

Spitfire Pictures
Presents

THE WAY BACK

Screenplay by
Peter Weir

Inspired by the book 'The Long Walk'
by Slavomir Rawicz

Shooting Draft: Sofia, January 2009

This script is the property of Exclusive Film
Distribution Ltd and is not to be copied or
distributed without our express consent.

Revised 4/23/09 (Buff)
Revised 3/31/09 (Tan)
Revised 3/17/09 (Cherry)
Revised 3/16/09 (Salmon)
Revised 3/11/09 (Goldenrod)
Revised 3/5/09 (Green)
Revised 3/4/09 (Yellow)
Revised 2/25/09 (Pink)
Revised 2/10/09 (Blue)

Exclusive Film Distribution
52 Haymarket
London SW1Y 4RP
Tel: +44 (0)20 7321 4827
www.exclusivemedia.com

1 AERIAL PANORAMA - DAY TO NIGHT

1

A slow, steady, downward view. The camera seemingly floats as the curve of the globe passes beneath. Beginning in the green jungles of Sikkim in Northern India it crosses the Himalayas, down into Tibet and beyond to China - the zigzag line of the Great Wall clearly visible. Then the Gobi desert is flowing beneath, and as the light begins to fade, Mongolia gives way to the Russian Steppe, and as dusk turns to night we are over Siberia - gliding North over Lake Baikal, and onward across forested hills and valleys. A sense of utter remoteness in this silent landscape. Then a tiny shaved patch within the primeval forest - a bald rectangle of ground, crisscrossed by faint probing lights. The camera slows, and hovers.

2 EXT. SOVIET LABOR CAMP 105, SIBERIA - NIGHT

2

Out of the blackness, the momentary glimpse of a barbed wire fence, lit by the combing fingers of a searchlight. Another angle, and the silhouette of distant timber buildings is briefly etched, before the light passes and all is again in darkness. Closer, on a canvas-sided barrack building - ghostly shadows projected on the wall.

*
*

SUPER: 'SOVIET LABOR CAMP 105, SIBERIA, 1940'.

3 INT. BARRACKS, CAMP 105, SIBERIA - NIGHT

3

A long rectangular building, the walls lined with two tiered bunks of rough-hewn logs. In the centre - a metal stove with a chimney stretching out through the roof. A dim central bulb illuminates some 150 men, aged from 16 to 60, most sitting or lying on their bunks. Some wear scraps of army uniform, or civilian clothing, others in prison issued padded jackets. Some, from the Asian territories, still wear something of their national costume. Included among them are groups of foreigners from recently occupied countries and a Babel of languages drifts through the fetid air. It's a wide ranging mix of types, of race, of class. They're miserable, starving and ill. There is no camp camaraderie and they eye each other with indifference or suspicion. Most of these men are political prisoners, known as 'Politicals' or '58ers', after the section of the Soviet Penal Code that has put them here.

*
*

Near the stove, and contrasted with the 'Politicals', a group are gathered about a card game on a lower bunk. These men look healthier, and are further distinguished by their tattoos.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

These are the URKI, some dozen of them, regular criminals, and from their manner the undisputed masters of the block.

Sitting facing each other - VALKA, thirties, heavily tattooed, flash of a steel-caped tooth. His opponent, BOHDAN, older, and the 'Pakhan', the 'boss' of this criminal gang. Bohdan shuffles a deck of home-made cards.

[All DIALOGUE IN THE CAMP IS IN RUSSIAN, SUB-TITLED, EXCEPT WHERE INDICATED THAT INMATES SPEAK ENGLISH].

BOHDAN

(In Russian)

What've you got?

**

VALKA removes his coat, passes it to BOHDAN who examines it briefly.

BOHDAN (CONT'D)

Think I want your stinking lice farm?

VALKA

Polish tailor.

He shows the label.

VALKA (CONT'D)

See? From Krakov. Good as new.

BOHDAN nods to his minder who opens a battered wooden suitcase - a glimpse of hoarded food. The minder puts his hand on a lump of bread lying beside a length of sausage. BOHDAN nods. The bread is placed beside the coat.

VALKA (CONT'D)

And the sausage.

BOHDAN stares at him, shakes his head, 'no'.

VALKA (CONT'D)

Bohdan, you're a dog's prick, I swear. I hope you die with an axe in your skull, and your balls ripped out.

The swearing is more or less a ritual and provokes no reaction.

VALKA (CONT'D)

OK. For the bread.

(CONTINUED)

BOHDAN shuffles and deals. He separates his cards with the long fingernail of his little finger. In a few rapid plays, VALKA is left coat-less.

Apart from the half-dozen thugs surrounding the players, the game is watched by two 'Politicals', who have just entered with a load of wood for the stove. The elder, SMITH, a hard-face man in his late forties, the other ANDREI, early twenties. VALKA signals to YURI who takes three 'tailor-made' cigarettes from his pocket, passes them carefully to VALKA who lays them before BOHDAN.

BOHDAN

For the bread.

VALKA

For the bread, and the sausage, bastard!

BOHDAN enjoying himself.

BOHDAN

Throw in that crappy shirt you're wearing and I might be tempted.

Smiles from the gang. VALKA knows he's being mocked but he's desperate. His eyes flick down to the sausage. Then he takes off his shirt. He sits bare-chested, a tattooed portrait of LENIN on his left breast looking across at STALIN on his right. BOHDAN deals, and again VALKA loses.

VALKA's mate YURI places a padded prison jacket over his bony shoulders, which he shrugs off irritably, then offers to BOHDAN.

BOHDAN (CONT'D)

I don't play for regulation issue crap.

VALKA lights a cigarette.

BOHDAN (CONT'D)

All done, Valka?

VALKA tries to conceal his mounting tension behind a veil of cool.

VALKA

I go on credit.

BOHDAN

'Credit'?

(CONTINUED)

3 CONTINUED: (3)

VALKA nervously fingers an aluminium crucifix hanging by a cord from his neck. Etched on the cross a naked woman.

BOHDAN (CONT'D)

You're already in debt.

VALKA's anxious eyes. They settle on SMITH by the stove. He speaks in carefully articulated English.

VALKA

Come here.

SMITH returns the stare, then slowly approaches.

VALKA (CONT'D)

Take off your ... coat.

A silence, the criminal gang sensing a showdown. There's something about SMITH, something steely, unpredictable. The fire crackles loudly. SMITH all the while holding VALKA's stare.

**

[THE DIALOGUE RETURNS TO RUSSIAN.]

VALKA (CONT'D)

Worth shit!

He looks at SMITH's companion.

VALKA (CONT'D)

You.

ANDREI goes pale, removes his coat to reveal a decent-looking patterned wool sweater. He offers the coat.

VALKA (CONT'D)

Let's have the sweater.

ANDREI

Take the coat.

VALKA

I want the sweater.

ANDREI doesn't move.

VALKA (CONT'D.) (CONT'D)

Your babushka make it for you?
Come on, hand it over.

ANDREI is visibly shaking.

**

3 CONTINUED: (4)

3

ANDREI

You have no authority, here.

VALKA gets up, moves slowly to ANDREI, a smile on his lips. Then he casually reaches down as if to tuck his trousers deeper into his boots, reaches for something, and in one slow balletic movement, swings up and stretches out his hand to ANDREI, and ANDREI sobs and leans to one side.

BOHDAN

Was that really necessary?

