work!

CHEBUTIKIN

THE VILLAGE LADS AND LASSIES
SAY
WITH ROSES THEY WILL STREW
THE WAY
AND WE'LL ALL FEEL GAY
WHEN JOHNNY COMES MARCHING
HOME

OLGA

As time passes, we will go
forever, we will forget, we
will forget our faces, forget
our voices, and we'll forget
all but the suffering of our
move into joy for those who
will come after us. Happiness
and peace will come to the
earth, and we'll speak well
and bless those whose lives
enter our own. Sisters, our
life is not yet over. let us
live!

CHEBUTIKIN

GET READY FOR THE JUBILEE
HURRAH! HURRAH!
WE'LL GIVE THE HERO THREE
TIMES THREE
HURRAH! HURRAH!
THE LAUREL WREATH IS READY
NOW
TO PLACE UPON HIS LOYAL BROW
AND WE'LL ALL FEEL GAY
WHEN JOHNNY COMES MARCHING
HOME

The full company slowly joins in
singing with CHEBUTIKIN and slowly
appear on stage as the SISTERS join
themselves together surrounded by the
military of the company.

CHORAL VOICES

LET LOVE AND FRIENDSHIP ON THAT DAY
HURRAH! HURRAH!
THEIR CHOICES PLEASURES THEN DISPLAY
HURRAH! HURRAH!
AND LET EACH ONE PERFORM SOME PART
TO FILL WITH JOY THE WARRIOR'S HEART
AND WE'LL ALL FEEL GAY

BLACKOUT.

CHEBUTIKIN

WHEN JOHNNY COMES MARCHING HOME.

END OF PLAY.