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A NIGHT IN THE KREMLIN

Book by Bernard Besserglik

Music and Lyrics by Bob Barton

Scene 1: PROLOGUE

The curtains draw apart to reveal at the rear of the stage another set of curtains which in turn draw apart to reveal a cinema screen.

Projection: movie-style "A Night in the Kremlin" titles, followed by a montage of scenes from the Marx Brothers' four films prior to October 1933: The Cocoanuts, Animal Crackers, Monkey Business and Horse Feathers, with some emphasis on Harpo's clowning.

Recorded laughter, and orchestra over. The movie dialogue is audible but faint, as if from a distance. Against the music (Harpo's theme, as developed in the next scene) or interspersed with it can be heard, quietly but distinctly, the sound of a train's wheels passing over rails – a leitmotif.

The music is maintained, as is the sound of the train's wheels, as Harpo appears in the stalls, climbing over the seats, clowning around and hamming it up as he makes his way through the audience to get to the stage. He is dressed in his tramp's uniform of shabby raincoat and battered stovepipe hat and carrying his trademark motorist's horn. And he is of course, for the moment, mute.

He climbs onto the stage, sees the projection and stops to watch, expressing great amusement at the sequences in which he himself features, slapping his thighs with laughter, making faces to the audience, hugging himself and chortling.

The Marx Brothers images suddenly grind to a halt and are replaced by Soviet newsreel/documentary footage of the same era vaunting the achievements of Soviet power and the recently completed five-year plan.

Titles with production figures, numbers of factories, tractors and houses built, virgin lands opened up, rates of electrification, etc.

Soviet-style music and strictly upbeat commentary, all in deadly earnest, as before heard as from a distance.

Harpo continues to find this hilarious, laughing, making faces, slapping his thighs.

Leaning against a wall stage right is William C. Bullitt, dressed as Uncle Sam (red-and-white striped trousers, top-hat, white goatee, etc). Bullitt, who will be encountered later as the US ambassador to Moscow, watches Harpo for a moment and then extends a forefinger to beckon him over.

Harpo crosses over to him, and Bullitt jerks a thumb at the Soviet newsreel images.

BULLITT/UNCLE SAM

Trouble-makers!

Harpo shrugs. In his exchanges with Bullitt/Uncle Sam, he uses a variety of gestures and comic mime effects to convey his response, occasionally honking his motor-horn.

BULLITT/UNCLE SAM

Damn Reds, and their fancy ideas. Last thing we need, state the economy's in right now.

Harpo indicates: it's their own business, let them get on with it. He's not interested.

BULLITT/UNCLE SAM

You fancy a trip to Moscow?

Harpo is astonished.

BULLITT/UNCLE SAM

Put on a few shows. Go on, say yes - we can fix it.

Harpo is suspicious.

BULLITT/UNCLE SAM

While you're there, you can do a job for us.

Harpo is apprehensive.

BULLITT/UNCLE SAM

Oh nothing dangerous. Just keep an eye on things. Watch what's going on.

Harpo is indignant.

BULLITT/UNCLE SAM

No, not espionage. Nothing like that.

Circus sounds offstage.

BULLITT/UNCLE SAM

They've got great clowns over there. Just think what you could learn from them.

Now Harpo is tempted. He hesitates.

BULLITT/UNCLE SAM (to Harpo)

Think about it for a while. No hurry.

Sergei Kirov enters stage left. He's a handsome, stocky man in his late forties with a relaxed manner, dressed in a Soviet-style semi-military smock.

KIROV (to the audience)

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen.

He waves a remote control device at the screen and the projection returns to the newsreel reportage of Soviet achievements.

KIROV

My name is Sergei Mironovich Kirov and I'm happy to be able to welcome you here today. I've been first secretary of the Communist party of the Leningrad region for the past seven years, I'm also a member of the central committee and of the politburo of the Communist party of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, and apart from being able to reel all that off without drawing breath I also - take it from me - take my political responsibilities very seriously.

(He smiles broadly)

I'm also, in my free time, when I can find any, a patron of the arts - theatre, opera, dance. And dancers...

An attractive young woman enters and crosses the stage. Kirov whistles at her, and winks. She laughs at him - she's obviously used to this.

Harpo, who along with Bullitt has been observing Kirov, reacts like the lecherous movie-Harpo and makes as if to set off in pursuit of the young woman, but Bullitt holds him back by the belt of his raincoat.

Kirov gestures at the stirring images of industry on the march.

KIROV

Impressive, huh? In little more than a decade, we've put this country back on its feet. But not the country as it was before. Oh, no. We're building a new society, a new man, a new world. Away with the rigid inequalities, the feudal bondage of the past. Away with the squalor, the obscurantism, the oppression. No more cynical exploitation by men of their fellow men. Our goal is a new dignity of labour: from each according to his means, to each according to his needs. Free education. Health care for all. Retirement pensions you can live on.

Sounds good? So it should. We're -
(Sings) Building Utopia.

The words Building Utopia are the cue for the lead in to the opening song which for the moment underscores the dialogue.

Meanwhile a light rises on Stalin, who has been standing in darkness, watching, listening. He is also lit from ground level, projecting a giant shadow on the rear screen.

KIROV

Of course it's been chaotic. There have been mistakes, there's been some rough justice now and then. We've had to knock a few heads together. You can't make an omelette without breaking eggs. Fortunately we have a strong, resolute collective leadership -

(He breaks off momentarily to acknowledge the presence behind him)

Hi Koba! - grouped around our general secretary Joseph Vissarionovich Stalin. With the people behind us, we have everything we need to meet the challenges of the future.

It's true. It's for you that we're -
(He sings, as earlier) Building Utopia.

Four Politburo members - Molotov, Kaganovich, Voroshilov and Ordzhonikidze - walk on and take up position.

KIROV (continuous)

Hi comrades! (He lowers his voice slightly and leans forward to the audience confidently) To be absolutely honest, the leadership is not as collective as it might be. The general secretary has an iron personality, and I see pitfalls ahead. (Brightly) But the Revolution is greater than any one of us. The foundations are solid.

Valentina, who will later be encountered as Harpo's interpreter, and her boyfriend Igor, walk on and take up position.

KIROV

Ladies and – comrades, some happy workers!

Valentina and Igor bow towards the audience.

KIROV

Together, we are -

The Soviet characters launch into the introductory number.

Bullitt/Uncle Sam watches disdainfully, while Harpo clowns to the words with appropriate gestures.

KIROV et al (sing)

BUILDING UTOPIA. LIVING ON HOPE, WE ARE.
BRICKS AND MORTAR, BREAD AND WATER
THAT'LL HAVE TO DO
YEAH, THAT'LL HAVE TO DO

BUILDING UTOPIA. LEARNING TO COPE, WE ARE.
WE'LL WIN THROUGH WITHOUT THE HELP OF
ANYBODY NEW,
YEAH, ANYBODY WHO

BUIDLING UTOPIA
WISHING UPON A STAR
NO-ONE CAN TELL

IF WE'RE HEADING FOR HELL
OR IF WE'RE NEAR OR FAR

Maxim Litvinov, smartly dressed in civilian clothes, and his wife IVY walk on.

The singing breaks off as Kirov greets them.

KIROV

Ah, here's my good friend Maxim Litvinov, the people's commissar for foreign relations, just back from Washington, along with his wife Ivy. Welcome, comrade Maxim Maximovich. Welcome Ivy Walterovna. What news?

MAXIM LITVINOV

Great news, Sergei Mironovich. US president Franklin Delano Roosevelt has agreed to recognise the Soviet Union. An exchange of ambassadors will take place as soon as we can arrange it.

KIROV

It gets better all the time. Well done, comrade.

MAXIM LITVINOV (spotting Bullitt/U. Sam)

And there he is - my new friend.

BULLITT/UNCLE SAM

Maxie! Great to see you!

Litvinov crosses the stage and he and Bullitt/Uncle Sam embrace, with much back-slapping bonhomie.

During these proceedings, the principals are joined by the rest of the company dressed as workers.

The song Building Utopia resumes.

ALL (except Bullitt and Harpo) (sing)

BUILDING UTOPIA. LIVING ON HOPE, WE ARE.
BRICKS AND MORTAR, BREAD AND WATER
THAT'LL HAVE TO DO
YEAH, THAT'LL HAVE TO DO

BUILDING UTOPIA. LEARNING TO COPE, WE ARE.
WE'LL WIN THROUGH WITHOUT THE HELP OF
ANYBODY NEW,
YEAH, ANYBODY WHO

Harpo, standing alongside Bullitt/Uncle Sam, reacts as appropriate, clowning, soundlessly mouthing the words, flinging his arms wide, gesticulating, blowing his motor-horn, etc.

With everyone onstage, the Company brings the opening number to a climax and conclude.

Lights down.

Silence. The sound of a train's wheels suddenly becomes audible and grows louder, accompanied by a stirring, Soviet-style massed choir theme.

Scene 2: A RAILWAY STATION

The sound of the train's wheels continues in the darkness, still accompanied by the massed choir theme, and segues into the sound of a steam-train slowing to a halt. As the lights come up, there is steam billowing across the stage and the outline of a locomotive standing in the background. Harpo in civilian clothes strides to the front of the stage. A large props basket is in evidence behind him.

HARPO (seeing there's no-one around)

You know what the man said: I have been over into the future and it works. Well, today seems to be its day off.

A uniformed Border Guard finally appears and takes up position. He stands strongly silent, indicating by gestures that Harpo is to produce his passport.

HARPO

What...? My...? Ah yes. Careful with that now, it's brand new.

More gestures and dumb-show from the guard over the passport.

HARPO

Yup - a true likeness. The inner me, not one of those cheap publicity shots. If you want a signed copy... What? Sure it's blank, I only got it... Ah, a visa, you mean. Why didn't you say so?

The guard ponders Harpo's papers.

HARPO

You know what, you remind me of someone. The strong silent type. Now hold on... That's it. You remind me of me!

The border guard points accusingly at Harpo's passport and visa.

HARPO (to the guard)

Yes, that's right, 1933 is not a good year to be called Adolph. And yes, the name is Marx, as in Karl. If you really want to know, I'm his idiot brother's love-child, though I don't like to talk about it much. Sure, go on, why don't you take a look at my luggage?

The border guard has begun rummaging around in Harpo's props basket. He becomes very agitated and calls excitedly to the frontier police post. Two guards run out.

The three guards bend over the basket, rummaging about. One gives a shout and stands, brandishing a gun. The second gives a shout and stands, brandishing a knife. The third - the first border guard - gives a shout and stands, clutching a blond, curly wig which he shakes under Harpo's nose.

BORDER GUARD (very loud and threatening)

Shhhhhhpiooooooon!!!

The two other Guards produce an array of other props including masks, beards and moustaches, hats, several more wigs and scores more knives, not to mention Harpo's trademark shabby raincoat.

HARPO

Now hold on a minute. I'm an entertainer and those are the tools of my trade. Look.

He seizes the raincoat and puts it on, along with the blond wig.

HARPO

Here's how it goes.

He becomes the movie Harpo, running rapidly through a few comic numbers, mostly at the expense of the chief Border Guard, to the other guards' amusement. He seizes the gun and fires it - a US flag pops out. He holds out his hand to the chief guard, and as he reflexively moves to shake it, a dozen knives slide out and clatter to the ground. Another guard finds himself holding Harpo's leg (the giving-the-leg routine) and Harpo wearing his beatific smile. Etc.

HARPO (sings)

I'M PLAYING THE FOOL FOR YOU
YOU'RE PAYING THE FOOL WHO'S ME
AND JUST SO WE KNOW
WHO'S JOKING WITH WHO, LET'S

LAY IT ON THE LINE, PAY THE PIPER
DRINK A LITTLE WINE WOULD BE FINE, A
NICKEL OR A DIME OUGHT-A DO, SO
GET YOUR FEET IN LINE, BLUES A NO-NO
NO-O-O-O-O

NOBODY'S FOOL, PLAYIN' IT COOL, COOL AS CAN BE
EV'RYONE LAUGHTS BUT THE LAST LAUGH'S COMIN' TO ME
NOBODY'S FOOL, PLAYIN' MY RULES, HOPE YOU AGREE

MOST POLITICIANS ARE UNLIKE MUSICIANS
THEY DON'T PLAY FAIR
JESTERS AND JOKERS NO DEALERS OR BROKERS
WE JUST DON'T CARE

SIMPLE PEOPLE THEY DON'T PINE
FOR NIETZSCHE, KANT OR WITTGENSTEIN
REPUBLICAN OR DEMOCRAT
THEY ONLY WEAR THE SAME OLD HAT
THE CATH'LICS WANT A POPE IN POWER
PHILOSOPHERS DIG SCHOPENHAUER
AND ME...
WELL... I'M A MARXIST

NOBODY'S FOOL, PLAYIN' IT COOL, COOL AS CAN BE
EV'RYONE LAUGHS BUT THE LAST LAUGH'S COMIN' TO ME
NOBODY'S FOOL, PLAYIN' MY RULES, HOPE YOU AGREE

NOBODY'S FOOL, PLAYIN' IT COOL, COOL AS CAN BE
EV'RYONE LAUGHS BUT THE LAST LAUGH'S COMIN' TO ME
NOBODY'S FOOL, PLAYIN' MY RULES, HOPE YOU AGREE
(honks his horn)

Maxim and Ivy Litvinov hurry onstage.

MAXIM LITVINOV

I'm sorry we're late.

HARPO

Thank heavens you came, I was about to be arrested for possession of a subversive blond wig and 200 knives you couldn't cut a milk shake with.

IVY

Don't worry, my husband is the foreign minister. He'll soon sort this out.

Maxim says a few words to the border guards who leave.

IVY

It's good of you to come.

HARPO

It was good of you to invite me.

IVY

That was my idea. My name's Ivy, by the way.

HARPO

You're English?

IVY

Yes. I'll explain later. We thought you could act as a kind of good-will ambassador. I'm sure you know how to be diplomatic.

HARPO

(flashes his gleeful mischief-making smile to the audience)

You can count on me.

IVY

Let me introduce you to your interpreter.

(Lowers her voice a tone)

I ought to warn you that she is also under instructions from the political police to keep an eye on you. (Calling) Valentina!

Valentina, a severely dressed and coiffed woman in her early 20s, steps forward.

IVY (to Harpo)

Valentina Malekinova, your interpreter.

(To Valentina)

This is Harpo Marx, known to millions around the world as a brilliant clown on the silver screen.

VALENTINA (sternly)

Welcome to Russia, known to millions around the world as the homeland of the workers.

HARPO

That sounds delightful.

VALENTINA

We welcome your visit as a valued contribution to the friendship between our two great peoples.

HARPO

I'm sure our great peoples are going to get along fine. (To Ivy) How did I do?

IVY

How did you do what?

HARPO

As a diplomat. Do I get the job?

MAXIM LITVINOV

You get the job. Now let's get you to your hotel. You have a meeting in the morning.

HARPO

I do?

IVY

That's right. We've set up an audition for you at one of the most prestigious playhouses in Moscow - the Chekhov Art Theatre.

HARPO

Why, that's wonderful! Marx at the Chekhov. Chekhov and Marx...

Exit.

Scene 3: THE KREMLIN

Stalin's apartment in the Kremlin. Stalin is seated at the head of a table at which he is accompanied by four members of the Politburo - Molotov, Kaganovich, Voroshilov and Sergo Ordzhonikidze, who are engaged in after-dinner conversation.

Stalin is reading a newspaper, apparently ignoring the others.

MOLOTOV

So what are we going to call it?

VOROSHILOV

Call what?

MOLOTOV

The Congress, of course.

VOROSHILOV

Why do we have to call it anything? It's not a cat or a dog.

MOLOTOV

We have to refer to it as something.

ORDZHONIKIDZE

Why not refer to it simply as the 17th Party Congress?

MOLOTOV

Communications, comrade. We must move with the times, embellish the event with a memorable title that will please the people. I don't know, something like: the Congress marking the Achievement of the Five-Year Plan in Just Four Years.

VOROSHILOV (sarcasm)

Sheer poetry - the people will love it!

MOLOTOV (musing aloud)

Or the Congress to Launch the Drive to an Ever-Higher Stage of Development.

VOROSHILOV (sighs)

What can we do with him? (To Kaganovich) What do you think? Do we give the Congress a special name?