In the dim light ANDREI's face is grey as he sags to the floor. None of the other prisoners move to help him, nor do they show any sign of concern, as VALKA places the knife back in his boot and returns to the game. YURI steps forward and strips the sweater from the dead man, handing it on to VALKA, who passes it to BOHDAN. BOHDAN examines it professionally, wipes a little blood off his hands.

BOHDAN (CONT'D)

OK. For the sausage.

The game resumes.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE UP ON:

4 EXT. GRAVEYARD, FOREST NEAR CAMP 105, SIBERIA - NIGHT 4 **

Freshly dug graves. Close on one of these, stones piled in a mound over the grave. Hands into frame moving aside the stones. Wider to see two PRISONERS, breath steaming from their mouths, as they work quickly and quietly to uncover the grave. The older of the two is KHABAROV, late thirties, the other, LAZAR, late twenties. Furtive looks over their shoulders as an occasional blade of light from the watchtower throws them into silhouette.

KHABAROV

Here he is.

He reaches out to touch a human toe poking out of the rocks.

As they work --

Close on the face of ANDREI, as they continue to uncover his body.

(CONTINUED)

4 CONTINUED:

4

KHABAROV (CONT'D)

He's not frozen yet, that's lucky.

The remaining stones are removed to find the corpse dressed in nothing but underwear.

LAZAR

Damn! Picked clean! Bloody thieves.

KHABAROV

Keep your voice down, be grateful there's anything left.

They reach into the grave to retrieve the underwear.

A5 OMITTED

A5 **

AB5 INT WASH-HOUSE - NIGHT

AB5 **

LAZAR's hands in water, some kind of tin sink, water running red as the underwear is rinsed clean of blood.

5 EXT. BARRACKS, CAMP 105 - DAWN

5

A Soviet guard beats a hammer against a hanging length of iron.

6 INT. BARRACK BUILDING - SAME TIME - DAWN

6

Close on the barrack stove, the underwear drying, KHABAROV's hands into the frame.

As the prisoners rise, follow a hand to hand exchange of the set of underwear for a hank of tobacco. KHABAROV having done the deal splits the tobacco with LAZAR. Moving quickly to complete a second deal, KHABAROV swaps half his share of the tobacco with another prisoner for two slices of bread. He waits until the last of the men leave then he carefully breaks off a corner from one piece of bread, concealing the rest in a hiding place in the dirt at the base of his bunk - a glimpse of a cache of hoarded food and other items.

6 CONTINUED: 6

The saved morsel he places on his tongue, and closes his eyes. He doesn't chew, just lets it dissolve like the Eucharist. Then it's gone in a slow swallow and he opens his eyes. He can hear a guard shouting outside, but he hesitates, carefully licking his fingers. He stares at his hand. Close on a spot between his fingers - there's a crumb there. Into frame, the tip of his tongue as it slowly and carefully retrieves the tiny speck of bread. **

7 EXT. LABOR CAMP 105, SIBERIA - DAWN 7

The camp seen in a distant view - surrounded by double wire, a collection of weathered timber buildings with watchtowers placed at regular intervals along the perimeter. In the distance, dense forest.

Entering frame a column of close to a hundred men march toward the camp. Following behind is a lorry, carrying six guards, supplies for their recent journey, and a camp stove. **

8 EXT. CAMP GATES - DAWN 8

As they approach one of the prisoners looks up to an arch stretching across the gates - a hand-painted sign in Russian subtitled: 'LABOR IS HONOR, GLORY, NOBILITY, AND HEROISM'.

The prisoner is JANUSZ, early twenties and he exchanges a look with the man beside him, TOMASZ, about the same age. **

ANOTHER ANGLE shows a line of prisoners, five abreast, marching toward them on their way to work. They have their attendant guards and dogs and as the two columns pass each other the contrast between the half-starved, ill looking 'old' prisoners and the comparative health of the 'new', could not be more apparent - 'Is this what we are to become?' on the faces of the 'new'. We glimpse some of those already established - they include BOHDAN, and VALKA, and further back - SMITH and KHABAROV. As they pass they look across to JANUSZ and TOMASZ, both Polish, and behind them to VOSS, a tall young Latvian with a mop of white-blonde hair. Behind VOSS - ZORAN, a blanket over his three-piece suit. Beside him, another Pole - KAZIK, at seventeen, the youngest in the group.

9 EXT. 'THE ZONE', CAMP 105 - DAY 9

The newly arrived prisoners assemble between the various buildings - an area known as the 'ZONE'.

CONTINUED:

The camp is being expanded, and everywhere are piles of cut timber, coils of wire, and work going on replacing old canvas-sided barracks with new timber ones.

The Spring thaw has turned recently melted snow into slush, and duck-boards are hastily laid to allow the Commandant to cross to the assembled prisoners. He walks with his subordinate and LAZAR who is FOREMAN of the new camp construction. LAZAR carries a sheaf of plans, and the COMMANDANT stops, studies a drawing, then impatiently issues an order dismissing him.

The COMMANDANT mounts a box, accepting a folder of documents from his subordinate, who has in turn received them from the escorting guard. The COMMANDANT surveys the prisoners before him. He's a man in his fifties with a bland but not unintelligent cast to his features.

He looks up from the collection of documents in his hand.

COMMANDANT

Enemies of the People! Look about you...and understand...it is not our guns, or our dogs, or our wire, that forms your prison. Siberia is your prison. All four million square miles of it. Here in Camp 105, you will work hard. Work and you eat. Eat and you live.

Close on JANUSZ and his friends.

10-13 OMITTED

10-13

A14 EXT. THE ZONE, CAMP 105 - DAY

A14 ***

Later, the newly arrived prisoners exit the wash-house, heads and beards shaved. In the background a glimpse of others waiting their turn. To one side of the wash-house, a pile of their luggage. A couple of guards sort through their belongings, pocketing the odd item.

JANUSZ, VOSS and KAZIK, heads shaved, exit the hut.

JANUSZ's attention is caught by the men working on replacing the old stockade wall with a new double barbed-wire fence. The overseer, LAZAR, gives a signal and a section of the old wall falls to the ground.

14 EXT. CAMP KITCHEN, THE ZONE - NIGHT

14

The prisoners move in a line toward an open window in the side of the kitchen building. Here, under the watchful eye of the cook - one of BODHAN's men - a single serve of thin soup is slopped into their metal bowls. One has no bowl, so he uses his hat.

JANUSZ and his friends shuffle toward the window. Their attention is caught by a group of blind prisoners feeling their way along the side of the kitchen hut, a hand on the shoulder of the man in front.

VOSS (TO JANUSZ)

(In English)

Night blindness. Saw it in the transit camp...vitamin deficiency.

SMITH, a couple of places ahead in the line, turns on hearing English spoken.

As JANUSZ moves forward he watches several wild-eyed men scrambling about in a pile of kitchen slops thrown into the mud by the kitchen door. They find here the odd scrap of food, or simply soak their fingers in the slime, then lick them clean.

SMITH, having been served, moves away, retrieving a hoarded slice of bread from within his jacket. He dips it into the soup, raises it to his mouth when a corner of the bread drops to the ground. One of the garbage-eaters, dives for it, but SMITH is too quick for him, placing a boot over the scrap of bread. JANUSZ watches as SMITH picks up the bread, cleans off the dirt and eats it, his every move watched by the starving man at his feet. JANUSZ offers the remainder of his soup to the man who greedily drinks it. SMITH and JANUSZ stare at each other.

SMITH

(In English)

Planning to survive on half rations, son?

JANUSZ surprised by the American accented English.

JANUSZ

(In English)

He's an old man.

SMITH

I'm an old man. But I'll be alive in the morning. He won't.

He goes to move away, hesitates, turns back to JANUSZ.

SMITH (CONT'D)

'Kindness'. That can kill you here. You'll learn that.

He places the last morsel of bread in his mouth, and chewing slowly, turns and walks away.

KHABAROV (V.O.)

(In English)

American.

JANUSZ turns to find KHABAROV beside him looking at SMITH's retreating back.

JANUSZ

American?

He looks back to SMITH walking away toward the barracks.

KHABAROV

Stalin doesn't like foreigners. That includes Poles. You are Polish aren't you?

JANUSZ still staring after SMITH.

14 CONTINUED: (2)

14

JANUSZ nods.

JANUSZ

Yes, I am.

KHABAROV

I love you Poles, your burning
sense of injustice, your yearning
for freedom.

(He offers his hand).

KHABAROV (CONT'D)

Khabarov. Andrei Timofeyevich.

JANUSZ looks at him - he wears a distinctive coat,
trimmed with fur - something refined about him,
'aristocratic' even. He offers his hand, and they shake.

JANUSZ

Weiszczek, Janusz.

KHABAROV

And your 'prayer', may I ask?

JANUSZ

58.10

KHABAROV

58.10 ... A spy?

JANUSZ

That's what they told me.

KHABAROV

Ten years?

JANUSZ

Twenty.

KHABAROV indicates himself.

KHABAROV

58.14. Sabotage, ten years.

They begin walking toward the distant barrack buildings.

KHABAROV (CONT'D)

And you were in the cavalry?

JANUSZ's suspicions aroused.

(CONTINUED)

JANUSZ

(Sharply)
How could you know that?

KHABAROV

Oh there's that Polish spirit! I
observe things – your demeanor,
your, may I say, certain
'swagger'. 'Cavalryman', that's
how I'd cast you.

He leans forward, whispers.

KHABAROV (CONT'D)

We've been waiting for you...Poor
Poland, Hitler invades from the
West...World War...days later,
Stalin from the East.

JANUSZ relaxes, smiles.

JANUSZ

How could we know Russia would
stab us in the back?

KHABAROV

And you were on the Soviet side of
the line, and they arrest you, and
thousands like you. Accuse you of
spying...And they torture you?
You signed a ... 'confession'?

JANUSZ

I wouldn't sign, so they tortured
someone else.

KHABAROV

Usual tactics – they torture a
close friend who names you as a
spy – a neighbor? Your old school
teacher? A friend?

14 CONTINUED: (4)

14

KHABAROV looks into JANUSZ's eyes - a pain beyond speaking. KHABAROV tactfully changes the subject.

KHABAROV (CONT'D)

I was an actor - moving pictures.
In my last picture I played an
aristocrat. They arrested me
after the film's release.

JANUSZ

Why?

KHABAROV

It was claimed I was elevating the
status of the old nobility.

JANUSZ

You got ten years for a
performance in a film?

KHABAROV

I've had better notices.

And they enter their hut.

15 INT. BARRACKS - NIGHT

15

The men sitting or lying on their bunks, a little conversation here and there but most have withdrawn into themselves, just glad to have survived another day. JANUSZ looks about him, KHABAROV still by his side. JANUSZ's attention is caught by the tattooed group playing cards by the stove. VALKA is playing BOHDAN again, his losing streak continuing. KHABAROV speaks just above a whisper.

KHABAROV

The 'Urki'.

JANUSZ

Who are they?

KHABAROV

Professional criminals, your
ordinary run of the mill murderers
and thieves, don't stare at them.
The guards let them run things in
here. They are to be feared.

JANUSZ

Why would they let them 'run
things'?

(CONTINUED)

KHABAROV

They are considered the by-product of bourgeoisie society and therefore 'Friends of the People'. We political prisoners are 'Enemies of the People'. Russia has become one vast prison - slave labor. You see even this camp is expanding to take in another thousand prisoners.

JANUSZ looks over to a group of Asiatic prisoners.

KHABAROV (CONT'D)

From the far reaches of the Soviet Empire - all scooped up in the net like so many minnows, poor creatures.

JANUSZ

And do any ever wriggle out of the net?

KHABAROV considers a moment, then leads him away from the surrounding prisoners. He lowers his voice to a whisper.

KHABAROV

You should be more careful. Stalin has eyes and ears everywhere, even in here.

He leans closer to JANUSZ.

KHABAROV (CONT'D)

In a camp like this you'll be dead in a year. If not literally then in spirit.

JANUSZ

And how long have you been here?

15 CONTINUED: (2)

15

KHABAROV

Eleven months and twenty-nine
days.

KHABAROV offers his hand.

KHABAROV (CONT'D)

Good night, friend.

16-17 OMITTED

16-17

A18 EXT. THE ZONE, CAMP 105 - DAWN

A18

In bone-chilling cold the prisoners form up in their brigades as a guard begins counting them. JANUSZ looks toward a barrack building where the bodies of several men who died overnight are being carried out and laid on the ground - among them the 'garbage-eater' from the night before. JANUSZ glances over toward SMITH who stares impassively ahead. GUARD NO. 1 is visible, checking paper work at the camp gates.

AB18 EXT. EDGE OF FOREST, ABOVE MINE - DAY

AB18

Follow a bird as it hops from branch to branch, pausing every now and then to listen to the sounds of axes and saws drifting from the forest floor.

JANUSZ and his friends - VOSS, TOMASZ, KAZIK and ZORAN - work at trimming felled trees of branches, and then sawing them into lengths.

SMITH and his gang work nearby. He watches JANUSZ peeling strips of bark from a pine-tree and stuffing them in his pocket.

KHABAROV, too, works here with a third gang, cutting and trimming the trees.

AC18 MINE SITE - DAY

AC18

On the valley floor, below towering cliffs, some 150 men haul rocks in wooden wheelbarrows from the mine entrance across a maze of tracks to waiting trucks.

A fire blazes in a 44 gallon drum set up in an open-sided wooden shelter. Here BOHDAN and his criminal associates supervise the work. VALKA has fallen on a slippery slope within the Urka hierarchy following his losses and growing debt.

(CONTINUED)

16.

AC18 CONTINUED: AC18

BOHDAN amuses himself by throwing stones at VALKA, warning him away from the fire like a stray dog. *

Guards placed at vantage points, stamp their feet to keep warm, occasionally shouting at the exhausted prisoners to work harder or move faster. Death is casual here. A man falls. If found to be dead he is left where he fell, bodies to be collected and counted at the end of the day. *

AD18 EXT. MINE ENTRANCE - DAY AD18 *

JANUSZ and his group dump a load of trimmed logs in a bay by the mine entrance. He hesitates as the others move away, staring into the black hole leading into the mountain. Eerie sounds drift up from deep below. A look of utter dread on his face. *

18 EXT. EDGE OF FOREST, ABOVE MINE - DUSK 18 *

The prisoners work hard to fill their quotas - VOSS swings his axe like a demon, but even with his contribution the cut pile of logs is a long way from the mark showing at the top of the storage bay. *

BOHDAN, the overseer, moves amongst the various working gangs, measuring their completed piles of logs. JANUSZ's group are still only half way to a full quota. KHABAROV leaves his gang and approaches JANUSZ. *

KHABAROV
(In English)
Quickly now, half-quota means half-rations. Quota is Law here. *

JANUSZ
No-one could meet that quota even if they were fed and rested. *

KHABAROV calls for them to follow him. He leads them at a jog deeper into the trees - pointing out various shapes buried in fallen leaves and drifts of snow. He clears away the leaves and snow to reveal a pile of old grey cut timber. *

KHABAROV
Cut last year and never collected!
Quickly hide them inside your fresh cut timber!