KAGANOVICH

Well, I, er, perhaps it's a little premature to take up a position on the issue...

STALIN (without looking up)

The Congress of Victors.

MOLOTOV

Yes, of course!

VOROSHILOV

That's it! Why didn't we think of it!

KAGANOVICH

Brilliant! Says it all!

MOLOTOV

Victors! After all, we've won, haven't we?

VOROSHILOV

Just look in the papers. Is the news good or is it good?

ORDZHONIKIDZE (acidly)

We write the papers. It ought to be.

KAGANOVICH

We've won! We've won!

MOLOTOV

Call up the editors and regional secretaries. It's to be: the 17th party Congress, the Congress of Victors.

STALIN (still not looking up)

Nothing official. Just word of mouth.

MOLOTOV

Hold on, hold on! Let's not get ahead of ourselves. Best to put it about quietly. You know, a word here and there in the right ear, nothing official, just let it slowly catch on...

KAGANOVICH

That's it. Everyone'll catch on...

Svetlana, Stalin's seven-year-old daughter, enters, accompanied by Karl Pauker, the head of the Kremlin guards.

Svetlana has pigtails and is played by an adult actor.

Pauker is rotund, bald and very short, with lifts.

SVETLANA (running to Stalin)

Papa!

PAUKER (hopelessly)

She insists on seeing you.

Stalin sets aside his newspaper and takes Svetlana in his arms.

STALIN

What's up with my Setanka, then? Why isn't she in bed?

SVETLANA (indicating Pauker)
He wouldn't let me see my First Secretary!

STALIN (cuddling her on his knee)
That's his job, you know. And it's past your bedtime.

SVETLANA
But I'm the Boss.

STALIN
Not after your bedtime, you're not.

SVETLANA
But I am! You're my First Secretary. And these are my second secretaries.

She indicates Molotov and the other Politburo members who have been smiling indulgently.

STALIN
That's right. And your secretaries are working very hard to make a better future for your people. You're happy with your secretaries, I hope?

SVETLANA (hugging Stalin)
Oh yes. I've got the best first secretary in the world!

STALIN (mischievously)
And your second secretaries? You're happy with them too?

SVETLANA (unsure)
I am if you are.

STALIN (scanning his colleagues's faces)
With all of them? You don't think anyone's been slacking? Not pulling their weight?

As Svetlana follows Stalin's gaze, the Politburo smiles freeze. A long pause.

SVETLANA (finally)
No, I don't think so...

STALIN
Good. Now it's off to bed with you.

SVETLANA
Oh but papa -

STALIN
No buts. Classes in the morning, and you'd better be on top form. (Standing, to Pauker)
Comrade, would you be so good?

I don't want to go to bed.

SVETLANA (petulantly)

You will do what I say.

STALIN

There is an edge in Stalin's voice as he says this that creates a momentary chill. Svetlana's resistance collapses.

Come on then, a goodnight kiss.

STALIN

Svetlana kisses Stalin on the cheek, then submissively offers Pauker her hand and heads for the door.

You gotta to be hard, you wanna be taken seriously...

STALIN (from the song he sings later)

Svetlana is about to leave when Kirov arrives. Svetlana runs to greet him.

Kirishka!

SVETLANA

Hey there, little girl! Hey, Koba!

KIROV

Pick me up and carry me! I want you to pick me up and carry me!

SVETLANA

She's on her way to bed.

STALIN (observing jealously)

Well then, it's goodnight, little girl, and sweet dreams.

KIROV

Oh...

SVETLANA (disappointment)

One last kiss and off you go.

KIROV

Svetlana kisses Kirov once more and leaves with Pauker. Kirov and Stalin throw their arms round each other.

Kirish!

STALIN (with genuine warmth)

Koba. The comrades in Leningrad send their warmest greetings.

KIROV

STALIN

I'm surprised they can spare you.

Stalin returns to his seat and, as is his custom, observes a watching brief.

KIROV (to Ordzhonikidze)

Sergo, my old friend. How are you? (To the rest of them) Hey there, fellers.

MOLOTOV

You're late.

KIROV

Work work work, I can never get away. Anyway, I'm here now.

VOROSHILOV

We're preparing the Congress.

KIROV

Yes, I know. I've prepared some notes -

MOLOTOV (interrupting)

Everything's been decided. The delegations, who to invite, who to exclude. The Central Committee vote, who gets how many, who -

KIROV

You're fixing the vote? What for? Why not let the delegates have their say. They're the Party, and the Party can't be wrong, can it.

MOLOTOV

We're just making sure.

KIROV

Aw come on, loosen up. We're not at war with anyone. The people are behind us. Why don't we just trust the people? (To Ordzhonikidze) Sergo, what do you say? You think we should trust the people, don't you?

ORDZHONIKIDZE

In principle, yes.

KIROV

In principle. What about practice?

ORDZHONIKIDZE (nods at the others)

It's been decided.

KIROV

We're getting results now - look at the figures. (Pause) But at the same time...

MOLOTOV

At the same time what?

KIROV

There's some discontent, especially among the cadres. The arrests, the punishments, have gone too far. It's not always their fault if the supplies arrive too little, too late, or if the quality of what they have to work with isn't good enough. It's demoralizing. It means no one wants to take responsibility any more. And there's the food situation. We have to ease up there too. After what happened in the Ukraine there has to be a -

MOLOTOV (throws up his arms)

Don't mention the Ukraine!

VOROSHILOV (idem)

Don't mention the Ukraine!

KAGANOVICH (idem)

Don't mention the Ukraine!

ORDZHONIKIDZE (pleadingly)

Don't mention the Ukraine!

STALIN (loudly, chillingly)

It - never - happened.

A long pause. Kirov stares at Stalin, who stares back.

KIROV

But Koba...

(Music begins, and he sings)

CHANGING THE WORLD ISN'T EASY
WHEN YOU'RE BUILDING UTOPIA
ROME WASN'T BUILT IN A DAY
AND THOUGH WE TRY COME WHAT MAY
THAT REAL CORNUCOPIA
IS STILL A HORIZON AWAY

A KINDER, GENTLER REVOLUTION
MORE TAKE-HOME PAY LESS NO-CAN-DO
A KINDER, GENTLER REVOLUTION
MORE JAM TODAY, LESS G-P-U
THAT PARTY LINE WANTS SEEING TO
MORE JAM TODAY, LESS G-P-U
THAT PARTY LINE WANTS SEEING TO

CHANGING THE WORLD ISN'T EASY
WHEN YOU'RE STORMING THE HEAVENS ABOVE
BUT PEOPLE DON'T WANT THE STICK
WE BUILD WITH SOULS NOT JUST BRICK
IT'S TIME TO MIND THE HUMAN SIDE
WE'VE NOTHING TO LOSE BUT OUR CHAINS

A KINDER, GENTLER REVOLUTION
MORE PEACE OF MIND LESS BENDED KNEE
A KINDER, GENTLER REVOLUTION
LESS PARTY LINE MORE YES-SIRREE
THAT'S WHERE WE WANT OUR HEART TO BE
LESS PARTY LINE MORE YES-SIRREE
THAT'S WHERE WE WANT OUR HEART TO BE

A KINDER, GENTLER REVOLUTION
NOW

Stalin intervenes immediately. .

STALIN
That's all very well, but as I see it...
(sings)
HARD, HARD, OH HARD, HARD...

YOU GOTTA BE HARD, HARD, HARD
YOU WANNA BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY
YOU GOTTA BE HARD, HARD, HARD
TO GET WHAT YOU WANT
YOU GOTTA BE TOUGH, TOUGH, TOUGH
YOU WANNA DESTROY THE BOURGEOISIE
YOU GOTTA BE ROUGH, ROUGH, ROUGH
AND NEVER RELENT

MMM HARD, YEAH HARD, M- M- HARD

CLEAN UP THE MASSES, NO UPPER CLASSES
TREAT EV'RYBODY THE SAME
TAKE A TIP FROM DANTE, ANYBODY ANTI
HELLFIRE'S THE NAME OF THE GAME
ROLL DOWN THE SHUTTER, GIVE 'EM GUNS NOT BUTTER
NOBODY'S GONNA TAKE THE BLAME

OOH HARD, YEAH HARD, M- M- HARD

YOU GOTTA BE HARD, HARD, HARD
YOU WANNA BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY
YOU GOTTA BE HARD, HARD, HARD
TO GET WHAT YOU WANT
YOU GOTTA BE TOUGH, TOUGH, TOUGH
YOU WANNA DESTROY THE BOURGEOISIE
YOU GOTTA BE ROUGH, ROUGH, ROUGH
AND NEVER RELENT

HARD, HARD, YEAH HARD, HARD, HARD, HARD, HARD

Stalin brings his song to a triumphant conclusion with the rest of the Politburo joining the chanting of "hard".

Lights down.

Scene 4: THE CHEKHOV ART THEATRE

The Chekhov Art Theatre. The artistic director's office. The stiff-necked Artistic Director and his Assistant are seated on chairs while Harpo, wearing his blond wig and tramp's clothes, and accompanied by Ivy and Valentina, stands in front of them.

IVY

To conclude this audition, Mr Marx has asked me to help him out with a routine, and you'll have to make allowance for my lack of experience. Now, imagine that one day Harpo is out on Red Square, and he wants to find his way to the main department store. So he goes up to a policeman...

With Ivy in a straight-man role, Harpo performs a Harpo-meets-dumb-cop sketch - exclusively physical, with occasional dialogue from Ivy when appropriate. It is riotously funny, but the artistic director and his assistant remain silent and stony-faced. After a while, realizing that his best efforts are achieving nothing, Harpo winds down.

HARPO

We're not getting much joy here, are we?

Harpo stares at the officials who stare back. He scratches his head and walks up to the assistant and throws him a "gookie" - a Harpo-style facial contortion.

The assistant recoils.

HARPO

He's alive! How about that! (To the assistant) D'you know, what we need is a patsy, a real, a proper patsy. And you look like just the ticket. Would you mind stepping forward...

Harpo takes the assistant by the arm. Caught by surprise, the assistant allows himself to be pulled into the playing area.

HARPO

Valentina, I think you can help me here.

Harpo uses the assistant and Valentina in orchestrating a brief flurry of physical gags. The assistant is invariably the butt of the jokes. Valentina at first frowns but is drawn into the routine. She starts to smile and finally has to repress a giggle at the assistant's discomfiture. Harpo ends up with a flourish.

HARPO

There now. How was that?

ASSISTANT (rage, confusion)

I... I... I...

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR (standing)

(To the assistant) Come. (To Harpo) Never will we allow such an outrage in the Chekhov theatre!

The artistic director and his assistant storm out.

HARPO (to Ivy)

Aw shucks. I think we just blew it.

IVY

Never mind. There are plenty of other theatres in town.

HARPO (to Valentina)

That's too bad about Chekhov. What do you say, honey?

Valentina's face has crumbled, and now she bursts into a torrent of sobs and tears.

HARPO

Hey, I didn't really care that much.

(She continues sobbing)

It wasn't you, if that's what you're thinking. You did great.

Harpo and Ivy manage to staunch the flow of tears.

HARPO

There now.

VALENTINA

I'm sorry.

HARPO

You want to tell us about it?

VALENTINA

No, I - (She chokes and sobs some more)

HARPO

Come on, it can't be as bad as that.

VALENTINA

No. Yes. It's... It's... I just can't stand it anymore.

HARPO

If it helps to get it off your chest... Tell us about it.

VALENTINA

Well, it's my fiancé, Igor. He's an engineer. Oh it's so unfair.

IVY

Don't be upset. Maybe we can help.

VALENTINA

It all began with a trivial incident - the stupidest thing. But since then my life's been a nightmare. They were talking about some ridiculous football game...

Lights dim on Valentina and fade up on:

Scene 5: FACTORY, SHOP FLOOR

The shop floor of a factory producing metal plates. Centrally positioned is a conveyor-belt with, either side of it, a pair of workers whose machine-like arm movements indicate the repetitive nature of the job. At a desk stands engineer Igor Shponkin - tall, big-boned, blond hair - talking animatedly to his colleague and friend Boris Rostovsky.

IGOR

No way you could have won. We've got half the best players in Moscow.

ROSTOVSKY

If it hadn't been for that fluke shot in the second half...

IGOR

Fluke my eye. It was a Yakushin special. Caught it on his thigh, swivelled to beat your defender, span again, leaned back and wham! chipped it into the far corner. Brilliant!

ROSTOVSKY

Rubbish! He was falling over and poked out a leg to stay upright. He just happened to catch the ball as he went down. Diabolical luck.

IGOR

Yeah, lucky like a fox. He does it all the time. Like this. Look...

He picks up an old football which happens to be lying nearby and gives it a hefty kick on the half-volley, intending it to whizz across the floor. But it flies up into the air and strikes a bust of Stalin full in the face. The bust falls backwards and crashes onto a lever which releases a heavy weight that falls onto the conveyor belt and knocks over a row of metal plates in a comic domino effect that brings the entire production process grinding to a halt.

There's an appalled silence, and then an alarm howls.

A factory Official in overalls rushes to the scene followed a moment later by Borchgrov, a party supervisor.

OFFICIAL

What's going on here?

IGOR (flustered)

I'm sorry, I... It was an accident. There was a... a football, and I took a kick at it, and...

BORCHGROV (rushing up)

Who's responsible for this?

IGOR

I am. I kicked this ball and...

ROSTOVSKY

We were just fooling around and -

BORCHGROV (to ROSTOVSKY)

Shut your face. (To Igor) Kicking balls around on the shop floor, that's a disciplinary charge at the very least.

OFFICIAL

You realize what you've gone and done, don't you? You've -

BORCHGROV (brutally, to the official)

You keep out of this. (To Igor) So you were kicking a football in working hours.

IGOR

Look, we were just chatting for a few seconds, and there happened to be a football around, and -

BORCHGROV (picking up a fragment of Stalin)

Look at this - our leader...! This is hooliganism, if not worse.

OFFICIAL (to Borchgrov)

Steady on, I don't think it was intended -

BORCHGROV (to the official)

Are you arguing with me?

OFFICIAL (muttering)

I'll go and check the damage.

The official leaves. Borchgrov returns to the attack.

BORCHGROV

This will be reported to the party committee. And I'm going to recommend disciplinary measures.

ROSTOVSKY

Take it easy, comrade. It was only a light-hearted -

BORCHGROV

And I'll have you down as an accomplice if you're not careful. (ROSTOVSKY falls silent)
You know, Shponkin, I'm beginning to wonder about you. There have been too many incidents like this lately. All objectively furthering the cause of our enemies.

IGOR

You're not suggesting I did it on purpose!

BORCHGROV

You know the watchword: Vigilance! Down with wreckers! Down with saboteurs! Let the committee decide what's to be done. I'm ordering an investigation, and I'll also be drawing up a character report.

IGOR

You've got nothing against me! I've worked my butt off, keeping up production levels.

BORCHGROV

I've got your number, Shponkin. I think you're a snake in the grass, just biding your time.
(Pointing at Igor) Take my advice - don't make any plans for the future.
(He leaves)

IGOR

What does he mean by that? Don't plan for the future...?

ROSTOVSKY

It means he's out to get you. He's got you in his sights.

IGOR

What? Because of just now? All right, I goofed, let them punish me. But I haven't committed a treasonable offence.

ROSTOVSKY

Sure, I know that. But beware of Borchgrov.

IGOR

Why? What's special about him?

ROSTOVSKY

I never intended to tell you, but... How long have you been going with Valentina?

IGOR

With Vala? Why... about six months.

ROSTOVSKY

Don't you remember? Just before that. Borchgrov was hanging around her. He was really sweet on her.

IGOR

Well yes, but that's no reason for him to...

ROSTOVSKY

She told him to get lost. Didn't mince her words. And when you showed up... He said he'd find a way of getting back at you.

IGOR

Well, sure, but... He's hardly going to denounce me just because of that? Is he now?

The underscoring of *They Promised me the Moon* resumes as the lights fade down on the factory floor.

VALENTINA (still tearful)

That was two weeks ago. Now we're just waiting, waiting, waiting. Oh I wish I knew what to do.

HARPO

That's outrageous. How can we stop him?

IVY

We'll put in a word for you. Tell us who we need to see.

VALENTINA

Oh but you don't know them. Once they've made up their minds, that's it.