BOHDAN moving closer. It becomes a race to transport all the old logs to their pile and to conceal them inside the fresh cut logs. *

(CONTINUED)

18 CONTINUED:

18

They just make it, but BOHDAN notices the end of an old grey log poking out from the center of the stack. He stops his measuring of their quota. A tense moment, then he nods and leaves. KHABAROV crosses from his gang to join them.

JANUSZ

He knows.

KHABAROV shrugs.

KHABAROV

He knows, but he doesn't care, as long as his arse is protected. This is 'Tufta'. Bull-shit.

JANUSZ nods his thanks.

19-22 OMITTED

19-22

A23 EXT. A DIRT ROAD THROUGH A FOREST - DUSK

A23

The long march back to camp. JANUSZ peers left and right toward the beckoning forest. Beside him ZORAN senses his friend might just take off then and there. He places a restraining hand on his arm, as a guard's voice drifts through the still air:

GUARD NO. 1

A step to the left, a step to the right, and I shoot!

23 INT. BARRACKS - NIGHT

23

VOSS and KAZIK are by the stove unwinding their long foot-cloths that most wear in place of socks. KAZIK hangs the damp cloths on the stove to dry and sets out to examine his toes, which are in poor shape, suffering the early stages of frostbite. TOMASZ sits nearby sketching the scene on a sheet of birch-bark, using a piece of charcoal.

**
**
**

WIDER to see VALKA, looking on in admiration. TOMASZ is uneasy despite the implied compliment. VALKA hands him a sheet of paper, and the stub of a pencil.

**

VALKA

(In English)

You do for me.

(CONTINUED)

TOMASZ

You want me to make a sketch of
you?

**

23 CONTINUED: (2)

23

VALKA

No. Not me.

TOMASZ puzzled.

24 A BUNK NEAR THE STOVE - SAME TIME

24

BOHDAN lies on his bunk, surrounded by several of his tattooed henchmen listening to a story. The storyteller, looking rather uncomfortable, is ZORAN. His Russian is good but for a moment his memory fails him as he desperately tries to recall the next beat in the story.

BOHDAN

Keep going and you'll get some bread - so how does this 'Long John Silver' find the treasure?

YURI

I knew a type like that. Remember Igor? He had one leg.

BOHDAN

Shut up.
(Then to ZORAN)
Go on.

The story resumes, ZORAN giving it all he's got, when VALKA appears a sketch in his hand. He passes it to BOHDAN. CLOSE on the sketch - a lusty naked woman. VALKA makes a gesture implying masturbation. BOHDAN examines the drawing before licking the back of it, lifting his shirt, sticking it to his chest, then lowering his shirt again. He waves VALKA away.

25 JANUSZ'S BUNK - SAME TIME

25

CLOSE on a shirt.

The shirt lies on JANUSZ's bunk and it's moving. A tiny subtle movement, but just perceptible, the movement caused by hundreds of lice.

WIDER,

to see this is JANUSZ's view, KHABAROV there too, watching over his shoulder.

KHABAROV

For the lice I have an old folk remedy.

(CONTINUED)

25 CONTINUED: 25

He picks up the shirt and walks toward the door of the barrack, indicating JANUSZ should follow. As he passes his bunk he scoops up his own shirt. ***

26 EXT. CAMP PERIMETER - NIGHT 26

KHABAROV leads him toward the wire. From somewhere deep in the bowels of the earth, a low sinister rumbling, the very ground itself shaking momentarily. JANUSZ stops, while KHABAROV keeps walking.

KHABAROV

The mines. They blast at night.

He pauses to let JANUSZ catch up, then looking furtively about him, he crouches by a drift of snow.

KHABAROV (CONT'D)

Shirt. ***

JANUSZ hands him his shirt. He scrapes a hole in the snow, buries the shirt, leaving only the tip showing. He does the same with his own shirt. ***

JANUSZ

We're going to leave them here overnight? Why?

KHABAROV

You'll see.

JANUSZ stares up at the wire, then to a distant watchtower, its searchlight briefly illuminating him. KHABAROV follows his eye-line. ***

KHABAROV (CONT'D)

It can be done.

JANUSZ holding his breath.

KHABAROV (CONT'D)

There is a way through the wire.

JANUSZ stares at him.

KHABAROV (CONT'D)

Lazar, you've seen him, my
associate, overseer of
construction.

He nods toward an area where stockade wall is being
replaced with double wire.

KHABAROV (CONT'D)

Few ever escape the camps. I've
waited for someone like you,
someone with the strength and will
to see it through.

JANUSZ

(Excited)

Can't go West - apart from the
Soviets, there's the Germans.
East? All Soviet right to the
Pacific...it would have to be
South?

KHABAROV nods, beams at him like a teacher with a very
bright pupil.

JANUSZ (CONT'D)

They marched as due North from the
railway, I glimpsed a lake, but I
have no idea where we are.

KHABAROV squats down, JANUSZ joins him, and smoothing out
a drift of snow KHABAROV sketches a map of a lake and
indicates the location of the camp.

KHABAROV

We believe about 500 kilometers
north of Lake Baikal.

JANUSZ

We could follow the edge of the
Lake, it runs due South.

KHABAROV

(Nodding)

Then on to the Trans-Siberian
Railway. Cross that and you're
close to the Mongolian border.
And freedom.

JANUSZ's eyes burn with excitement. KHABAROV takes his arm, as if drawing energy from the younger man.

KHABAROV (CONT'D)

Spring is already upon us. It would have to be next autumn.

JANUSZ

Why wait?

KHABAROV

It's 1000 kilometers to the border, maybe more. We need careful planning, stock-pile food. I've already begun - trading, dealing. You could do the same. In the Autumn the weather is predictable. We need the early snows to cover our tracks.

JANUSZ nods.

JANUSZ

What about my friends?

KHABAROV

If you trust them. But they won't all survive.

JANUSZ

But they'd die free men.

KHABAROV offers his hand, and they shake.

A27 INT. BARRACK - NIGHT

A27****

KHABAROV and JANUSZ enter, having buried the shirt in the snow. KHABAROV indicates LAZAR, sitting on a bunk, and whispers. ****

KHABAROV

That's Lazar. He was architect. ****
In Kiev. Now he is grave robber - ****
me too. (Whispers) We sneak out ****
at night. Through the wire. ****

He moves away. ****

27 EXT. CAMP - DAWN

27

To the echoing clang of the hammer and iron, JANUSZ and KHABAROV hurry to where they buried their clothing.

CLOSE on the tips of the cloth showing above the snow – a teeming mound of lice on each.

WIDER, as they shake their clothing free of the lice, and hurry over to join the assembly of prisoners at the kitchen servery window for their meagre breakfast ration. At the same time the morning ritual of carrying out the bodies of those who have died overnight is underway. The corpses are stacked like cords of wood for burial. JANUSZ pauses, a muttered prayer on his lips. Then he's passing the hospital barracks – the usual crowd of desperately ill prisoners hoping to be admitted, to be excused another day of the killing work, the majority turned away. He joins the line at the kitchen. The days' bread ration is being weighed and issued. If not exactly 500 grams a little is added or subtracted, the cook keeping trimmed slices, placing them in a tin.

28 EXT. THE ZONE/CAMP EXTERIOR - DAWN 28

Having been counted once, inside the camp, the brigade of prisoners is marched outside the gates where the armed guards who will escort them to work are waiting. GUARD NO. 1 begins counting them again. It's much colder than usual, prisoners beating their arms to keep warm, a high wind blowing. Khabarov stands with JANUSZ.

**
**

KHABAROV

Temperature is dropping. Below 60 they're not supposed to send us out. Know how to tell the temperature? You see frosty fog - it's 40 below. If you exhale easily but in a rasping fashion? 50 below. When your spit freezes? More than 60 below.

He hoiks and spits. Close on the ball of spit mid-air. Freeze-frame. It's a solid glittering crystal of ice.

29 OMITTED 29

A30 EXT. ROAD THROUGH FOREST - DAY A30

The freezing wind has picked up considerably, driving sleet against the column of prisoners, forcing them to a halt in an open snow-covered area. The column halts, the guards anxiously confer - 'to go back or continue on'? The prisoners shiver in the biting cold, some collapse, their fellow prisoners unwilling or unable to help them. JANUSZ and his friends find themselves near SMITH and watch as he hails a GUARD.

**
**
**

SMITH

(Shouts in Russian)
We need to make shelter.

GUARD NO. 1

Who asked you?

SMITH

We'll freeze to death in less than an hour.

GUARD NO. 1

I couldn't give a fuck if you drop dead right now.

A30 CONTINUED:

A30

SMITH

Yes, but lose 200 men and you'll
have some forms to fill out.
Could go badly for you.

The GUARD dimly considers this. The prisoners begin to stir, some shouting out that they should turn back. The GUARD alarmed, orders the prisoners to the ground - other guards level their rifles as the mass of men lay down on the freezing ground. All but SMITH.

SMITH (CONT'D)

We could move into the forest,
find shelter!

GUARD NO. 1

Lie down!

The GUARD is about to leave when to his astonishment, and that of the other prisoners, SMITH begins to walk toward the forest edging the road. The GUARD draws his pistol. On the ground ZORAN lies beside JANUSZ, as they watch the unfolding drama.

GUARD NO. 1 shouts for SMITH to return, others raise their rifles, waiting for his order to fire. He is conflicted, and after a tense moment gestures for them to lower their weapons.

GUARD NO. 1 (CONT'D)

Let the prisoners take shelter in
the trees! Shoot anyone who makes
a run for it!

JANUSZ stares after SMITH, admiring of his reckless
courage.

AB30 FOREST, LATER - DAY

AB30

The men work frantically collecting fallen timber. SMITH watches as VOSS picks up a massive log, places it on his shoulder and carries it to where JANUSZ is supervising the building of their shelter. Most of the other prisoners have just piled snow up around bundles of sticks to make windbreaks, but JANUSZ is building something more elaborate. SMITH's eyes miss nothing as he notes JANUSZ's skill and the way the others work as a team under his direction.

(CONTINUED)

AB30 CONTINUED:

AB30

Some distance away VALKA huddles alone against the trunk of a tree. He too, is watching JANUSZ organize shelter for the group.

AC30 LATER STILL.

AC30

JANUSZ calls KHABAROV to join them, but he declines politely. He moves on to find SMITH - invites him back to their improvised shelter. As SMITH sits, ZORAN offers his hand. ***

ZORAN

You are brave man - Dragan Zoran, Yugoslav ... this is Janusz WieszczeK ... the youngster is Kazik, both Polish. (They nod to SMITH) ***

VOSS

Andrejs Voss, Latvian.

ZORAN

(It's a League of Nations.) English our common language! ***

SMITH nods.

JANUSZ

And you're ...?

SMITH

Smith.

JANUSZ

Your first name?

SMITH

Mister.

JANUSZ

Mister Smith?

SMITH

That's right.

As the blizzard grows in intensity, JANUSZ reaches into his pocket for strips of pine-bark collected earlier. He hands them out to his companions. They watch as he chews on the bark. The others follow his example.

Watching from a short distance away is GUARD NO. 1. He takes note of the group as future troublemakers.

AD30 INT. BARRACKS - DAWN AD30 **

The men are stirring, struggling up to face another day, **
when the door opens, and in a flurry of snow, GUARD NO. 1 **
enters with another soldier. He orders SMITH, JANUSZ and **
his group to fall out. As he passes SMITH - **

GUARD NO. 1 **
(In Russian) **
You don't like being out in the **
cold, do you Cowboy? **

And as he moves away SMITH mutters to JANUSZ. **

SMITH **
Might as well have shot us **
yesterday. **

JANUSZ and the others look at him. **

SMITH (CONT'D) **
We're for the mine. **

30 INT. MINE - DAY 30

A labyrinth of twisting tunnels leading down into the frozen earth. Dim lights silhouette ghostly figures working with pick and shovel. Occasionally the muffled sound of a distant explosion as a gallery is blasted yet deeper. Mingling with these eerie sounds something more sinister - the hacking coughs of those who've done the most time in this frozen hell.

The man working beside JANUSZ wields a pick, JANUSZ shovelling out the rock as it breaks up. The man pauses to light a smoke. His fingers have moulded themselves into the shape of his pick-handle - they are like hooks, the man unable to straighten his fingers. He holds the cigarette with the tips of his fingers, as if his hand was an artificial limb. JANUSZ looks around desperately, fighting off an overwhelming feeling of claustrophobia. Despite the cold, sweat beads on his forehead.

31 INT. DEEPER IN THE MINE - DAY 31

KAZIK and a man known as 'THE PROF', drag a cart laden with rock up a steep incline. They wear horse collars attached to the cart by leather harnesses.

THE PROF's wasted frame and sallow complexion are in contrast to his lively intelligent eyes. He says something to KAZIK in Russian. He shakes his head. He doesn't speak Russian. THE PROF tries German, then English.

KAZIK

English, yes.

They share a smile.

PROF

I was only saying, these collars - the same used by ancient Egyptian people.

KAZIK

Yes, but on their horses probably.

PROF

No. Same. On people.

KAZIK

How do you know that?

PROF

I was professor of Egyptology.
Leningrad University.

KAZIK manages a look at his companion, before putting even more effort into dragging the load.

A man, enveloped in clouds of white steam, points a long pipe at the frozen rock and gravel - the heat making it easier for the pick and shovel men to dig. This is the 'POINT-MAN', and he opens and shuts valves on the pipe-stem which regulates the hot steam that travels along pipes leading back to a primitive boiler. Men try to warm themselves by working near the POINT-MAN, and when the guards are not around they clutch the pipes in their hands gaining a few moments of precious warmth.

SMITH knows how to work the system and has found a spot here working beside the POINT-MAN. He looks across to see JANUSZ staggering up the slope toward the distant mine entrance, where a guard can be seen silhouetted against the light. He watches a moment, something not right about JANUSZ. He lays his shovel aside and hurries after him.

33 INT./EXT. TUNNEL - DAY 33

JANUSZ scrambling toward the surface. He stumbles, falls to his knees. He looks down, sees something on the ground. *

JANUSZ'S VISION - DAY *

Something buried in the dirt and rubble - paving stones. He clears away the debris to reveal a stone path. Looking up he sees the path leads to a gate framed by a hedge. His P.O.V. as he moves up the path to the gate. His unseen hand opens the gate. Now the view is of the path as he walks forward - a series of worn flagstones, then the camera tilts up to see a closed front door. A pan to the left of the door - to see a loose brick in the wall. *

34 INT./EXT. TUNNEL - DAY 34

CLOSE on JANUSZ, as SMITH is suddenly beside him, grabbing his arm and swinging him into the darkness of an adjoining tunnel.

SMITH

Are you crazy? They'll shoot you.