IVY (to Harpo)

I'm afraid she's right. Once a decision's been taken, it's the devil's own work to get it changed.

HARPO

Then we'll take it as high as it goes. To the top if need be.

IVY

To the top?

HARPO (against musical intro)

To the top!

VALENTINA (sings)

THEY PROMISED ME THE MOON
I'D HAVE BEEN AS HAPPY WITH JUST A LITTLE STARLIGHT
TO MAKE MY MEANINGLESS EXISTENCE
SOMETHING NEW
MAKE IT NEW, MAKE IT NEW, MAKE IT NEW

I KNOW I'M NOT ALONE
GLAD TO BE UNHAPPY, HOPING THAT TOMORROW
WILL TAKE THE FRAGMENTS OF MY LIFE
AND TURN THE TIDE
TURN THE TIDE, TURN THE TIDE, TURN THE TIDE

GIVE ME ALL YOUR MOONS AND JUNES
AND HONEY TUNES AND RED BALLOONS
I'D SOONER HAVE THE PRECIOUS PAIN OF LOVE
BORE ME WITH YOUR FANCY PARTY PIECES

WHERE PUSH ALWAYS TURNS INTO SHOVE

THEY PROMISED ME THE MOON
I'D HAVE BEEN AS HAPPY WITH JUST A LITTLE STARLIGHT
TO MAKE MY MEANINGLESS EXISTENCE
SOMETHING NEW
MAKE IT NEW, MAKE IT NEW, MAKE IT NEW

I KNOW I'M NOT ALONE
GLAD TO BE UNHAPPY, HOPING THAT TOMORROW
WILL TAKE THE FRAGMENTS OF MY LIFE
AND TURN THE TIDE
TURN THE TIDE, TURN THE TIDE, TURN THE TIDE

Lights down.

Scene 6: THE KREMLIN

Darkness. A voice rings out: Stalin's. A cry of pain.

STALIN

Kirish....!

KIROV (still in darkness)

I'm here, Koba.

STALIN

I hate today.

KIROV

Soon be over, Koba. Soon be tomorrow.

STALIN

Where are we?

KIROV

We're back. We're almost back. Here we are.

The lights rise dimly on a corridor. Stalin and Kirov, passably drunk, have their arms around each other's shoulders.

They reach a door in the corridor that Kirov prepares to open, stretching out his hand to turn the knob.

STALIN

Wait.

KIROV

What?

STALIN

You can hear what they're saying. Let's listen in.

He puts his ear to the door.

On the other side of the door the lights snap on and we're in a Kremlin apartment where the Kremlin crew - Molotov, Voroshilov, Kaganovich, Ordzhonikidze and Pauker - are seated or sprawled around a table. The remains of a meal, including wine bottles, are in evidence.

PAUKER (loudly, waving his glass)

French wines, who needs 'em! You can keep your Georgian mouthwash! Bull's Blood beats 'em all any day of the week.

VOROSHILOV

Oh yeah? So when did a Hungarian hair-dresser get to be a wine connoisseur?

PAUKER

Well if you really want to know, I had an extremely varied and fulfilling existence before assuming my present duties.

KAGANOVICH

We know everything we need to know about your previous existence, thanks.

ORDHZONIKIDZE

Wine is only one of the many contributions that Georgia has made to Russian life.

VOROSHILOV

You haven't exactly been stinting on the booze, I notice.

PAUKER

Well, we are celebrating.

KAGANOVICH (refilling his glass)

Aren't we just. Refills, anyone?

MOLOTOV

Remind me to order measures to step up wine production by 50 percent in the next year.

The doors burst open and Stalin and Kirov stagger in, still with their arms round each other's shoulders. Stalin detaches himself from Kirov and straightens himself up.

STALIN

No economic chauvinism. Chauvinism - bad!

MOLOTOV

Of course not. No question. Just a matter of quotas, and –

STALIN

Everyone having a good time?

MOLOTOV

Oh yes, certainly. Fulfilling our quota of, heh heh, good time.

STALIN

Good, good. Carry on.

VOROSHILOV

After all, we're celebrating.

STALIN (frowns)

We are? What are we celebrating?

VOROSHILOV

The anniversary. The 16th anniversary of the Great Revolution.

STALIN

Ah yes. (Pause. His face crumples) It was a year ago today...

A chill falls over the assembly.

VOROSHILOV (coughs)

Glorious October. The day the masses rose up and seized power. The day -

STALIN

Bugger the masses.

A beat.

MOLOTOV

Damn. I forgot. I have a report to write. Tractor production in the Urals. Must have it ready by tomorrow. Must be going.

VOROSHILOV

Now you mention it, me too.

KAGANOVICH

And me.

One by one, everyone stands and files out. Stalin and Kirov are left alone.

STALIN (staring at the door)

What's going on? Was it something I said?

KIROV

Forget it. You're tired –

STALIN (snaps)

I'm never tired. You noticed? They left when I mentioned Nadya.

KIROV

That is rather a personal matter.

STALIN

So they don't want to talk personal? What am I, a machine? Do they think I don't have feelings?

KIROV

Look at it their way. We've always said individual feelings are a distraction from the business of building socialism.

STALIN

I don't want to look at it their way. (Maudlin) A year ago today. In this very room. A year since she sat there and looked at me and stood up and walked out of my life for ever. The humiliation of it. (Long pause) Bah - who needs women?

KIROV

You do, Koba. We all do.

STALIN

I could handle women, Kirish. Got any woman I wanted.

KIROV

Sure you could. You'll find someone new, you'll see.

STALIN

Right. I'll find someone. Let's drink to it.

Stalin finds a couple of glasses and pours wine into them. He hands one to Kirov.

KIROV (raising his glass)

Koba - to the love of a good woman!

STALIN (raising his)

Right. To the... (Trails off. Pause) Kirish, if it wasn't for you... You saved my life. When Nadya... died, I wanted to kill myself. I was ready to forget my responsibilities. To the party, to History, everything. But you were there. You saved me. Saved me from myself. What would I have done without you, without my Kirish...? (He shakes his head) No. It won't do. It won't do for me, the Guide, to depend on anyone. On a woman. On you. Even on you, Kirish. Especially on you. I've got to be strong. I've got to be hard.

KIROV (stands)

Get some sleep, Koba. We've got a busy week ahead. Don't forget - the Americans are coming to town. We have to put on a decent show. (He walks to the door and looks back) Good night.

Kirov leaves. The lights dim. Stalin stands and moves centre stage (spot).

STALIN

A year ago today. You took that little gun that your fool of a brother gave you and pointed it at your breast and blew my heart out.

(Sings)

DO I NEED A WOMAN? NO - WOMEN ARE TOO SOFT
WOMEN MAKE YOU WEAK
BUT NADYA, NADYA, OUR LOVE WAS SO STRONG
AND NOW YOU ARE GONE FOREVER - WHAT KIND OF MAN AM I?

WHEN YOU DIED, I DIED WITH YOU
AND THE STRENGTH OF MY LOVE TURNED INTO ANGER AND HATE
BY YOUR SIDE, I DIED WITH YOU
AND THE JOY OF MY LIFE WAS WIPED OFF CLEAN FROM THE SLATE

YOU KILLED ME, NADYA, IT'S ME YOU KILLED
I DIED WITH YOU
YOU KILLED ME, NADYA, IT'S ME YOU KILLED
I DIED WITH YOU

AND NOW WHO WILL STOP ME BECOMING
WHAT I AM ABOUT TO BECOME
NOW WHO WILL STOP ME BECOMING
WHAT I AM ABOUT TO BECOME

A woman in white, barely visible in the shadows, passes quickly across the stage.

STALIN

Nadya! Nadya, is that you?

The woman vanishes. Stalin shakes his head.

STALIN

Madness. I don't believe in ghosts. I'm a dialectical materialist.

Lights down.

Scene 7: THE LITVINOVS' APARTMENT

A light, airy apartment, with Spartan fittings. Ivy enters, followed by Harpo.

IVY

You can hang your coat there.

HARPO

Sure. Husband not at home?

IVY

Husband never at home. Too much work.

HARPO

Everyone has too much work round here. And not enough time for having fun. Sometimes I think I might as well go back home.

IVY

Oh no, you mustn't do that.

HARPO

No? Why not?

IVY

You saw that poor young woman. We've got to help her. What's more you promised you would. We'll take it to the top, you said. Remember?

HARPO

Me and my big mouth.

IVY

A promise is a promise.

HARPO

Say, how long have you lived in Moscow?

IVY

Fifteen years. Since the early days of the revolution.

HARPO

And how did you end up married to the foreign minister of the Soviet Union?

IVY (laughs wryly)

I never could resist a lost cause. The day I met my husband... That was long ago. I was young and fresh-faced and full of ideals. The world was at war. Everywhere there was just blood and oppression. One day I took my ideals and my anger for a stroll up on Hampstead Heath...

A shift in the lighting. Spot on the Younger Ivy and the Younger Litvinov. Both are dressed in white. He's sitting reading a newspaper.

YOUNGER IVY

It's far too hot, isn't it.

Litvinov ignores her.

YOUNGER IVY

Quite unbearable. I'm sure I can't bear it. Can you?

Litvinov takes out a dictionary and looks up a word.

LITVINOV (strong Russian accent)

If you know of a better, er, bench, you may go to it.

YOUNGER IVY

Oh you don't speak English. I'm so sorry, I didn't realise.

LITVINOV

Excuse me, I speak English enough good for that if I want speak with you I succeed without problem. But now it wants me to read newspaper. Thank you so kindly.

YOUNGER IVY (peering at his newspaper)

You're Russian! Oh how interesting! Have you been in London long?

LITVINOV

That is my business, not for you.

YOUNGER IVY

You won't tell me? (Pause) You aren't one of those revolutionaries, are you? Oh you are, I can tell.

LITVINOV

Miss... Madam... I am not at liberty to discuss with you.

YOUNGER IVY

You mustn't be afraid of me. I'm devoted to Russia. To the Revolution.

LITVINOV

Young lady, what can you possibly know about my country?

YOUNGER IVY

Well for starters, some bits of Russian. Listen. Dobry den! (Raising her fist) Slava Revolyutsiyi! V peryod, tovarishi!

LITVINOV (staring at her)

(Pause) Okay, okay. So you're on our side. Big deal.

YOUNGER IVY

Isn't there anything I could do to help?

LITVINOV (laughs)

Miss, go home. Wish we be lucky. That is help enough for us.

YOUNGER IVY

I could help you with your English! You could certainly use a hand there. And if you like, I could... I don't know, perhaps you need a secretary. You wouldn't have to pay me. I could do it in my free time.

LITVINOV

(Long pause) Well, now you mention it...

The following song is sung partly singly either by the younger or the older Ivy, partly jointly by both. Litvinov joins in on two lines.

YOUNGER IVY (sings)
I STARTED LIVING, LIFE BECAME THRILLING WHEN I MET YOU
BUT LET'S NOT BE ROMANTIC, JUST STAY TRUE
(jointly) HEADING FOR A BRAVE NEW WORLD TOGETHER

(younger Ivy) WE NEED A SHAKE-UP, CHANGE ALL OUR MAKE-UP, HERE'S WHAT WE'LL DO
WE'LL PAINT THE WHOLE TOWN RED, MAX, NO NOT BLUE
(jointly) NEVER MIND ABOUT THE STORMY WEATHER

(older Ivy) WHEN TIME AND TIDE HAVE HAD THEIR SAY
IS IT ONLY EMPTINESS THAT'S REAL
(jointly with Litvinov) WHICH REVOLUTION WILL BE ENDED, WHOSE LOVE LIE BROKEN
ON THE WHEEL

(younger Ivy) MADNESS TO LOVE YOU
(older Ivy) WEAKNESS TO LEAVE YOU
(jointly) NOWHERE TO GO
(older Ivy) SO LET'S NOT BE ROMANTIC, JUST STAY TRUE
(jointly with Litvinov) HEADING FOR A BRAVE NEW WORLD TOGETHER

Lights down.

Scene 8: PARTY COMMITTEE ROOM - THE KANGAROO COURT

A room in the factory that serves for party business. On the walls, posters glorifying Lenin, incitements to the workers to work harder and to exercise greater vigilance, etc.

The rhythmic throb of the machines is audible in the background, punctuating the dialogue and modulating easily, as the context requires, into the fear riff.

Seated at a desk facing a group of workers are a Party Official and his Assistant. The workers include Igor, Rostovsky and Valentina. Borchgrov, presenting the case against the defendant, is standing.

BORCHGROV

Comrades, it's clear that engineer Shponkin fully intended to damage our industrial apparatus. Moreover his demolition of a bust of our great leader Joseph Vissarionovich Stalin was an act of spite and disrespect to the party.

IGOR (indignantly)

Never! It was just a -

PARTY OFFICIAL

Will you sit down, Comrade Shponkin!

BORCHGROV

Naturally, Shponkin disguises his ill intentions under a cloak of youthful high spirits. But make no mistake - what we have here is nothing less than counter-revolutionary activity, and I urge that the wrecker Shponkin be punished with the utmost severity.

PARTY OFFICIAL

Thank you. (To Igor) What do you have to say to that?

IGOR (standing)

That's nonsense! I'm hundred percent behind the party line. My record speaks for itself.

PARTY OFFICIAL (sternly)

The fact remains that as a result of your action two hours' production was lost. Objectively you have assisted the cause of our enemies.

IGOR

It was an accident! I'll make up for it.

PARTY OFFICIAL

Sit down! Your foolish actions have given satisfaction to counter-revolutionaries everywhere. (To Borchgrov) You say you've obtained information about Shponkin's antecedents.

BORCHGROV

That's right. (Producing some documents) I can show that five years ago Shponkin's mother's second cousin in Omsk was unmasked as a Right Deviationist.

IGOR

What of it? Last year my father's second cousin in Tomsk was unmasked as a Left Deviationist. That evens it out.

PARTY OFFICIAL (thumping the desk)

Enough of that!

The factory machines have worked up a rhythm conducive to the development of a comic-but-sinister Gilbert and Sullivan-style musical number sung by the party official, the assistant and Borchgrov.

Each of the three stands to sing his line and sits once he has completed it.

(The suffix -tion in the following lines is pronounced as three syllables: -ish-ee-on).

PARTY OFFICIAL

THE PARTY CANNOT TOLERATE THE PLANNING OF SEDITION

ASSISTANT

THE ROOTING OUT OF TRAITORS IS A BOLSHEVIK TRADITION

BORCHGROV

THERE'S NOTHING LIKE A TRIAL TO PURGE UNWANTED COMPETITION

PARTY OFFICIAL

BUT FIRST A LITTLE MORE OF OUR MOST JOLLY INQUISITION

ALL THREE TOGETHER
BUT FIRST A LITTLE MORE OF OUR MOST JOLLY INQUISITION.

The three return to the seated position and their solemn poses.

PARTY OFFICIAL (to Borchgrov)
I understand that a number of Shponkin's fellow workers have spontaneously come forward to provide character references.

BORCHGROV
That's right. And the evidence of Shponkin's moral turpitude is absolutely overwhelming. (To one of the workers) Comrade! Tell the party commissioner what you told me.

WORKER #1 (uncertain)
Well, the other day he was whistling...

BORCHGROV
Yes, comrade. Whistling what?

WORKER #1
While the rest of us were singing the national anthem, he just whistled it!

BORCHGROV
You see? Utter contempt for Soviet institutions. Thank you, comrade. (He nods to another worker) Now you.

WORKER #2
Last summer, a group of us went on a camping holiday, and he (pointing to Shponkin) came with us.

BORCHGROV
Yes? And?

WORKER #2
Well, he wanted to light a cigarette but no one had any matches, so he tore a page from a party instruction manual to catch a light from the camp fire.

BORCHGROV
And?

WORKER #2
On the page of the manual there was a picture of Vladimir Ilyich Lenin...

PARTY OFFICIAL
Enough! Is nothing sacred?

He sings. The same standing-up, sitting-down routine as earlier.

PARTY OFFICIAL
LET'S HEAR IT FOR STALIN! LET'S HEAR IT FOR LENIN!

ASSISTANT
WITHOUT OUR GREAT LEADERS THERE'S REALLY NO TELLIN'

BORCHGROVE
THE STATE THAT WE'D BE IN, SO QUIT ALL YOUR SNARLIN'

PARTY OFFICIAL
LET'S HEAR IT FOR LENIN! LET'S HEAR IT FOR STALIN!