JANUSZ

Got to get out!

SMITH stares at him. He's delirious and begins to shake with cold. SMITH grabs his shoulder and drags him back to where the POINT-MAN works, thrusting JANUSZ's hands around the pipe. The POINT-MAN waves them away but SMITH bribes him with a slice of bread. SMITH turns back to JANUSZ - the warmth of the pipe beginning to have its effect.

JANUSZ (CONT'D)

It can be done.

SMITH

What can be done? *

JANUSZ

He knows a way through the wire.

SMITH slaps a hand over his mouth, glancing at the Point-Man, before dragging JANUSZ further away.

(CONTINUED)

JANUSZ (CONT'D)

(a whisper)
He has a plan.

SMITH

Who?

JANUSZ

His name is Khabarov.

Now SMITH understands.

SMITH

The actor.

JANUSZ

You know him?

SMITH

He has no intention of escaping.

JANUSZ

What?

SMITH

He's a liar. Been here for years - seeks out new arrivals, me when I first came here. He just likes to talk about escape. I've known others like him.

JANUSZ

Why should I believe you?

SMITH

(shakes his head)
Nothing is for nothing in the camps. From you he gets your energy, your spirit. You feed his 'dream' of escape. You help keep him alive. He's no more than a leech.

JANUSZ

You're a cold bastard, Mister.

SMITH

(shrugs)
I'm still alive, that's all I know. But I won't be in six months. And neither will you. Not in the mines. So, if you're serious about making a run for it - I'm in.

(CONTINUED)

JANUSZ

I thought you were a loner?

SMITH

Can't be done alone. Besides you have a weakness that could be useful to me.

JANUSZ

And what's that?

SMITH

Compassion. If anything happens to me, I'm counting on you carrying me.

JANUSZ knows he's not joking.

35 EXT. CAMP KITCHEN, SAME TIME - NIGHT

35 *

It is snowing heavily, and after swallowing their soup, JANUSZ and his friends walk back to the barracks. KAZIK stumbles, and is helped to his feet by VOSS. He limps on to the barrack a hand resting for support on VOSS' shoulder. JANUSZ is preoccupied and he hesitates at the door, turns, and looks back. After a moment staring at the ground he hurries inside. *

36 INT. BARRACKS - NIGHT

36

JANUSZ has a puzzled KHABAROV by the arm, guiding him back to the door.

37 EXT. BARRACKS - NIGHT

37

He points to the ground - CLOSE on footprints as they rapidly disappear under the heavy snowfall.

JANUSZ

Tonight.

KHABAROV looks from the footprints to JANUSZ, a horrified look on his face.

KHABAROV

It's a passing storm!

JANUSZ

It'll do, it'll cover our tracks.

(CONTINUED)

KHABAROV

Impossible! We need preparation,
detailed plans, maps ...

JANUSZ

(overlap)

The timing will never be perfect,
they won't expect it now!

**

KHABAROV

But the distances! And food!
What about food?

JANUSZ

We've been trading, the American
is with us. He has food, you have
food.

KHABAROV

How long will that last?

JANUSZ

I've spent half my life in the
woods and mountains. We'll live
off the land.

KHABAROV

It can't be done!

JANUSZ shocked at the change in his friends' demeanor,
the appalling realization that SMITH was right about him.
He seizes his arm.

JANUSZ

How do we get through the wire?

KHABAROV

I don't know what you're talking
about.

JANUSZ

Your friend, Lazar, he knows
doesn't he?

A look of fear crosses KHABAROV's face. Someone behind
JANUSZ. JANUSZ turns. VALKA, a few paces away watching
them. KHABAROV scuttles back inside the barracks.
JANUSZ hesitates a moment, then follows.

A38 INT. BARRACKS - NIGHT

A38

In the last minutes before lights out the would-be escapees make discreet preparations. Clothing and other items are traded for food and tobacco. The COOK and BOHDAN are at the center of the camp black-market and most of the trading is done with them. TOMASZ trades more pornographic sketches with BOHDAN while KAZIK tries to trade his scarf for a pair of boots - his own being in poor shape. VOSS sits beside him, and notices that KAZIK does not look directly at his shoes or the scarf, but is doing everything by feel. As they move away VOSS whispers to him. **

VOSS

You can't see, can you?

A look of panic crosses the boy's face.

KAZIK

(Whispers)

Don't leave me behind!

VOSS conflicted.

KAZIK (CONT'D)

Promise me, Andrejs! I could keep a hand on your shoulder by night, and in the day I can see just fine. I won't hold you up. Please don't tell them. I'll die here.

JANUSZ and SMITH sit in a darkened corner working on LAZAR. They want to know how to get through the wire. He is reluctant until SMITH produces a wristwatch from his boot. The strapless watch, of good make, settles the deal, just as the light flickers and goes out plunging the barracks into darkness.

AB38 EXT. THE CAMP - NIGHT

AB38

Several shots of the wind driven snow whipping about the buildings.

38

INT. BARRACKS - LATER THAT NIGHT

38

The wooden building creaks and heaves like a ship at sea as the storm builds into a fully fledged blizzard. The sounds of the sleeping men, the usual cries and groans, hacking coughs, all mix into the howl of the storm. CLOSE on the conspirators lying awake - SMITH, VOSS, KAZIK, TOMASZ and ZORAN. SMITH looks across to JANUSZ, catches his eye. A signal from JANUSZ, 'not yet'. KHABAROV too, is awake. He jumps at any unexpected sound, checks his horde of food in the hiding place at the base of his bunk, as if expecting at any moment to be attacked and robbed. He sees a shadow. Someone moving about near him, a look of terror on his face.

LATER,

JANUSZ lies on his back listening to the storm. A movement beside him, then a knife pressed against his throat. It's VALKA. He grins, steel-capped teeth, his cross dangling from his neck. JANUSZ goes still.

VALKA

There are no secrets here.

JANUSZ

What do you want?

VALKA

The game goes against me. Small debt - lose fingers. Big debt, they take head. Me, big debt. But one thing I never gamble is my Wolf.

**

He removes the knife from JANUSZ's throat, tilts the blade to show a wolf's head incised into the blade.

VALKA (CONT'D)

In forest you need knife to survive. Without? A miracle.

**

He leans in close to JANUSZ's ear.

VALKA (CONT'D)

You need a knife, and I need miracle to get me out of here.

With a conjurer's ease he spins the knife in his fingers and arches his eyebrows - 'Deal'?

39 EXT. CAMP PERIMETER - DAWN 39

Heavy snow still falling as shadowy figures run toward the wire. Shouted commands and the beam of a searchlight isolates them - not the fugitives, but a group of guards. They've found a gap in the wire. A great yelping and baying as the dog-handlers join them, releasing the dogs into the gap, then following them toward the distant forest.

40 EXT. FOREST, SIBERIA - DAWN 40

Then seven fugitives, now including VALKA, weave in and out of the trees at a fast jog. Snow whirls about them, as, gasping for breath, they attempt to keep up with JANUSZ. In the rear KAZIK holds onto VOSS' rope belt, occasionally stumbling, but VOSS has him up and on his feet fast enough to keep up with the others. *

JANUSZ pauses briefly every now and then to study the moss growing on the North side of tree-trunks, before plunging on Southward. *

41 FURTHER ALONG ... 41 *

They top a rise to a clearing and pause to catch their breath. The snow continues to fall but JANUSZ will allow no rest and moves off without a backward glance. *

42 FURTHER STILL ... 42

JANUSZ is out in front when SMITH stops, resting his hands on his knees, gulping for air. The others stop too, VALKA dropping to his knees. JANUSZ runs back to VALKA, drags him to his feet. *

JANUSZ

Get up. Or we die right now. You know how fast dogs travel. *

He turns to the others. *

JANUSZ (CONT'D)

Run, damn you! Run! *

He moves to SMITH. *

JANUSZ (CONT'D)

Is it time for me to carry you?