ALL THREE TOGETHER
LET'S HEAR IT FOR LENIN! LET'S HEAR IT FOR STALIN!

PARTY OFFICIAL (to Borchgrov)
And have you found any character references in favour of the engineer Shponkin?

BORCHGROV
Nothing. No-one has a good word to say about him.

IGOR
That's not true! You scared them off!

PARTY OFFICIAL
The engineer Shponkin will sit down.

VALENTINA (aside, to ROSTOVSKY)
Boris, it's our only chance. You've got to tell them. Tell them how Borchgrov was harassing me all the time and wanting to sleep with me, and how he's accusing Igor as a way of getting rid of him.

ROSTOVSKY (nervously)
I don't know. It's not the proper way.

VALENTINA
Please.

ROSTOVSKY (rising to his feet)
Comrades.

PARTY OFFICIAL
Yes?

ROSTOVSKY
Boris ROSTOVSKY, mechanic, second grade. If I could say a word.

BORCHGROV (also rising to his feet)
Ah yes. Mechanic Rostovsky. You were present with Shponkin at the time of his assault on our productive apparatus. Not only did you not prevent him from carrying out this outrage, it now appears that you want to exonerate him.

PARTY OFFICIAL (to Borchgrov)
Let the comrade say what he has to say in his own words. (To ROSTOVSKY) Go ahead.

Borchgrov remains standing, eyeing Rostovsky menacingly. The Fear riff, which began as Rostovsky rose to speak, grows louder.

ROSTOVSKY

I've known Igor five years. He's... (glances nervously at Borchgrov) mad about footie.
(Pause. He's sweating) He wouldn't... wouldn't... (Pause) Both took our exams... (Pause)
Ideological... (Pause) Don't see why...

His voice trails away and he sits.

PARTY OFFICIAL

That's it?

Rostovsky bows his head. Valentina and Igor stare at him aghast.

PARTY OFFICIAL

Well then, to conclude...

(sings) (standing then sitting, as earlier)

THE PARTY WILL NOT REST UNTIL THE PEOPLE ARE VICTORIOUS

ASSISTANT

THE REVOLUTION AIMS TO MAKE THE WORKERS' LIFE MORE GLORIOUS

BORCHGROV

AND IF AT TIMES IT SEEMS WE'RE JUST A LITTLE BIT CENSORIOUS

PARTY OFFICIAL

WE SEEK TO PLEASE THE CLIQUE FOR WHOM IT'S NOW ALL HUNKY-DORY - US!

ALL THREE TOGETHER (standing, arms raised)

WE SEEK TO PLEASE THE CLIQUE FOR WHOM IT'S NOW ALL HUNKY-DORY - US!

The three go into a head-down rugby-style huddle.

Indistinct murmurings are heard, then the official emerges.

PARTY OFFICIAL

Engineer Shponkin, you are relieved of your duties as of this moment. You will hand in your party card before you leave the building. You will be convoked at a later date to learn the nature of the administrative measures that will be taken against you.

The party official and his assistant stand and leave.

With a satisfied smirk, Borchgrov collects his papers together and does the same.

Valentina bursts into tears. Igor tries to comfort her

ROSTOVSKY stands, numb, then edges away, joining the other workers.

VALENTINA (between sobs)

They're going to take you away from me. They're going to send you to prison. Or to Siberia.

IGOR

It's all a terrible mistake.

The rhythmic factory sounds rise in volume, resolving gradually into the Fear riff.

VALENTINA

I don't know what to do. I'll have to leave my job too.

IGOR

No, you mustn't. Not unless they make you.

VALENTINA

It's so unfair. After all your hard work.

IGOR

There must have been a mix-up. If we could just find someone high up in the party to talk to about it, maybe we could have the decision rescinded. Maybe I could even get my party card back.

VALENTINA

Oh Igor, it never happens. I know - I work for them.

IGOR

Then what shall we do?

VALENTINA

I wish I knew. Oh darling, I'm scared.

IGOR

Don't be frightened. We'll win through somehow.

VALENTINA

Do you think so? Oh yes, I'm sure you're right.

IGOR/VALENTINA (duet, sharing as appropriate)
(Valentina) WHAT'S THE PARTY LINE ON LOVE?
(both) WE DON'T KNOW, WE DON'T CARE
THE PARTY HAS ITS FIVE-YEAR PLANS
(Igor) MAKING TRACTORS
(Valentina) GETTING IN OUR HAIR
OUR PLAN FOR LOVE IS
LET YOURSELF GO
WE LOOK INTO THE MIRROR OF OUR HEARTS
AND THEN WE KNOW
THAT ROMEO AND JULIET WERE SO
IN LOVE

SO IN LOVE
THAT'S WHY WE DON'T NEED A REASON
WE DON'T NEED A SEASON
OUR PLAN FOR LOVE IS
(Igor) NEVER SAY NO
(Valentina) GO WITH THE FLOW
THE VELVET GLOVE IS
(Igor) PAMPER YOUR BEAU
(Valentina) FORGET ABOUT JOE
TWO LOVEY-DOVEYS
TAKE IT NICE, TAKE IT SLOW
OUR PLAN FOR LOVE IS
LET YOURSELF GO

The lights slowly fade.

Scene 9: KREMLIN BANQUET HALL

Darkness. Silence. The lights snap on, a pair of doors fly open and in marches the US diplomatic delegation, Ambassador William C. BULLITT at its head.

The delegates march to a medley of loud, brash American brass-band music, starting with Souza's Stars and Stripes Forever and blending in plenty of Yankee Doodle Dandy, pizzazz, razzmatazz, Irving Berlin and all that jazz. They parade around the banquet hall (one of the delegates is a drum-majorette) before finally taking up position on one side of the hall. They horse-step up and down on the spot for a moment.

BULLITT

'Shun! (The marching stops) Right. You know why we're here. We're here because our president, Franklin D. Roosevelt, has decided that it's time to be nice to the Russkies. Of course we're not planning to be nice just in order to be nice. There are certain advantages to be had. Such as the fat business contracts that we confidently expect to come our way in the fullness of time. The vast natural resources they're gonna need a helping hand with. And of course their pledge that they will cease propogandising in the US of A. So. You know the form. We're diplomats, and that means acting diplomatically. Therefore no mention of the Russian emperor and his family. No mention of Russian bonds. And don't mention the Ukraine.
(Pause) We and the Soviets are going to be friends forever. What are we going to be?

AMERICAN DELEGATES

Friends forever!

Lights down on the Americans.

The banquet hall doors fly open again and in marches the Soviet delegation with Foreign Minister Maxim Litvinov at its head.

It marches to the stirring sound of a Soviet massed choir leading off a medley including folk music, balalaika tunes and Georgian hymns. The delegates (who include a stereotypical Soviet worker in overalls with his sleeves rolled up) parade around the banquet hall before finally taking up position opposite the Americans.

They horse-step on the spot for a few seconds.

LITVINOV

All right, all right, that's enough! (The marching stops) Comrades. This is a historic day. By recognising us, by allowing the US flag to fly in Moscow for the first time in 16 years, the Yankees have admitted at last that the Soviet Union is here to stay. The opening of official relations marks our arrival as a great power. It will provide several benefits. Through trade we will be able to obtain strategic equipment that we are currently lacking. Our friendship with America will warn off certain neighbours who may have designs on our territory. And of course with an embassy in Washington we'll be able to promote our interests more effectively. So. You know what is expected of you. For one thing: tact. No mention of plutocrats and robber barons. No mention of Al Capone. And don't mention the Wall Street crash. (Pause) The peoples of the Soviet Union and the United States of America are going to be friends forever. What are we going to be?

SOVIET DELEGATES

Friends forever!

The lights rise again on the Americans.

Litvinov sees Bullitt and turns to him with his arms outstretched.

LITVINOV

William! My dear friend! How are you?

BULLITT

Maxim! Delighted to see you. This is a great day for me.

LITVINOV

Indeed. As it is for all of us!

Litvinov and Bullitt embrace heartily. The Soviet and US delegates cross the stage and meet in the middle to do likewise. For a moment the stage is a mass of bear-hugging, embracing and general bonhomie.

The American music starts up again, launching into the Friends Forever song. The melody is taken up by the Soviet massed choir, and the two musical forms alternate.

DELEGATES (sing)
(Americans) FRIENDS FOREVER, ENEMIES NEVER
REGULAR GUYS AND GALS ARE WE
OPEN-HANDED, SUGAR-CANDIED
BIG-HEARTED GOOD OLD PALS YOU SEE

(Russian) COMRADES EVER, BOXING CLEVER
FRIENDSHIP IS OUR SECOND NAME
COSSACK DANCES, TAKING CHANCES
BEAR-HUGS ARE OUR CLAIM TO FAME

(Americans) FRIENDS FOREVER, (Russians) COMRADES TOGETHER
(Americans) FRIENDS FOREVER, (Russians) COMRADES TOGETHER
(All) WE WON'T MAKE WAR 'CAUSE WAR'S A CHORE
WE'LL UNLOCK OUR DOORS
SIGN THAT SANITY CLAUSE
(AIN'T NO SANITY CLAUSE, HOY!) (Stomp of feet)

(All) FRIENDS FOREVER, TIME WON'T SEVER
SOLID FRIENDSHIP, RIGHT TO THE END, HIP
HIP HOORAY
HAPPY DAY
WE'RE ALL FRIENDS AND COMRADES
NO SNEAKY BOMB RAIDS
FRIENDSHIP FOR EVER AND A DAY

During the song Stalin enters discreetly, followed by KIROV.

STALIN (genially)
Please, don't mind me. Just carry on as you were.

LITVINOV (surprised)
Comrade Gen-Sec!

STALIN
I heard you were holding a little celebration. I hope you don't mind my gate-crashing.

Stalin takes a glass from a nearby table, knocks back the contents
in one.

STALIN
I love a good party. Don't you, Kirish?

KIROV
Don't I just. Bring on the dancing girls.

STALIN
Good to see people enjoying themselves.

LITVINOV
On such an occasion it's the least -

STALIN (spotting Bullitt)
Ah, there he is - the man of the moment!

Mr. Ambassador, this is truly a momentous event. At last our countries are to be friends. Let us seal our friendship in the appropriate manner.

Stalin walks up to Bullitt and before he can react takes his head in
his hands and kisses him on the lips. Bullitt is stunned and fails to

react as the diminutive Stalin keeps his face turned up and his lips pursed in expectation of a return kiss.

Come on. Your turn.
STALIN

Finally Bullitt takes his courage in his hands and kisses Stalin back. The company cheers.

FRIENDS FOREVER!
STALIN (sings)

As the company sets to mixing, chatting, socialising and generally having a good time, the lights go down, plunging the banquet hall into darkness. Everyone freezes.

A spot picks out Harpo (movie persona) at the front of the stage.

HARPO (to the audience)
Mum's the word. Shhhht - see no evil, hear no evil. Easy, eh? Oh so easy.

As he speaks, he performs a series of physical routines using the frozen figures of the banquet hall delegates as props, those closest to the front of the stage, allowing each to return to his or her frozen position as he moves on to the next. Recorded laughter over.

HARPO
They say silence is golden. I dunno, maybe they're right. It's sure been that way for me. Started out from nothing, earn my living saying nothing, and now, well, look at me.

Clowning, most of it mute, continues with recorded laughter over.

HARPO
But there are times when you just have to speak out. Say what you see, say what you think, come what may. No two ways about it, when you see something that ain't right, speaking out is what a man's gotta do.

(More clowning, more laughter)
So here I am - speaking out, saying what has to be said - that's what friends are for.

(sings) FRIENDSHIP FOREVER AND A DAY...

A final piece of clowning, ending with a pratfall by one of Harpo's banquet hall delegate-props. Recorded applause. The spot snaps off.

Lights up. Harpo has vanished and the banquet hall celebrations are in progress.

The delegates are posted around the banquet hall, standing in groups. One group, positioned at the front of the stage, is formed by Stalin, Kirov, Litvinov and Ivy.

LITVINOV

Comrades, this is Ivy Walterovna.

KIROV

Maxim Maximovich, you old dog. You didn't tell us you had such a charming wife.

STALIN (to Ivy, gallant but stiff)

Greetings, citizen Litvinova. It is my pleasure.

IVY (cheerily)

You're too kind. I'm glad to help out in entertaining our American friends.

KIROV

Maxim tells me that you translate works of Russian literature into English.

IVY

It helps to supplement my husband's modest income.

KIROV (laughs)

Are you angling for a rise for your husband?

IVY

Certainly not. But don't let that stop you offering him one.

STALIN

The rules regarding pay rises for people's commissioners are very strict. (Frowns) But I'll look into it.

LITVINOV

No, please. That won't be necessary.

KIROV (to Ivy)

You must know our culture rather well.

IVY

There's a lot of it but I try to keep up.

KIROV

Do you like ballet? Opera?

IVY

Naturally.

KIROV

You must come up to Leningrad some time. We have some of the finest performers in Russia.

LITVINOV

My work doesn't often take me to Leningrad.

KIROV

Come up when your husband is off on one of his trips.

STALIN (starting to feel excluded)

Why should she, with the Bolshoi here in Moscow?

KIROV

I'm well in with the opera crowd. I could introduce you to people.

STALIN

I went to London once, you know.

IVY

Oh yes? How did you like it?

STALIN

Terrible transport. Always breaking down.

KIROV

You look like you might have been a dancer yourself.

IVY (laughs)

Comrade Kirov, you say the most outrageous things.

STALIN

Kirish, remember the other night, when we were talking about, well... (he trails off)

KIROV

What?

STALIN

You remember. We'd been drinking a bit, and I got rather... You said that I ought to find someone who... That what I needed was...

KIROV

What do you mean?

STALIN

Well, dammit!

KIROV (the penny drops)

Ah! You mean about...

IVY

What a delightful evening this is. (Taking in both Stalin and Kirov) Such charming company.

STALIN (captivated)

We must continue this discussion. I shall ask my secretary to arrange it.

KIROV

And you can call me any time.

IVY

Thanks. It's good to have friends in high places.
(sings) FRIENDSHIP FOREVER AND A DAY...

The lights go down. The banquet-goers freeze. Darkness.

Lights up on:

A Moscow street (front of stage). Igor and Valentina, muffled up against the cold, are walking up and down in the snow.

IGOR

The problem isn't Stalin, it's bad people at the top, in positions of authority.

VALENTINA

Do you think so?

IGOR

Sure. Stalin is surrounded by the wrong kind of people. If he knew what was happening, he's stop it soon enough. If only we could get through to him.

VALENTINA

Yes, if only. Well, there's a possibility...

IGOR

What possibility?

VALENTINA

The people I'm working for right now. They're well connected. I told them about us, and they said they'd like to help.

IGOR

That's wonderful! Who are they?

VALENTINA

One is Ivy Litvinova, the wife of the foreign minister, comrade Litvinov. She's English. The other is an American entertainer called Harpo Marx.

IGOR

Foreigners?! Are you out of your mind?

IVY

What choice do we have? They're our only friends.

Lights down. Lights up a moment later on: The banquet hall.

The celebration is still in progress. The delegates resume their conversations.

Ivy and Harpo (now in civilian clothes) talk in low tones near the front of the stage. Litvinov, while not forming part of the conversation, is a short distance away.

IVY (confidingly)

It's great that you could come. Guess what. We've got an invitation.

HARPO

We have?

IVY

Tomorrow night. With the master of the Kremlin himself.

HARPO

He invited me?

IVY

Actually it was me he invited, but I insisted on you coming with me. You'll be my chaperone.

HARPO

Great thinking, partner. Between the two of us, and with our powers of persuasion, it'll be a cinch.

IVY

And for good measure I've also set up a meeting with Sergei Kirov. For some reason he didn't seem keen to have you along.

LITVINOV (breaking in)

I don't know what you two are up to, but...

HARPO

I think I ought to go and meet some of my American friends. Excuse me.

He nods politely to Litvinov and crosses to another part of the stage, greeting and joining a group of American delegates.

IVY

What do you mean - up to?

LITVINOV

Stalin is not a man to play games with.

IVY

It was his suggestion. I could hardly say no.

LITVINOV (earnestly)

Ivy, my dear. We've led separate lives for many years now. I know that you've sought distractions elsewhere, and I've understood, I've kept my own counsel. But this time I must

speak out in warning. That Stalin, in his loneliness, should wish to enjoy your company, that is one thing. For you to encourage him in any way, or worse, to indulge him, that would be another. It would be sheer folly. Be careful, I beg you.

IVY

Don't worry, Maxim. It's not what you think it is.

LITVINOV

Everything about that man is dangerous. You know that.

IVY

You're right. But I feel he's at a turning point. He could go on as he is, a danger to all of us, to all of Russia. But perhaps he can still change. Perhaps it would take so little for him to take another course, to become more humane. He wants to see me, to talk to me. Okay, why not? (Pause) Apart from which, Stalin is not unattractive as a man.

LITVINOV

As always I find your approach to the finer points of historical development dismayingly unscientific. (Sighs resignedly) But then you're English.

IVY

For better or for worse.

LITVINOV

Yes, for better or for worse. Which is how I married you, is it not?

IVY

It is.

LITVINOV

It's been a matter of great satisfaction to me that despite everything we have remained friends.
(sings)
FRIENDSHIP FOREVER AND A DAY...

IVY (touches his hand)

To me too. Let's hope that, whatever the future holds, that much survives.

The Friends Forever motif develops Russian massed choir-style, and Stalin strides upstage, leading Bullitt by the arm. He goes up to Litvinov and seizes his hand, raising it aloft like a boxing referee announcing the winner of a fight, while doing the same with Bullitt's.

STALIN

Yes, friendship's the thing! Friendship between peoples. Between Russians and Americans. We have a few local difficulties? Let's forget 'em. Friendship between the classes, the haves and the have-nots. Okay, so it's dog eat dog. We can do better. Friendship between the generations, between those who are building the future and those who'll inherit the earth. One day, you'll see. Friendship between man and wife? A great idea. Don't you just love it? Can't you just see it? Let's give it a try. For tonight at least, let's be...

ALL (sing, as earlier)
(Americans) FRIENDS FOREVER, (Russians) COMRADES TOGETHER
(Americans) FRIENDS FOREVER, (Russians) COMRADES TOGETHER
(All) WE WON'T MAKE WAR 'CAUSE WAR'S A CHORE
WE'LL UNLOCK OUR DOORS
SIGN THAT SANITY CLAUSE
(AIN'T NO SANITY CLAUSE, HOY!)
(Stomp of feet)

Lights down.

Scene 10: THE KREMLIN - STALIN'S FLAT

Stalin's study-living room, sparsely decorated, with plenty of books and cushions. Some papers and files. A small bust of Lenin.

A table has been laid out with tea for three, but only Harpo (in civvies) is present.

Harpo pours himself some more tea, yawns, then glances at his watch. He stands and walks over to pick up the bust of Lenin, then addresses it, performing a mute Alas-poor-Yorick routine in an exaggerated Harpo-esque parody of Hamlet's soliloquy.

Finally he hears approaching footsteps and hurries to return to his seat. Stalin enters, accompanied by Ivy who is formally but attractively dressed.

Harpo has no part in the Stalin-Ivy dialogue and they barely acknowledge his presence as he observes them, his eyes flicking back and forth as at a tennis match.

IVY

Georgia sounds like a wonderful country. I really must visit some time.

STALIN

I go back there most summers. If you wanted I could -

IVY

And now here you are in the Kremlin, guiding the destinies of millions of people, scattered over thousands of miles. How far you've come - I'm sure it must take your breath away when you think about it.

STALIN

I'm far too busy for personal indulgences.

IVY

All work and no play - not a good thing, you know.

STALIN

I have other pleasures. For example, music. More tea?

IVY

Please.

STALIN (starts pouring)

I have a box at the Bolshoi. Perhaps one evening you might like to -

IVY (the tea)

That's enough, thanks. (Pause) Thank you for your invitations, but you really needn't.

STALIN

Oh but it would be my pleasure. If there's any favour I can do for you, just let me know.

IVY

Please, no.

STALIN

Really. You only need to ask.

IVY

I couldn't.

STALIN

Why not?

IVY

Well...

STALIN

Yes?

IVY

Actually there is something. One favour you could do.

STALIN

Whatever you like.

IVY

A young man of our acquaintance, an engineer name of Shponkin, has got into a spot of bother.

(Stalin frowns)

Youthful high spirits, quite obviously. But he's got his local party cell on his back. Yes, I know it's stupid, but I thought that a word from you, a brief note in the right place maybe, would sort it out or at least -

STALIN

Can't do it.

IVY

Can't do what?

STALIN

Can't step in. Not on. Not my job.

IVY

What do you mean, you can't step in? You run the party.

STALIN

Far from it. I'm merely its general secretary. A humble servant.

IVY

But we all know that you decide what's -

STALIN

No, no, no, you're quite wrong. I decide nothing. The party is the expression of the will of the working class which speaks through me. I'm helpless to impede its inexorable advance as it manifests itself in History. Individually we are powerless to affect its course. It's my policy never to try.

IVY

You won't try?

STALIN

No. Ask for something else.

IVY

No, I won't. I've never heard such nonsense.

STALIN

What?!

IVY

You heard me.

She holds his gaze. Several seconds pass.

STALIN (icily)

I said: ask for something else.

Ivy stands and picks up her coat.

IVY

You disappoint me. I thought you were a man of resource. I thought you were a man who could move mountains to help his people. It turns out you can't even pick up the phone. Helpless to help. Powerless to patch up a quarrel. For crying out loud, what kind of a man are you? (She leaves)

STALIN (rising to his feet)

Wait!

But she's gone. Stalin stares after her.

STALIN (to himself, impressed)

What a woman!

Ain't she just! HARPO (man to man)

STALIN
No-one ever spoke to me like that bef - (double-takes) Oh, it's you.

HARPO
Yeah, me. The funny man.

STALIN
What's so goddam funny about you?

HARPO
Well...

In double-quick time, Harpo turns his coat inside out and produces his blond wig topped by a battered top hat, turning himself into the screen Harpo.

STALIN
And that's funny?

HARPO
You like Charlie Chaplin?

STALIN
I love Charlie Chaplin.

HARPO
So do I. Put it there, pal.

He offers his hand which, when Stalin takes it, detaches itself.

STALIN
Hey...

Stalin gets rid of the fake hand but then finds himself, as in the cinema routine, holding Harpo's leg in his hand.

STALIN
Now look here...

HARPO
No! You look here... (sings)

HEY JOE, HOW'S THE SOVIET SYSTEM DOIN', YOU KNOW
DON'T BELIEVE IT'S REALLY WORKIN', AND F.D.R, WHEELIN', DEALIN',
HE TOLD ME SOMETHING GONNA HURT YOUR FEELINGS
NO RHYTHM, NO-O-O BLUES, NO VISION, BAD NEWS
CAN'T SNAP HIS FINGERS, SINGS LIKE A BEAR
JOE AIN'T NOTHING BUT A RED SQUARE

STALIN (joining in)
HARPO MY FRIEND, I DON'T QUICKLY OFFEND
BUT COME ON, THIS IS JUST A DISGRACE
TELL FDR, HOOVER GROOVED MORE BY FAR
AND WHAT'S MORE I DON'T LIKE HIS FACE

HARPO
I DON'T WANT TROUBLE, LET'S JUST SING TOGETHER

STALIN
YEAH GET YOUR HARP BEFORE I LOSE MY TETHER

HARPO & STALIN
SWING IT HERE, SWING IT THERE
WE'LL ALL SHAKE LEATHER ON THE RED SQUARE
SWING IT HERE, YEAH, SWING IT THERE
WE'LL ALL SHAKE LEATHER ON THE RED SQUARE

Harpo keeps up the physical comedy during the first part of the song. The song ends with some hokey-cokey-style shoe-shuffling.

STALIN
Look, you Americans act like you invented the joke. We Russians like to clown around too, you know.

HARPO
You do?

STALIN
Yeah. I, er...

For a second Stalin appears to attempt a physical routine, but thinks better of it.

STALIN
Right, I'll tell you a joke. A Russian joke. Listen. (He chortles to himself) You ready?

HARPO
I'm ready.

STALIN
Thousands of rabbits arrive at the Polish border, from all over the Soviet Union, and ask for permission to cross over. "What for?", the Polish border guards ask. The rabbits - (Stalin has to repress a snort of laughter) the rabbits explain: "The GPU has just issued an order to round up all the camels". The border guards reply: "But you're not - "(He creases over with laughter again) "but you're not camels". And the rabbits reply: "Yes but - "(He's now unable to control himself) "but try telling that to the GPU!"

Stalin explodes with thigh-slapping laughter which subsides into a racking cough. He bends forward, coughing, and Harpo slaps him on the back a few times to help it pass.

STALIN (wiping tears from his eyes)

Try telling the GPU!

HARPO

What a hoot. You okay now?

STALIN

Sure, I'm fine.

HARPO

You're in the wrong job. You'd make a great comic.

STALIN

You think so?

HARPO

You bet. Now wait a second, you remind me of someone. (leans back, fixing Stalin with an appraising look) That moustache... Those eyebrows... Where have I seen them before? If I might be allowed to...

Harpo whips a pair of wire-framed specs out of his pocket and perches it on Stalin's nose.

HARPO

Hmmm...

He whips out some blacking and blacks up Stalin's moustache and eyebrows.

HARPO

That's it. Perfect. Now if you'd just crouch down a little, like this... (he demonstrates, and Stalin complies) And you move around like this. Oh, and you'll need one of these - (He hands Stalin a cigar)

He leads the way and Stalin, with a more than passing resemblance to Groucho Marx, follows as they lope around the room.

STALIN

Like this?

HARPO

That's it. Stupendous. Now you're a real Marxist.

They complete a couple of circuits of the room.

HARPO (to the audience)
Better not let Groucho hear about this. He'd throw a fit.

STALIN (enjoying himself)
This is easy. Do all your brothers walk like this?

HARPO
Heck no, one's enough. So you can walk the walk. But if you wanna be a real Marxist, you've got to talk the talk. And nobody talks Groucho like Groucho. But mind you, there's my other brother.

STALIN
Your other brother?

HARPO (Italian-ish, Chico-fashion)
Yeah. He speak-a like this and make specially stupid jokes. Hey, you got something for a pain in the neck?

STALIN (offering some pills)
Certainly. Try these.

HARPO (pocketing them)
Thanks. I give them to him later.

STALIN (pause, then roars with laughter)
I like it!

HARPO
Ats-a funny, right?

STALIN
Yeah, ats-a real funny.

HARPO (encouraging)
You got it. You catch on real good.

STALIN (vaguely Chico-ish)
Hey, you got something for a headache?

HARPO
Nope. Not a thing.

STALIN
Oh. (stumped) Hey, ats-a all right, I don't gotta headache. (He laughs uproariously)

HARPO (Groucho voice, side of the mouth)
Much more of this and I'm going to need those pills. (To Stalin) Say, I've always been an admirer of yours, and so has just about everybody in my family.

From a pocket he produces several sheets of paper and a pen which he hands to Stalin.

HARPO (continuous)

I'd be honoured to have you in my autograph collection. If you'd just sign here.

STALIN

No problem. Ats-a my pleasure. (He signs)

HARPO

Here too. For uncle Willie in Kentucky. (Stalin signs) And here. For cousin George in Ohio. (Stalin signs) These are for my aunts in California, Ida and Ada. (Stalin signs twice) For another uncle, Reuben, in West Virginia. (Stalin signs) And my favourite nephew, Morrie, in upstate New York. (While Stalin signs) All good Marxists, every one of them. Now this one is for a little niece of mine called Little Nell...

(An exaggerated tremolo enters his voice)

... and she has an incurable disease which means her days are numbered. She hasn't got long to live, but I just know that receiving your autograph will mean so much to her and -

Stalin takes a closer look at the writing on one of the sheets of paper he has just signed.

STALIN (breaking in)

Now hold on, what's this? (Reading) "I the undersigned, Joseph Stalin, general secretary, order the acquittal of engineer Igor Shponkin on whatever charges he..." What's all this about?

Harpo gives a sickly smile.

STALIN

You tried to trick me! Don't lie!

Harpo looks left, looks right, searching desperately for an exit.

STALIN

The nerve of it! Trying to dupe me, the leader of the international working class movement, the ruler of one sixth of the world's land-mass, as if for a minute I'd fall - (He shakes his head in disbelief, and finally laughs) You cheeky devil! Give me back those pieces of paper.

Harpo hangs his head, mock-remorseful, and hands the sheets of paper back.

STALIN

Why, I ought to have you arrested. I ought to... to... I don't what I ought to do with you.

Harpo sketches out a few steps of the earlier shoe-shuffling routine, at first maintaining his hangdog movie-tramp demeanour, but then more confidently as the Red Square motif resumes and builds up.

STALIN

What the...?

He laughs once more and finally surrenders to the mood, joining in the song as it reprises the last refrain.

HARPO & STALIN
SWING IT HERE, SWING IT THERE
WE'LL ALL SHAKE LEATHER ON THE RED SQUARE
SWING IT HERE, YEAH, SWING IT THERE
WE'LL ALL SHAKE LEATHER ON THE RED SQUARE

KIROV enters.

The song winds down, but the music continues through the following as underscoring.

KIROV
Hey there, Koba. Guess who I saw just now - the Englishwoman. We had tea together.

STALIN
How very nice for you.

KIROV
She's quite a gal, ain't she.

STALIN
You could say that.

KIROV
You know, I think she rather fancies me.
(Stalin bristles. Kirov fails to notice)
We talked a bit. You know, this and that. Then she said something odd. Something about an engineer in trouble, name of Igor Shponkin. Naturally I -

STALIN
What?! Him again!

KIROV
I, er naturally I pretended I hadn't heard. Why, did she mention him to you?

STALIN
She did.

KIROV (hurriedly)
I think it was a way of talking about you, which is what she really wanted. It was all very innocent. Just a few friendly words over tea.

STALIN
Hmm. All right, then. No harm done. Come on now, join in...

The underscoring having built up under these last words, the three of them join in a last chorus of Red Square.

HARPO, STALIN, KIROV (sing)
SWING IT HERE, SWING IT THERE

WE'LL ALL SHAKE LEATHER ON THE RED SQUARE
SWING IT HERE, YEAH, SWING IT THERE
WE'LL ALL SHAKE LEATHER ON THE RED SQUARE

The song concludes and the three of them troop off, Stalin following Harpo and Kirov.

Before he exits Stalin calls over Pauker, the security chief who has been lurking in the shadows, unseen by the two others.

STALIN

I want you to track down this engineer fellow Shponkin, wherever he is, and make sure he's sent away. Somewhere a very long way from Moscow.

Lights out. The sound of trains rolling slowly over railway tracks.

End of Act One.

ACT TWO

Scene 1: TRAIN COMPARTMENT

(Entr'acte) The Building Utopia motif rings out as the curtains draw apart, revealing again the rear cinema screen whose curtains open on a series of images of Soviet-era (1930s) economic achievement.

As the motif, rendered in Soviet massed choir style, fades down, the sound of trains rolling over tracks becomes audible. A series of images from Marx Brothers movies, solely featuring Harpo, fades in and is merged in double-exposure with the image of rail tracks as the train follows them, with the names of Harpo's Soviet tour venues spinning out over: Moscow, Novgorod, Leningrad, Tver...

Lights up on:

The interior of a train compartment, some of it taken up by Harpo's large props basket. Harpo, in normal clothing, is seated on one side, leafing through a Soviet photo-magazine. On the other side of the compartment are Valentina, who is also reading, and Igor, who is staring moodily out of the window.

IGOR

Three hours, and we'll be back in Moscow. What are we going to do then?

HARPO

Stop worrying. We'll think of something.

VALENTINA

He can't stay at my place, it's too obvious.

HARPO

Relax, after a month away the trail will have gone cold.

VALENTINA

Don't you believe it. They never forget. Also, how is he going to work, or find food to stay alive?

IGOR

Wouldn't it be great if I could find a job as a clown's assistant. Just like I've been doing. I did okay, didn't I?

HARPO

You did fine, kid.

IGOR

Maybe I could work in a circus. Why don't you teach me more of your tricks?

HARPO

Hey, you want to put me out of business?

IGOR

No. Just enough so that I can tour around in a circus and hide out. (Pause) Maybe I could be as successful as you.

HARPO

Sure you could. Just keep at it and practise for another 25 years.