(CONTINUED)

42 CONTINUED:

42

SMITH waves him away, gets up and continues.

43 EXT. ANOTHER PART OF THE FOREST - DAY

43

A feeble light penetrates the forest as day begins. The snow still falling heavily as the men stumble into a deep depression, and facing a steep climb find they can go no further. KAZIK turns his face to the light. His sight is returning with the day and he nods gratefully to VOSS.

In the deep stillness the sound of distant voices. They look about them. Hard to tell the direction of the sound. JANUSZ is on his feet - there's plenty of fallen timber but no obvious place to hide. He draws a circle in the snow, mimes digging to the others, then turns to VALKA, whispers.

JANUSZ

Knife.

VALKA has never taken an order from a 'Political' in his short life.

VALKA

What?

JANUSZ

Your knife.

With a glance to the others he reluctantly draws his knife from his boot and passes it to JANUSZ.

While the group furiously dig, JANUSZ collects and trims fallen timber. As the hole deepens, JANUSZ begins to make a trellis roof. The voices change direction. They go still. Are they surrounded? They resume their digging with greater intensity, the hole now more than a meter at its deepest, JANUSZ placing the branches to cover their hide.

44-46 OMITTED 44-46

A47 EXT FOREST - DAY A47

Several angles on the forest. Utter stillness. Light snow falling.

AB47 EXT. THE HIDE, FOREST - DAY AB47

Camera moves slowly toward their hide, wisps of vapor rise from below the surface. The Russian voices are closer now. ***

AC47 INT. THE HIDE - DAY AC47

It's like an Indian sweat-lodge as the fugitives sit shoulder to shoulder in a tight circle, ears straining, sweat running down their faces. The voices closer still. A tense moment, and then they are passing, the voices fading into silence.

47 EXT. COUNTRYSIDE, SIBERIA - NIGHT 47

The strong wind drives snow and sleet horizontally, and as they push forward they cover their faces to keep the snow from throat and lungs. VALKA, his arm wrapped defensively across his eyes, staggers and falls to his knees. JANUSZ turns back, drags him to his feet. KAZIK hangs onto the back of VOSS' coat, VOSS at times literally dragging him along.

48 EXT. A TREE, FOREST - NIGHT 48

With VALKA's knife JANUSZ cuts a square of bark, pulls it from the tree, cuts two triangular holes some centimeters apart, then rams the base of the bark piece into VALKA'S collar. It's a crude mask.

49 EXT. THE PROCESSION, FOREST - NIGHT 49

The group, all now wearing the improvised snow-masks, push forward against the wind, looking like a tribe from some distant age dressed in ceremonial masks.

50 EXT. ANOTHER PART OF THE FOREST - NIGHT. 50

JANUSZ in the lead, some fifty paces ahead, but he's stopped, thigh-deep in the snow, as still as a statue. The others catch up, puzzled. SMITH calls to him, lifts his mask. He's asleep. SMITH shakes him back to consciousness, all the while the storm continues at full force.

SMITH

We've got to make fire!

JANUSZ

No! You saw how close they were!

KAZIK sinks to the snow, then ZORAN.

SMITH

We die either way, might as well die warm.

A51 EXT. FOREST, LATER - NIGHT A51

A hole scraped out of the snow and a wind-break of fallen timber, is all they can manage in their exhausted state. Down in the hole JANUSZ is striking a spark from a flint. Some are fading fast, KAZIK keeps falling asleep, to be shaken awake by TOMASZ. MR. SMITH is splitting wood into ever finer shavings, ready to feed a nascent fire. Still the damp kindling will not catch. *

They draw closer together for warmth, draping their arms over each other's shoulders. ZORAN's head drops to his chest. TOMASZ shakes him. *

TOMASZ *

Sleep and you die. Tell us a story. *

A51 CONTINUED:

A51

The other look to ZORAN, and fighting the desire to sleep, he begins. VALKA loves a good story, and despite their desperate situation he listens with the attention and concentration of a small child.

ZORAN

Once upon a time, in the days of wooden ships, there was a great storm in far away seas. A merchant ship hurried toward big rocks, lightening in the sky, the waves as high as house-tops. Very, very cold, brrr! The ship smashed onto the rocks, the sailors cried in fear, called out to God, but they all drowned. All but one, Mr. Robinson Crusoe. He woke to find himself all alone on a desert island. For many years he lived without any human companions, until one day he saw something shocking! What was it? A human footprint. He was no longer alone. But was the stranger friend or foe? Another ship wrecked sailor? Or, a cannibal?

All turn as a flicker of flame begins at the base of the kindling. While JANUSZ blows at the flame, MR. SMITH feeds in small shavings. The group watch with the awe and wonder usually reserved for child-birth. Then everyone is making a contribution - adding a few leaves, or tiny twigs, like offerings, as the fire grows and spreads.

AB51 EXT. FOREST, CAMPFIRE - DAWN

AB51

A comfortable blaze, the group, minus JANUSZ, sleep or drowse in the life-giving warmth, when a pile of snow lands on the fire. The others react. It's JANUSZ. He heaps on more snow and the fire sputters out.

By the time the others are on their feet JANUSZ is almost out of sight and they hurry to catch up, fearful of being left behind.

AC51 EXT./INT. SHELTER, FOREST - DAY

AC51

Ruins, deep in the forest. From the overgrown rubble they build a shelter, discovering as they do, evidence that this was once a small, remote, Soviet gulag.

(CONTINUED)

AC51 CONTINUED:

AC51

LATER, the fugitives sit shoulder to shoulder in a tight circle. They shiver in their padded jackets, rub frozen limbs. VALKA looks up to find SMITH staring at him.

VALKA

You stare at me like the snake at
the rabbit ... or is it the other
way 'round?

VALKA turns to the others with a silver-toothed smile,
indicates SMITH.

VALKA (CONT'D)

He teach me English. Speak good,
huh? Bread for words, wasn't it
cowboy?

SMITH holds his gaze a moment before being distracted by
a thumping sound outside. The group go very still. A
second thump, overhead this time. VALKA draws his knife.
A trickle of snow falls through the vent in the roof.

JANUSZ

Snow, falling from trees.

They relax a little.

KAZIK

When can we travel by day?

JANUSZ

When I say.

AC51 CONTINUED: (2)

AC51

KAZIK glances at VOSS.

TOMASZ

How far have we come?

JANUSZ

Twenty, thirty kilometers.

**

ZORAN

Is that all?

VALKA

Less, if we've been going in circles, like the chicken without its head.

TOMASZ

(to JANUSZ)

How can you tell we're heading South?

**

**

ZORAN

He reads the trees, don't you?

JANUSZ

Something like that.

He spreads out a piece of cloth on the snow at his feet.

JANUSZ (CONT'D)

Alright, let's see what you've got.

No one moves. JANUSZ reaches into his own pockets, emptying the contents onto the cloth - several slices of bread, half a kilo of buckwheat, some dried meat, a swatch of tobacco. SMITH goes next with a larger store of bread and a little salt. VOSS has a collection of small fish-heads which he adds to the store. TOMASZ, KAZIK and ZORAN make their contributions. They stare grimly at their limited food supply. Various other items are added - a razor blade, a length of cord, a piece of barbed-wire, etc. SMITH picks up the barbed wire, examines it.