IGOR

It's like anything. If you put your mind to it you can -

The compartment door, which has been locked, rattles.

Igor jumps to his feet and dives into the props basket. Valentina throws a bundle of coats on top of the basket to obscure it and then unfastens the door.

The Ticket Inspector enters.

INSPECTOR

Tickets, please. (He inspects Valentina's ticket) (Indicating Harpo) And his?

She nods to Harpo and he turns to one side to fish out his ticket from the pages of a book. When he turns back he has contorted his features into a "gookie". He hands the ticket over, allowing his face to resume its normal shape as he does so.

Valentina has seen the "gookie" but the inspector hasn't. She has to repress a giggle. The inspector examines the ticket, and while he does so, Harpo throws her another "gookie". She giggles again.

INSPECTOR (turning to Valentina)

What?

Valentina tries to straighten her face. The inspector, puzzled, looks at Harpo who is looking angelically innocent. He looks again at Valentina who, seeing Harpo throw yet another "gookie" behind the inspector's back, struggles to contain her mirth.

INSPECTOR

Hey, what's the matter with you?

The inspector turns and finds Harpo in mid-change between a "gookie" and a normal face. Valentina snorts with laughter.

INSPECTOR

Now listen, you two. I don't know what's up with you, but any more of this and I'm reporting you for anti-social behaviour.

VALENTINA (giggling)

I'm sorry, inspector, it's just a - (she giggles again)

Valentina finally succeeds in keeping a straight face. The ticket inspector gives a last scowl and leaves. She re-locks the door.

VALENTINA

Oof!

HARPO (nodding at the basket)

He can come out now.

Valentina opens the props basket and Igor emerges. He looks depressed.

VALENTINA

What's the matter, sweetheart?

IGOR

It's no use. We've no future together.

VALENTINA (stunned)

What are you talking about?

IGOR

I can't go on like this. On the run the whole time. Always hiding. Constantly afraid of being found out. Leave me. Forget me. I'll make my own way. I'll survive somehow.

VALENTINA

I couldn't do that.

IGOR

But I'll drag you down with me. You'll come under suspicion. You'll lose your job, or worse.

VALENTINA

Don't talk like that. We'll fight it. I'll stand by you whatever happens.

IGOR

You've taken enough risks already. Please, Vala. Just walk away. It'll be for the best. Maybe years from now we can -

VALENTINA

Out of the question!

IGOR

But I can't go home. I've no job, and I'm on the run. What can I do?

Valentina nods towards Harpo who is throwing Igor a "gookie". She laughs, and despite himself, Igor does likewise.

IGOR

You're right. How could I leave you? (sings)

AS LONG AS YOU WANT ME
I'LL BE THERE FOR YOU
I'LL TRAMP AROUND TOWN,
BRING THE HOUSE DOWN
I'LL BE A CLOWN FOR YOU
I'LL JOKE AND FALL OVER
GRIN TO MAKE YOU SMILE
SEE ME GET IN A FIX
DOING DUMB TRICKS
FOOLING AROUND FOR YOU

A CLOWN CAN BE A FUNNY FACE
WHO TAKES THE LAUGHS WITH NO DISGRACE
LET'S PLAY THE GAME
I'LL TAKE THE BLAME
AND STAKE MY CLAIM
JUST WATCH THIS SPACE

AS LONG AS YOU WANT ME
I'LL BE THERE FOR YOU
I'LL SETTLE THE SCORES
DISOBEY STUPID LAWS
IF IT WINS YOUR APPLAUSE
YEAH, I'LL BAR ALL THOSE BORES
GO ON GRASPING AT STRAWS
AND BACK EVERY LOST CAUSE
DARE THE BEAR AND ITS CLAWS
'CAUSE I NEED YOUR ENCORES

I'LL BE A CLOWN FOR YOU
I'LL BE AROUND FOR YOU
I'LL BE A CLOWN FOR YOU
CLOWN FOR YOU

Scene 2: THE KREMLIN

Stalin's apartment, as previously: Stalin is seated at the head of the table, with Molotov, Kaganovich, Voroshilov and Ordzhonikidze seated close by. As earlier, the remains of a meal are in evidence and Stalin is reading a newspaper.

Stalin throws the newspaper onto the table and points to an article.

STALIN

That American. The comic. The one who calls himself Marx. Even in the sticks he's packing 'em in.

MOLOTOV

Who?

STALIN

Harpo Marx. The clown. You remember, I told you about him.

MOLOTOV

Oh yes.

VOROSHILOV (to Kaganovich)

You remember. The movie Marx.

KAGANOVICH

That's right. Not the real one.

STALIN

Right. The one who's good for a laugh. Unlike you lot.

MOLOTOV (stiffly)

Guiding the nation's destinies is a serious business.

STALIN (mimics)

"Guiding the nation's destinies..." A right pocket Napoleon, we've got here.

VOROSHILOV

I enjoy a joke as much as the next man.

STALIN

Ah, but can you tell one? Can you make me laugh?

KAGANOVICH (nervously)

What kind of joke?

STALIN

The funny kind, stupid. Maybe we should invite him again.

MOLOTOV (blankly)

Who?

STALIN

The American. Harpo. He likes a bit of fun. Man after my own heart. What do you say?

KAGANOVICH

Great idea. Have some funny jokes.

STALIN

He could do a show specially for the Central Committee.

MOLOTOV

What? The whole Committee?

STALIN

That's right, the whole 120 of them. We need someone to shake up those sour-pusses. (To Kaganovich) Fix it, will you?

KAGANOVICH

Right, boss.

STALIN (beams)

Atta boy! And while we're at it, that would be an opportunity to invite the Englishwoman, you remember - Litvinova. (deliberately casual) What was her name again? Oh yes, Ivy. I like that name. Got a nice sound to it.

Scene 3: MOSCOW PARK

A Moscow park on a bright, cold winter's afternoon. Ivy, muffled up, is feeding bread-crumbs to the birds.

Equally muffled and with his collar raised, Kirov sidles towards her, looking around furtively as if to make sure he's not being watched.

KIROV

Ah there you are. (He tries to kiss her) Aw come on.

IVY

Please. If anyone sees us and my husband finds out, it'll kill him.

KIROV

You should worry. If anyone sees us and Stalin finds out, he'll kill me.

IVY

I don't want to risk it.

KIROV

There's nobody around. Come on - Where's the harm?

IVY

I'm not ready.

KIROV

This is our fourth meeting in a month.

IVY

It's not about quantity, it's about quality.

KIROV

I know why you agree to meet me. You're after something, aren't you?

IVY

Well, yes and no.

KIROV

It's to do with that engineer, isn't it.

IVY

Since you ask; yes. Yes it is.

KIROV

I've already told you: there's nothing I can do to help.

IVY

Maybe there is.

KIROV

Why? Do you have something in mind?

IVY

Yes. You've heard that we're coming to the Kremlin again, Harpo and I?

KIROV

Yes.

IVY

Well, maybe there's something you can do.

KIROV

I'll think about it. First gives us a kiss.

IVY

But Sergei, it's not that I don't like you...

KIROV

Well, then...

Musical lead into a Kirov-Ivy duet, each singing alternate lines.

(Kirov) THERE'S NO DENYING NATURE'S LAWS - GIVE US A KISS

(Ivy) YOU KNOW I'M MARRIED TO THE CAUSE - BEST GIVE IT A MISS

(Kirov) OH HOW I LOVE YOUR ENGLISH COOL - DON'T MAKE ME LEAVE

(Ivy) THE ANGUISH OF YOUR RUSSIAN SOUL - IS WORN ON YOUR SLEEVE

(Kirov) YOU SURELY MUST ADMIT THAT THERE'S A MUTUAL ATTRACTION
(Ivy) NO CAUSE FOR ACTION
(Kirov) AND IF I SIMPLY TAKE YOU IN MY ARMS AND HOLD YOU TIGHT
(Ivy) YOU KNOW IT'S NOT RIGHT
(Kirov) SO JUST WHAT'S YOUR VIEW OF OUR FUTURE RELATIONS?
(Ivy) TO BE DIPLOMATIC LET'S THINK LEAGUE OF NATIONS
(Kirov) IF YOUR HEART'S WILLING LET'S GIVE IT A WHIRL
(Ivy) BUT BILLING AND COOING IS NOT FOR THIS GIRL
(Kirov) PLEASE STATE YOUR REASONS
(Ivy) SSSSSHHH... REASONS OF STATE!

KIROV

(Beat) All right. You want it? You got it!

Lights down.

Scene 4: THE AMERICAN EMBASSY

As Harpo, in civilian clothes, enters the ambassador's office, Bullitt is sprawled in his seat, his feet up on the desk, smoking a cigar. (Harpo is initially his normal self but as the scene develops he assumes more and more of the movie persona). Bullitt stands and goes to greet him.

BULLITT (pumping his hand)

Good to see you, Harpo. You don't mind if I call you that, do you?

HARPO

Be my guest.

BULLITT

Cigar?

HARPO (pocketing the cigar)

Thanks.

Harpo (short) backs off as the rather tall Bullitt seeks to put his arm round his shoulder.

BULLITT

So. Been having a good time, huh?

HARPO

Oh yeah, a great time.

BULLITT

Looks like you've had them eating out of your hand.

HARPO

Aw, just doing my job.

BULLITT

Now don't come over all modest with me. I know how committed you are to your work, to your art, and to your country.

HARPO

You do?

BULLITT

Sure I do. In fact I bet that right now you're wondering if there isn't some other way you could be of service to Uncle Sam.

HARPO

Can't say I was...

BULLITT

And now that you mention it, there is. A little bird has told me that you've been invited to give a special performance at the Kremlin.

HARPO

You're very well informed.

BULLITT

Just doing my job. Now, this provides a great opportunity, and you may be able to help us. We have reason to believe that General Secretary Stalin, prior to the seizure of power by the Bolsheviks, may have been hedging his bets and working for both sides. There are stories that he was an informer for the Tsarist police, and that the papers proving this are stashed away in a safe that he keeps in his office. We'd like to get our hands on those papers.

HARPO

But aren't we friends with the Russians now? (sings) Friendship forever...

BULLITT

Sure we are, but you know how it is. It's good to have a little insurance. So here's the deal: we'd like you go break into that safe and smuggle the papers out to us.

HARPO

Hey, I'm no spy. Why should I do your dirty work for you?

BULLITT

Look on it as something you can do for your country.

(sings)

PATRIOTIC DUTY,
ROOTY-TOOTY-TOOTY
DON'T WANT TO NAG BUT PICK UP THE FLAG
AND WAVE IT
AMERICA WE LOVE IT
ALL THE REST CAN SHOVE IT
MAYBE IT'S CORN, BUT PICK UP YOUR HORN...
MOTHERHOOD AND APPLE PIE
STARS AND STRIPES AND HAM ON RYE
FORGET ABOUT THAT STALIN GUY

WE'LL HANG THAT MOTHER OUT TO DRY
PATRIOTIC DUTY
SHARING OUT THE BOOTY
MAYBE A DRAG BUT PICK UP THE FLAG
AND WAVE IT
GET YOURSELF A CUTIE
HOPE THAT SHE'S A BEAUTY
DO WHAT YOU DO DO
TO RENEW THE CREW
THAT'S PATRIOTIC DUTY

Harpo clowns around during the song, sending it up. As the number closes:

HARPO

Spying? Out of the question. Totally against my principles.

BULLITT

Maybe we could offer you some kind of service in return.

HARPO

Principles, shminciples. Right, here's the deal: there's this young engineer and his girl-friend. They're in big trouble...

Lights down.

Scene 5: STREET

Moscow by night. The city outline, a few windows lit here and there. The lights fade up on Igor and Valentina, muffled up against the bitter cold, standing at a payphone. The fear riff is heard in the background.

IGOR

Another night on the street. Unless... It's worth a try.

He takes out a token, inserts it and dials.

VALENTINA

Who are you calling?

IGOR

Boris. I didn't want to, but he owes me.

A phone rings. At a window, a light comes on. Behind the window, Rostovsky stands and picks up the phone.

IGOR

Boris.

ROSTOVSKY

(beat) For Pete's sake.

IGOR
How are you?

ROSTOVSKY
What do you care how I am?

IGOR
Boris, I'm your friend.

ROSTOVSKY
No you're not. I let you down.

IGOR
Yes, you sure did. (Pause) Boris, I need...

ROSTOVSKY
What?

IGOR
I need a place to stay. For a night or two.

ROSTOVSKY
And?

IGOR
Boris. You've got floor space. (Long silence) Boris?

Another window lights up. Behind it, a man wearing head-phones is crouched over a switchboard. He beckons a colleague over to listen. The colleague pulls on a headset.

ROSTOVSKY
There's the watchman.

IGOR
He's never there.

ROSTOVSKY
I don't know...

IGOR
Just a couple of nights.

ROSTOVSKY
You promise that's all?

IGOR
Promise.

ROSTOVSKY

(Pause) Okay. Make it fast.

ROSTOVSKY hangs up. Blackness in Roskovsy's room, and the window light goes out.

Behind the second window, the listeners take off their headphones. The first man picks up a phone and dials a number. Blackness in the room, the window light goes out.

IGOR (to Valentina)

It's good. But we have to hurry.

Lights down.

Lights up a few moments later.

The street outside the building in which Rostovsky's room is located. Igor and Valentina arrive. They stand for a moment, looking up at Rostovsky's unlit window.

IGOR (calling low)

Boris? (A moment's silence) Boris?

A few moments more, and then the window flies open, the light in ROSTOVSKY's room snaps on and a voice rings out.

ROSTOVSKY

Run! They're here! Run!

A security man clamps his hand over Rostovsky's mouth from behind while another punches him in the stomach. Igor and Valentina run for their lives. A few seconds later two security men appear at a door at stage level and set off in pursuit.

Lights down. The sound of running. The fear riff.

Lights up a few moments later. The street. Igor and Valentina turn a corner, still running, and then pause to catch their breath.

IGOR (panting)

Where are we? Are they still behind us? (The sound of men in pursuit is heard, growing louder)
What do we do now?

A door opens and Ivy appears.

IVY

Found you at last. Come with me. We're just in time.

VALENTINA

What?

IVY
I'll explain as we go along. Don't argue.

IGOR
It's a trick. Don't listen to her.

IVY (beckoning them through a door)
Quickly. Through here.

VALENTINA
What have we got to lose?

Valentina and Igor vanish through the door. Two GPU men rush up.

IVY
Can I help you, gentlemen?

GPU MAN #1 (coughing and spluttering)
We're looking for a man and a woman, terrorists...

IVY
No-one's passed this way, I can assure you.

GPU MAN #2
Who are you, then? Why are you out here at night?

IVY (smiling innocently)
Oh I'm Ivy Litvinov, the foreign minister's wife. Do I need a reason?

The GPU men glower at her in frustration and run off.

Lights down.

Scene 6: THE KREMLIN

Slow fade up on an empty side-room off the Central Committee assembly hall. Only Harpo's props basket is visible. Laughter (recorded) is heard faintly from behind closed doors to one side. Harpo is putting on his show.

From the other side, Valentina tip-toes onstage, goes to the props basket and opens it up to peer inside. Inside the basket, Igor rises to his feet.

IGOR
What's happening?

VALENTINA (finger to lips)
Shhh... He's not finished yet.

Ivy enters from the same side as Valentina and sees Igor.

IVY (urgently)
Get back inside. You'll ruin everything.

VALENTINA
I just wanted to -

IVY
It's too soon. I'll tell you when.

Someone tries to enter through the same door as Ivy but she jams herself against it.

IVY
Quick. Into the basket.

Valentina jumps into the basket and crouches down with Igor, pulling the cover over them. Ivy stands back from the door and Kirov enters.

KIROV
Everything all right?

IVY
Yes, fine. I just felt a little faint.

KIROV
You're on your own now.

IVY
Yes, thank you, I'm grateful.

KIROV
Okay, I've kept my side of the deal. (He leans over to kiss her) How about a little something on account.

IVY (leaning away)
Not here. (Amused) Really, you're incorrigible.

KIROV
Oh, go on.

IVY
Someone might come in and see us.

KIROV
Exactly. Isn't that exciting?

IVY
Not for me, it isn't.

KIROV
I've been waiting so long.

IVY
Then a little longer won't harm you.

KIROV
You can't go on putting me off. You promised.

IVY
Yes, I promised. But now's not the time.

There is further rattling at the door. Ivy jams herself up against it.

IVY
There's someone coming. Quick. (Pointing to another exit) That way. I'll speak to you later.

Kirov hurries out. Ivy leans away from the door. PAUKER enters.

PAUKER
There you are. (Looking around suspiciously) I thought I heard voices.

IVY
No, I was coughing. Something caught in my throat.

PAUKER
Hmmm. Well, come with me. The General Secretary says he'd like to see you.

Lights shift. Pauker vanishes.

Stalin's apartment. Stalin is standing facing Ivy. He appears bashful.

STALIN (eyes downcast)
Since Nadya died...

IVY
I can imagine.

STALIN
Do you find me attractive?

IVY
Power always attracts.

STALIN
Do you find me charming?

IVY
I've heard that you can be.

STALIN

Lots of people say I am. You know, when I try.

IVY

I'm sure they're right.

STALIN

I'm from Georgia. We Georgians know how to treat a woman right.

IVY

I'm sure you do.

STALIN

I used to write poems. Would you like to hear one?

IVY

I'd be delighted.

STALIN (coughs)

The pinkish bud... (He trails off) Er, the pinkish... (He's forgotten. Pause) I can sing, too. I've got a good voice. Listen. (sings - a capella, traditional Georgian air)

I LOOKED FOR YOUR LITTLE GRAVE

MY HEART CHOKED WITH PAIN

I WEPT AND CALLED OUT SULIKO... (his voice chokes)

IVY

Please don't. (She puts her arm round his shoulders) You have to let it go.

STALIN (sniffing, pulling himself together, coughing, and finally:)

Maxie no good in the sack then, eh?

IVY (drawing back)

Now that's none of your business.

STALIN (aggressively)

Everything's my business.

IVY

No it isn't.

STALIN (petulant)

Tis.

IVY

Tisn't.

STALIN

Tis.

IVY.

Isn't. It isn't. And yet, because of who you are, everything depends on you. You can make things happen.

STALIN

Same thing.

IVY

What you decide here affects everyone in the country.

STALIN

I don't decide anything. The party does.

IVY

That means you.

STALIN

No. I just follow its instructions. I have no personal desires.

IVY (touches his arm)

No desires? None at all?

STALIN (uncomfortably)

What I want personally isn't important.

IVY (drawing closer)

Oh but it is.

STALIN

We're talking impersonal forces here.

IVY

And if not for yourself, you can want for others.

STALIN

What are you on about?

IVY

Hasn't it ever occurred to you to want something for someone else, to want to help them as much as you can, even though you yourself have nothing to gain?

STALIN

No. (Stares blankly) Ah... I see what you're up to. It's about that engineer scamp again, isn't it? The answer's no.

IVY

Won't you at least let me put his case?

STALIN

I most certainly will not.

IVY (furious)

Then I have nothing more to say.

Ivy storms out. Stalin remains, nonplussed, then he too leaves.

Lights shift. Another part of the Kremlin.

Litvinov is sitting reading. Ivy enters. She is still flushed with anger. Litvinov looks up.

LITVINOV

Don't tell me - you've seen the Boss.

IVY

Is it that obvious?

LITVINOV

I don't know what the question was, but I can see the answer.

IVY

I hope this won't cause you any trouble.

LITVINOV

Don't worry. He needs me too much. It's you I'm concerned about.

IVY

He wouldn't harm me for something so trivial, would he?

LITVINOV

He's capable of anything. And he certainly knows how to nurse a grudge.

IVY

Oh Max, it hasn't really worked out, has it? The revolution, I mean.

LITVINOV

That's not for me to say. And even if that's true, it's the only one we've got.

IVY (sings)

TIMES WERE, YOU'D LISTEN TO ME, HOLDING MY HAND
AND GET A PLACE NOT MUCH TOO NEAR THE BAND
I GUESS THOSE TIMES HAVE SUNK RIGHT IN THE SAND

WAY BACK, WE KNEW THE WORLD WOULD TURN A BRAND NEW PAGE
THAT WE WOULD SEE A SILV'RY GOLDEN AGE
BUT THEN SOMEBODY CAME AND LOCKED THE CAGE

I THINK I'VE HEARD ENOUGH LOVE SONGS,
BLUESY MELLOW SUGAR SWEET AND RARE
I KNOW I'VE SEEN TOO MUCH FIGHTING
LOST MY DREAMS, THE LIFE WE USED TO SHARE
AND I CAN'T STAND IT

BUT I'LL STAY WITH YOU, KNOWING IN MY HEART TIMES WERE

Lights shift. The unfurnished side-room, as earlier.

Harpo, dressed as the movie Harpo, enters through the doors to the central committee assembly hall, having finished his act.

He sees the props basket and sidles over to it. His gestures are exaggerated, like those of a silent cinema actor, but he's not yet the manic figure of the Marx Brothers movies. He lifts the lid of the basket and peers inside. Valentina and Igor stand up.

IGOR

Can we come out yet?

HARPO

Not yet. Where's Ivy?

VALENTINA

We don't know. She told us to wait here. That was twenty minutes ago.

The doors rattle - the sound of someone preparing to enter.

Valentina and Igor plunge back into the basket. Pauker enters and finds Harpo sitting on the basket in an exaggeratedly innocent pose.

PAUKER (suspicious)

What are you doing here?

HARPO

Clearing my things away.

PAUKER

You look to me like you're just sitting around.

HARPO (carelessly)

That's just a pose. Ignore it.

PAUKER

I'm looking for the Englishwoman. Litvinova.

(Looks suspiciously at the basket)

Are you sure you're not up to something?

HARPO (Groucho voice)

How could you even think such a thing? Now I'm offended.

Pauker harrumphs, heads for the far door and, with a last suspicious backward glance, exits. Harpo descends from the basket and raises the lid. Valentina and Igor start to stand, but then

the doors to the assembly hall rattle again and Kirov enters. They plunge back into the depths of the basket.

KIROV

Ah. It's you. Have you seen Ivy... er, Litvinova? She was here a few minutes ago.

HARPO

Can't help you, I'm afraid.

KIROV

Well if you see her, will you tell her that Kirov's looking for her?

Valentina and Igor throw open the lid of the basket and rise to their feet.

IGOR

Comrade Kirov!

VALENTINA

Comrade Kirov!

KIROV

What on earth...?

IGOR

I need to talk to you!

VALENTINA

You've got to listen!

IGOR

I've been set up. Only you can help me.

KIROV

Wait a minute, wait a minute. Calm down. You're... ?

IGOR

Engineer Shponkin.

VALENTINA

Comrade Ivy told us you might be able -

KIROV

Yes, yes, comrade Ivy has told me all about you. Unfortunately I don't know where comrade Ivy is right now. And as for being able to do anything...

IGOR

If you can't, who can?

HARPO

And if none of you can, who needs you?

KIROV

Now hold on, hold on. We'll see what we can do. But first, just hanging around here is going to get you nowhere but the Lubyanka. So you get back in there and stay out of sight while we track down Ivy and work out what to do next.

Valentina and Igor get back inside the basket.

Lights down, then up, but dimly, on Stalin's apartment.

Stalin is seated at his desk, deep in thought.

Harpo enters, uncertain of his bearings in the gloom.

The lights snap on, startling both of them.

Harpo recovers first.

HARPO (Chico voice)

Hey Boss, what you say we go down-a da Bolshoi, get us some real dance action?

STALIN

Huh? What's going on?

HARPO

Nuttin's goin' on. Say, Boss, can you mamba?

STALIN

No.

HARPO

Neidda can I. I forget-a my head if somebody no screw it on.

STALIN (catching on at last)

You again! The clown.

HARPO

Ats-a right.

STALIN (laughs)

Ats-a right! I haven't laughed so much in years. I should give you the freedom of the city.

HARPO (Groucho voice)

Thanks, but I'd rather you gave it back to the people you took it from.

STALIN

You've got nerve. I like that. There's a place in our society for people who speak their mind.

HARPO

Yes, I know where it is. I'll take a rain check on that.
(Takes Bullitt's cigar from his pocket) Cigar?

Don't mind if I do. STALIN

Your turn. HARPO

My turn what? STALIN

Harpo whips out the Groucho specs, perches them on Stalin's nose.

To make the jokes. HARPO

(Stalin snaps into the Groucho crouch)
(Chico voice) Hey Boss, I hear the next five-year plan is going to be even bigger and better than the last one.

STALIN (his version of Groucho)
You bet your life. Each of the years is going to have 13, maybe 14, months.

HARPO
But what if the workers don't meet their quotas?

STALIN
We'll send them to Siberia. The years may not be longer there but they sure feel like it.

HARPO (normal voice)
You're a natural. Keep it up. (Chico voice) Hey Boss, here's that top-secret report you asked for. But frankly, it's double-Dutch to me.

STALIN (Groucho again)
Then go out and find me two Dutchmen to read it.

HARPO
And once they've read it?

STALIN
Shoot 'em. Reading top-secret reports - why, the very idea.

HARPO (normal voice)
Yeah right, I get the picture.

Lights shift. The side-room off the Central Committee assembly hall.

The props basket. Murmurs, movement, and then the lid of the basket edges up and Valentina and Igor slowly emerge.

IGOR

There's no-one around.

VALENTINA

I'm sure they haven't forgotten us.

IGOR

Well we can't wait here all night.

VALENTINA

We'll never find our way out on our own.

IGOR

Well at least let's look around.

(He peers back inside the basket)

I've got an idea. I'll put this on... and this... and pretend to be Harpo. You don't have to put on anything special because you're his interpreter. And we can stroll around as we like, no-one'll be any the wiser.

He starts putting on a Harpo raincoat and wig. But just before he finishes dressing up the door opens and Pauker appears. He sizes up the situation at once.

PAUKER

Hey. You there. You're not Harpo. What the hell's going on? (Calling back through the door)
Men! This way...!

Igor and Valentina head off at top speed through the far door and the chase begins.

The following scenes are, as far as possible, pure anarchy in the Marx Brothers mould, with Valentina and Igor-dressed-as-Harpo pursued by Pauker and three guards, crossing and re-crossing the stage, climbing up walls, sliding down curtains, swinging from ropes, etc. Choreography to be arranged, with music and changes in lighting as appropriate.

Lights shift. Stalin's apartment.

Stalin and Harpo as before. Harpo is holding Stalin's leg, having been engaged in teaching him the giving-the-leg routine.

Igor and Valentina race across the stage at high speed.

STALIN

Devil take...! Who was that?

A second later, Pauker appears at the door through which Igor and Valentina entered. He spots Harpo and points at him, turning to call back to his men.

PAUKER
There he is! This way!

HARPO (to Stalin, dropping his leg)
Excuse me.

Harpo rushes out through another door, different from that through which Valentina and Igor exited, and Pauker, followed by the Guards, sets off after him.

Lights shift. Another part of the Kremlin.

Kirov has finally cornered IVY and is preparing to call in her debt to him.

KIROV
There's no-one around. Just the two of us. Don't say you don't feel anything for me. I've got eyes in my head. Oh Ivy, you're bewitching, you're entrancing. One kiss from you will set my heart on fire.

IVY
You certainly know how to charm a girl.

KIROV (drawing near)
I've been waiting so long for this moment.

IVY
You're so romantic. How could I possibly say no?

Kirov leans forward. Their lips are about to meet. A door flies open and Harpo runs across the stage at full tilt, vanishing through another door. Ivy pulls back.

IVY
Good grief. What was that?

KIROV
That was nothing and nobody. There's no-one in the world but you and me.

He leans forward again, and as their lips are once again about to meet, the door flies open and Pauker appears, flanked by his guards. He spots Kirov and Ivy.

PAUKER (urgently)
Which way did he go?

Ivy points in a different direction from that taken by Harpo, and Pauker and the guards follow her lead.

KIROV

They're gone now. You're with me, with me alone. Kiss me as if nothing else in the world matters...

Kirov leans forward, and their lips touch. The door opens and STALIN appears.

STALIN

Comrade Kirov!

KIROV (springing back)

Now who the devil is...? Oh, I, er...

STALIN (ominously)

What are you doing here?

KIROV

I was just, er... Comrade Litvinova had something in her eye and, er, I was, er, trying to, trying to...

STALIN

You were trying to suck it out?

Lights shift. Stalin's apartment.

Valentina and Igor-dressed-as-Harpo hurtle across the stage and vanish through another door, followed in quick time by Pauker and the Guards who also vanish. A moment passes, and then Harpo appears from behind a curtain.

Harpo explores briefly, then opens a wardrobe door and finds a spare Stalin uniform. He rapidly puts on the uniform, not forgetting to take off his blond wig.

Barely has he done so than a door opens and Valentina and Igor-dressed-as-Harpo enter at full speed and exit at the far side. A second later and it is the turn of Pauker and his guards to re-enter.

Pauker, seeing "Stalin", pauses for a moment and Harpo takes advantage of the hesitation to point in another direction from that taken by Valentina and Igor. Pauker is about to set off in pursuit but Harpo beckons him to stay and the guards set off on their own. When they are alone Harpo draws a stage-prop gun from his pocket and points it at Pauker, pulling his standard Harpo mock-fierce face.

HARPO

Okay. One false move from you and I'm gonna blow you to Kingdom Come.

PAUKER (shrinking)

Wha... What do you want?

Stalin's safe. Where is it?

HARPO

I don't know.

PAUKER

Don't lie to me!

HARPO (piling on movie Harpo-esque fierceness)

Don't shoot me! It's... it's over there.

PAUKER (cringing)

Pauker points to a large painting on the wall. Harpo goes to it, pulls at the frame and it swings away to reveal a safe.

Open it!

HARPO

I don't know the number. (Cringing back as Harpo gestures menacingly) I don't! I really don't. Oh please don't kill me.

PAUKER

Try his mother's birthday.

HARPO

Pauker tremblingly turns the safe dial backwards and forwards a couple of times and the safe door swings open. Harpo raises his gun hand and points to the ceiling.

Hey, what's that?

HARPO

Pauker looks up and Harpo brings his gun hand down, knocking Pauker out. He hugs himself and chortles, impish-Harpo style, before turning to the safe, seizing some papers and stuffing them into his pockets. He tiptoes across the apartment, heading towards the door.

Stalin enters, and the two of them find themselves face to face.

The uniform Harpo is wearing is identical to that worn by Stalin, and he launches into the mirror routine familiar from the movie "Duck Soup".

Stalin leans forward suspiciously. Harpo does the same.

Stalin moves an arm. Harpo mirrors it.

Stalin frowns. Harpo frowns back.

Stalin scratches his head in puzzlement. Harpo mirrors the gesture.

Stalin tries out some of the tricks that Groucho uses in "Duck Soup" to try to catch out the reflection figure - he hip-hops sideways; he launches into a Georgian high-step dance, followed by a wild Charleston - and each time Harpo produces the mirror image. Finally Harpo fails spectacularly to find the right gesture and Stalin makes a lunge for him, breaking the spell.

STALIN

Why, you...

The chase resumes.

Back in the side-room near the Central Committee assembly hall, having briefly thrown off their pursuers, Valentina and Igor find another Harpo outfit - raincoat and blond wig, with motor horn as an accessory - in the props basket, and Valentina rapidly transforms herself into yet another Harpo.

The chase plays itself out - a lengthy pursuit of the two false Harpos, one of them visibly female, and the real Harpo dressed as Stalin, by the real Stalin, Pauker and his Kremlin guards - to a finale, to be choreographed in accordance with the layout of the playing area, in which Harpo, Valentina and Igor make good their escape, abetted by BULLITT, perhaps by sliding down a rope from the Kremlin walls (a box) to the street below (the stalls) where a car is waiting.

Lights down.

Scene 7: EPILOGUE

The screen curtains at the rear of the stage draw apart. Projected onto the screen, further newsreel of the latest achievements of the Soviet economy.

Most of the stage is dark. Standing centre, their backs to the audience as they watch the flickering images on the screen, are Valentina and Igor. They watch in silence.

The lights rise (right) and we see, previously hidden in the obscurity, Bullitt leaning against a wall (in the manner of his Uncle Sam figure in the Prologue, though he's now in civilian clothes). A furled stars-and-stripes flag tells us that we're in the US embassy.

BULLITT (sardonic, to Igor)

A dilemma, huh? You've got asylum if you want it, she hasn't. If you leave, you miss out on building Utopia. On the other hand, if you stay... (He draws his finger across his throat).

VALENTINA (to Igor)

Please go. There's nothing for you here. Just prison, or worse.

IGOR

I can't leave you to face the music on your own.

VALENTINA

They won't touch me. I've done nothing wrong. I was simply acting as the interpreter for an official visitor.

IGOR

I want to stay, I must stay with you.

VALENTINA

But you can't. You mustn't.

IGOR

I'll get a fair hearing, sure I will. I still believe in the system. If we can just explain it right -

VALENTINA

Oh Igor, don't be so naive.

IGOR

And I want to play my part in building Utopia. (Pointing to the screen) Can't you see? It's the society of the future.

The lights rise (left) and we see, previously invisible, the ranks of Soviet workers (as represented in the Prologue) and the standard triumphalist iconography. The Building Utopia theme rings out massed chorus style. During the scene, the theme rise, falls and fades according to the needs of the moment.

Kirov enters and strides briskly over to Igor and Valentina.

KIROV (to Igor)

She's right. Don't be a fool.

Kirov now steps forward and addresses the audience.

KIROV

Ladies and gentlemen, this is where our tale ends. All that remains is for these young people to make their decision. The issues are clear. There is trouble in the workers' paradise. Power has been seized by a small group of people, and that circle dwindled to a single pair of hands.

He steps back and observes as Litvinov enters, followed at a short distance by IVY.

LITVINOV (stiffly)

I have come to demand that you hand over Soviet citizen Igor Shponkin who is required to face sentencing following his conviction on charges of sabotage.

BULLITT

Can't be done, old man. My government has offered Shponkin asylum. He leaves here of his own accord or not at all.

LITVINOV

My government will take a very dim view of your refusal to cooperate.

BULLITT

Oh come on, they're not going to put a small matter like this before their strategic interests.

LITVINOV

Very well. I shall inform my government accordingly. (Relaxing visibly) Good. I'm with you on this, but I have to go through the motions. Ivy?

Ivy and Kirov have been casting glances at each other, a mixture of wistfulness and embarrassment.

IVY

Yes, dear?

LITVINOV

Our leader has also taken a dim view of certain late-night goings-on in the Kremlin. But my feeling is that you don't need to worry too much.

IVY

Why's that?

LITVINOV

He needs good relations with America and its allies. That's something I can deliver better than anyone else in Moscow. He'll leave me alone, and you too, for as long as he wants a channel to the West.

IVY (guiltily)

That's good to know.

LITVINOV

Your fate is bound up with mine. You understand that, don't you.

Ivy glances again at Kirov, and gives the faintest of shrugs.

IVY

Yes, I understand.

LITVINOV

Good. Now we can get on with building Utopia.

BULLITT (to Igor)

Well then, young man. What's it to be?

Igor and Valentina put their heads together and consult in whispers.

IGOR

I'm staying.

He's going. VALENTINA

No, I'm staying. IGOR

No, he's going. VALENTINA

The outline of a car outside the embassy becomes visible, and HARPO enters. He's dressed for travel and towing his props basket behind him.

Hello, I must be going. HARPO

BULLITT
You don't say! But first I want a word with you. (To Harpo, aside) That inside job you did for us. Well done, right spirit - but we really didn't need Stalin's school report and a manuscript copy of his early poems. (Harpo pulls a face) However a deal's a deal, and the boy's got asylum.

And the girl? HARPO

Sorry. State wouldn't buy it. BULLITT

That's really too bad. HARPO

BULLITT
Yes, I'm sorry. Well, let's look on the bright side. Great tour. Showed them all a bit of our razzle-dazzle. Folks back home well pleased. What about you? I hope you thoroughly enjoyed yourself.

I sure did. With just one regret, though. HARPO

What's that? BULLITT

I never got to use my basket trick. HARPO

Your basket trick? BULLITT

That's right. I could you show you it right now if you've no objection. HARPO

BULLITT
Be my guest.

HARPO
Here goes. (He points to the props basket) Say, how many people do you think could fit into that basket?

BULLITT
Why, not more than two.

HARPO (to Litvinov)
How many?

LITVINOV
Two. Three tops. If they're small.

HARPO (to Kirov)
How many?

KIROV
Three. Bit of a squeeze, though.

HARPO
Okay, let's try it and see.

Harpo walks to the props basket and raises the lid. (The lid opens towards the audience, ie. obscuring what happens behind it).

HARPO (to Kirov)
Now get inside.

KIROV
What, me? Now look, I don't -

HARPO
Don't be a spoil-sport. Get in there.

Kirov clammers into the basket. Harpo closes the lid on him and then raises it again.

HARPO (to Ivy)
Now you.

Ivy enters the basket. Same business with the lid.

HARPO (to Litvinov)
And you.

Litvinov enters the basket. Same business with the lid.

Now you. HARPO (to Valentina)

Valentina walks to the basket and hesitates.

Don't worry. There's room. HARPO

He leans forward and murmurs in her ear. She nods finally and, with a backward glance at Igor, enters the basket. Business with the lid.

And you. (As Igor hesitates) You'll be all right. (Igor enters the basket. Business with the lid) Ambassador? HARPO (to Igor)

Me too? BULLITT

Yup. You too. There's still room. HARPO

Whatever you say. BULLITT

Bullitt enters the basket, disappearing behind the lid which Harpo closes on him.

Harpo is now alone. He hugs himself and gives a chortle in the movie-Harpo manner, then raises the lid of the props basket once more, steps inside, blows kisses at the audience, then lowers himself and disappears, bringing the lid down over himself.

The props basket remains on the empty stage for a moment.

Lights down.

When the lights rise, the basket has gone. Projected onto the rear screen are black-and-white images of an aircraft preparing (against a background of movie-finale music) to take off - taxi-ing on the runway, getting into position, setting off, gathering speed and finally lifting into the air. As it does so, Kirov enters stage right. He glances at the screen images, then turns to address the audience.

KIROV
And so love won out. Amid the hustle and bustle of leave-taking, amid the to-ing and the fro-ing, no-one was paying too much attention as to who or what went where or why, and what finally did it matter if in his luggage Harpo Marx the magician carried an unscheduled passenger? There at least we can believe in the obligatory happy ending.

Kirov indicates the words "The End" which have appeared on the screen in movie-style lettering. The Building Utopia motif builds under the following.

KIROV

But of course it was not "The End". It was barely even the beginning. Three weeks later the 17th Congress of the All-Union Communist Party, known as the Congress of Victors, opened here in Moscow to chart the way ahead and renew the party leadership.

Screen projection: archive images of the events Kirov is describing - Stalin and other members of the Politburo on the rostrum, Kirov chatting and joking with delegates, Stalin playfully pointing a rifle at the party elite.

As Kirov speaks, Stalin appears downstage left. He is wearing a full-length military great-coat and cap. He advances silently, holding a rifle raised and pointed at the back of Kirov's head.

KIROV (continuous)

It was a joyous celebration. The list of our achievements was impressive. In his report, General Secretary J. V. Stalin coolly and dispassionately set out the reasons why we must maintain our rigorous approach in the face of the continuing crisis of world capitalism. He received an ovation and was re-elected handsomely to the leadership. (Pause) As was I. (Pause) As an expression of its appreciation, a delegation from the Red Army presented Stalin with a gift: a sniper's rifle. A supreme irony. And one that, in the years ahead, many a delegate would come to regret. But that, friends, comrades, brothers and sisters, is a story for others to tell.

A shot rings out. Kirov falls dead. Silence. Darkness.

Spot on Stalin standing by his desk. Chords lead into:

STALIN (sings)
I HAVE BECOME STALIN
HISTORY PLANNED IT
SCHOOL OF HARD KNOCKS
PASS IT ON

I HAVE BECOME STALIN
AND IF STALIN LIVES THROUGH ME
WHAT AM I?
WHAT AM I?

SOMEBODY STOP ME
IF YOU STAND IN MY WAY
I'LL KILL YOU

I HAVE BECOME STALIN
JUST AS YOU PLANNED IT
JACK IN THE BOX
PASS IT ON

I HAVE BECOME STALIN
I SOUGHT OUT YOUR LITTLE GRAVE
IT WAS EMPTY
IT WAS EMPTY

SOMEBODY STOP ME
IF YOU STAND IN HIS WAY
I'LL KILL YOU

I HAVE BECOME STALIN
NOW THE TERROR BEGINS
LOVE ON THE ROCKS
PASS IT ON

I HAVE BECOME STALIN
AND WITHOUT YOU I AM NOTHING
DO I EXIST?
DO I EXIST?

SOMEBODY STOP ME
IF YOU STAND IN HIS WAY
HE'LL KILL YOU

PASS IT ON
PASS IT ON
PASS IT ON
PASS IT ON

The lights snap abruptly full on.

Stalin advances slowly on the audience and halts at the front of the stage, his rifle poised. He takes aim at the rear of the stalls. A shot rings out. A figure slumps. Stalin continues to aim the rifle at the audience, its barrel moving from right to left, then from left to right. He raises it to the circle, then takes aim. A shot rings out. Another figure slumps.

Stalin continues to seek out targets in the audience. He takes aim and is poised to fire again when with a loud ripping noise Harpo bursts through one of the (paper) screens at the rear of the stage.

HARPO

Stop!

Stalin freezes.

Harpo holds his pose for a few seconds, that of the manic mischief-maker, grinning ear to ear, arms outstretched. Then he lets his arms drop and eases into a normal posture.

Now, when he speaks, it is in a quieter, relaxed tone, in his normal voice.

HARPO

Stop.

He advances towards the front of the stage, joining Stalin who remains frozen.

HARPO

It's over.

(He takes the rifle out of Stalin's hands and places it on the ground. Stalin remains motionless throughout the following)

The joke's over. The dream's over.

(He removes Stalin's cap)

You've met the man, more or less.

(A broad gesture, and Stalin's military great-coat falls away)

Charming when he wanted to be, a poet after a fashion -

(Another whisk, and the jacket comes off)

an affectionate father -

(Whisk, and his shirt comes off)

a good singing voice, liked a drink -

(Whisk, and his undershirt comes off)

enjoyed a joke.

(Whisk, and Harpo rips off Stalin's moustache)

Good old Uncle Joe.

(Whisk, and Harpo rips off Stalin's fine head of hair)

And a monster. A killing machine, built by Russians, to kill Russians. Assisted by Russians.

(Whisk, and Stalin's trousers fall to the ground)

Harpo lowers Stalin's arms and he stands there, wearing only his long underpants and his soft leather boots, staring dully at the audience.

HARPO

You know, it's easy to blame Stalin. Too easy. For who was Stalin? Well, let me tell you something - Stalin was nobody. And nobody was Stalin. Not even Stalin was Stalin. Stalin was just an idea, an illusion. Our illusion – an illusion for all of us. And how did we come to create this sorry, sick idea? I'll tell you how.

In the background, the air of Building Utopia starts to build again.

They sold us on Utopia. We bought into the notion that we could remake the world if we'd just fall into line behind a charismatic leader, leaving our brains at the check-in counter. Phooey! That's not how it goes. You've got to deal with the real. Decline the party line. In short: Stop Building Utopia. (To Kirov) Okay, you can get up now.

Kirov picks himself up off the floor and joins him at the front of the stage.

The rest of the Company too have filed back onstage in ones and twos and lined up alongside him.

The following version of Building Utopia is delivered to begin within a subdued, almost sombre tone. By the bridge the rendition has become a little more self-confident, and the third verse is delivered in a more assertive manner.

The succeeding variations on the bridge (No time to mope. We are...) become progressively more raucous and unbridled, so that as it veers towards nonsense the song is delivered in a sing-along beer-tent or football-crowd fashion.

The "Stop" is delivered by Kirov clearly and distinctly in sharp pistol-shot fashion.

THE COMPANY

(Stop)

BUILDING UTOPIA. NO MORE SOFT SOAP. WE WERE PHARAOH'S DAUGHTER, LAMBS
FOR SLAUGHTER
THAT'LL NEVER DO
NO, THAT'LL NEVER DO

(Stop)

BUILDING UTOPIA. NO MORE MYOPIA
WE'LL PULL THROUGH WITHOUT THE HELP OF
ANY HAPPY FEW
YEAH, ANYBODY WHO

BUILDING UTOPIA
WISHING UPON A STAR
NO-ONE CAN TELL
IF IT'S HEAVEN OR HELL
OR IF IT'S NEAR OR FAR

(Stop)

BUILDING UTOPIA. NO TIME TO MOPE. WE ARE
HERE FOR SPORT AND WON'T BE BOUGHT OR
ORDERED WHAT TO DO
BY ANYBODY WHO

NO TIME TO MOPE. WE ARE
DREAMING UPON A STAR
NO-ONE CAN TELL
IF IT'S TIME FOR THE BELL
OR WHERE'S THE NEAREST BAR

NO TIME TO MOPE. WE ARE
LEANING UPON A BAR

NO-ONE CAN TELL
IF IT'S BEER OR MARTELL
THAT'S IN THAT SAMOVAR

NO TIME TO MOPE. WE ARE
WISHING UPON A JAR
NO-ONE CAN TELL
IF IT'S RED MUSCATEL
OR IF IT'S PINOT NOIR

NO TIME TO MOPE. WE ARE
SLUICING DOWN CAVIAR
NO-ONE CAN SEE
IF IT'S WORTHINGTON-E
OR ABSOLUT VODKA

Towards the close, a little before the song collapses into nonsense and segues into a grandstand reprise of Harpo's Nobody's Fool number, Harpo starts playing tricks on the other characters/actors - tripping Stalin up (by now he's joining in the clowning), placing Stalin's moustache on Ivy's upper lip, and so on.

THE COMPANY (continuous)
NO TIME TO MOPE. WE ARE
PISSING UPON A TSAR
NO-ONE CAN TELL
ME THAT STALIN WAS SWELL
OR THAT HE LOVED HIS MA...

A musical shift allows (Stop) Building Utopia to blend seamlessly into Harpo's song.

Harpo moves to the fore to deliver it, but the clowning carries on behind him as the song builds and concludes - additional lyrics could easily be devised - over a background of carefully choreographed mayhem.

HARPO (sings)
I'M PLAYING THE FOOL FOR YOU
YOU'RE PAYING THE FOOL WHO'S ME
AND JUST SO WE KNOW
WHO'S JOKING WITH WHO, LET'S

LAY IT ON THE LINE, PAY THE PIPER
DRINK A LITTLE WINE WOULD BE FINE, A
NICKEL OR A DIME OUGHT-A DO, SO
GET YOUR FEET IN LINE, BLUES A NO-NO
NO-O-O-O-O-O

NOBODY'S FOOL, PLAYIN' IT COOL, COOL AS CAN BE
EV'RYONE LAUGHTS BUT THE LAST LAUGH'S COMIN' TO ME
NOBODY'S FOOL, PLAYIN' MY RULES, HOPE YOU AGREE

MOST POLITICIANS ARE UNLIKE MUSICIANS
THEY DON'T PLAY FAIR
JESTERS AND JOKERS NO DEALERS OR BROKERS
WE JUST DON'T CARE
SIMPLE PEOPLE THEY DON'T PINE
FOR NIETZSCHE, KANT OR WITTGENSTEIN
REPUBLICAN OR DEMOCRAT
THEY ONLY WEAR THE SAME OLD HAT
LIFE'S A CAKE-WALK, LIFE'S NOT HARD
JUST KEEP YOUR HANDS OFF KIERKEGAARD
AND ME...
WELL... I'M A MARXIST

NOBODY'S FOOL, PLAYIN' IT COOL, COOL AS CAN BE
EV'RYONE LAUGHS BUT THE LAST LAUGH'S COMIN' TO ME
NOBODY'S FOOL, PLAYIN' MY RULES, HOPE YOU AGREE

NOBODY'S FOOL, PLAYIN' IT COOL, COOL AS CAN BE
EV'RYONE LAUGHS BUT THE LAST LAUGH'S COMIN' TO ME
NOBODY'S FOOL, PLAYIN' MY RULES, HOPE YOU AGREE

HOPE YOU AGREE (honks his horn)
HOPE YOU AGREE (honks his horn)
HOPE YOU AGREE (honks his horn)

End.

Performance rights must be secured before production. For contact information, please see the A Night in the Kremlin information page (click on your browser's Back button, or visit <http://singlelane.com/proplay/kremlin.html>)