**

**

**

**

**

JANUSZ (CONT'D)

Valka?

VALKA reluctantly reaches into his coat - something familiar about it with its distinctive fur-lined collar.

JANUSZ (CONT'D)

That's Khabarov's coat.

(CONTINUED)

AC51 CONTINUED: (3)

AC51

He smiles at JANUSZ as he produces a bulging sack from inside his coat.

VALKA (CONT'D.)

Yes...and...

**

From the sack he produces KHABAROV's hoarded supply of food and other items. Off JANUSZ's reaction -

**

**

VALKA (CONT'D)

He was going to inform. Don't worry. I talk to him. Everything o.k.

He puts the goods back in the sack and goes to place it inside his coat.

**

**

JANUSZ

We share.

JANUSZ reaches out for the sack of food. VALKA glances at the others, then passes it to him. TOMASZ has already begun to organize seven slices of bread laying one of VOSS's fish heads on each one. He hands them out. They eat in silence, savoring every bite. ZORAN removes the fish-head, passing it back to TOMASZ. Then he places a thin layer of snow on the bread like a canape. He eats daintily, his little finger extended like a dowager at a tea party, raising a smile from his exhausted companions.

AD51 EXT. FOREST - NIGHT.

AD51

The wind is rising, whipping flurries of snow through the trees. SMITH and JANUSZ are in the lead. SMITH refers back to VALKA.

SMITH

You've made a bargain with the Devil.

JANUSZ

(terse)

Have you got a knife?

They move on in silence, JANUSZ not liking his bargain any more than SMITH.

AE51 LATER, THAT NIGHT

AE51

SMITH finds himself walking beside VALKA.

(CONTINUED)

AE51 CONTINUED:

AE51

VALKA

For direction he looks at grass
and mosses, what's that? I swear
to God he better know what he's
doing.

SMITH

You should be grateful you're here
at all.

VALKA

Gratitude is for dogs.

He moves away from SMITH, his eyes fixed on JANUSZ, who
is again studying moss on the side of a tree.

51 EXT. FOREST - DAWN

51

The group in the shelter of the trees. The sky is
overcast but at least it's not too cold. Everywhere
about is deep snow from the recent storm. TOMASZ
prepares a meal from their dry rations, small portions
for men who have expended so much energy. KAZIK examines
his swollen blistered feet. VALKA has his boots off,
shaking them.

VALKA (TO KAZIK)

Clean inside boots, foot-cloths.

KAZIK copies him.

VALKA (CONT'D)

Man on run - one tiny piece of
sand can make cripple, I swear to
God.

The others are listening, and some do likewise.

52 EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

52

With lengths of wood as 'ski-poles', the group begin to
make up lost time. VOSS has lashed his rope-belt to
KAZIK who walks behind him. SMITH wonders about this,
but says nothing. They pause at the top of a rise
amongst the trees, on hearing the sound of dogs howling
from behind.

JANUSZ

Wolves ... it's only wolves.

52 CONTINUED: 52

Relieved, they continue forward.

ZORAN
'Only wolves', great. **

A53 THE SUN A53 **

From behind clouds, the sun appears, shafting light toward the earth. **

53 EXT. RIDGE, MOUNTAIN TOP, SIBERIA - DAY 53 **

The upturned faces of the fugitives. Sun worshipers all. JANUSZ a short distance away. He plants his 'ski-pole' in the snow, marking the tip of its shadow with a pine-cone. They watch as he draws a line in the snow from the second marker - about a foot in length. Then he stands, and with the toe of his left foot at the first pine-cone and the toe of his right foot at the end of the line in the snow, he points, calling to them. **

JANUSZ
South! To Lake Baikal! **

Cheers from the watching group. **

JANUSZ (CONT'D)
Now we travel by day. **

They move off down toward a distant valley, ZORAN the last to leave, doubt on his face as he studies the series of seemingly endless forested hills stretching before them. **

54-61 OMITTED 54-61

A62 LATER STILL - DAY A62

The group push on with renewed energy. VALKA hurries to keep up with JANUSZ.

VALKA
You are the 'Pakhan'.

JANUSZ
What's 'Pakhan'?

A62 CONTINUED:

A62

VALKA

Boss of criminals.

JANUSZ

We're not criminals, we're
escaping from criminals.

VALKA

I swear to God you win my respect
with your sticks and pine-cones.
I'll stand between you and death.

JANUSZ

You want to be my bodyguard?

VALKA

It's the Urka way. You have me
... and you have the Wolf.

He touches the knife in its bark sheath at his belt.
JANUSZ increases the pace, VALKA pushing himself to keep
up with his 'Pakhan'.

62 EXT. LATER, FIRESIDE - DUSK

62

The fugitives settle for the coming night. As TOMASZ
unpacks their meagre food supply JANUSZ sketches a map on
a piece of birch-bark. The other sit exhausted, some
close to sleep, except SMITH who is working the piece of
barbed wire from KHABAROV's stash. *

JANUSZ (V.O.)

I have us here somewhere.

Above Lake Baikal their former camp is marked. South of
the lake, the Trans-Siberian Railway, a little further
South the Russo/Mongolian border. With a twig he points
to a spot seemingly not far from the prison camp. *

WIDER to see the disappointed faces of the group - the
distance yet to cover overwhelming.

JANUSZ (CONT'D)

(to VALKA)

Are you going all the way?

VALKA

To Mongolia? No. I go further.
To America.

The first SMITH has heard of this. TOMASZ turns from
examining their store of food.

(CONTINUED)

TOMASZ

We have food for another week.

*
*

VALKA

We need meat.

VOSS

I can make traps.

JANUSZ

We'll be moving too fast to wait
for traps.

VALKA

We find farms, villages, get food
there.

JANUSZ

There's a bounty on our heads.

VALKA

We steal it. At night. They
never know.

VOSS

We're not thieves.

VALKA

(laughs)
Then I'll steal it, and I'll eat.
You can watch.

SMITH is working the length of barbed-wire someone added
earlier to their communal store. His fingers are
bleeding as he struggles to separate the strands of wire.

ZORAN (TO SMITH)

What's that?

SMITH

Barbed-wire.

ZORAN puzzled, but TOMASZ gets it.

TOMASZ

He's making a fish-hook.

JANUSZ smiles at SMITH's ingenuity.

JANUSZ

It's how we'll survive isn't it,
Mister?

ZORAN

Fish? I don't eat fish.

(CONTINUED)

62 CONTINUED: (2)

62

SMITH

Then you'll die.

KAZIK has a far-away look in his sight-less eyes. He speaks in Polish to JANUSZ.

VOSS

What does he say?

TOMASZ

He asked Janusz if he believes in God's forgiveness.

This has come from seemingly nowhere.

SMITH

Save your philosophy. Concentrate on keeping up with us instead.

He gets up and goes in search of more wood, the others surprised at his cold tone.

The rest of the group also begin to prepare their camp. Most gather wood while TOMASZ, the 'quartermaster', makes their meal, and JANUSZ the fire. VOSS keeps an eye on KAZIK who, demonstrating his independence while it's still light, and his desire to contribute, returns with a load of wood, turning back into the forest for more. Others gather wood, and as the light fades, begin to take up positions by the growing fire, roll cigarettes, etc. VOSS looks anxiously for KAZIK. He has not returned. *

63 OMITTED 63 *

64 OMITTED 64 *

A65 EXT. FOREST - DUSK A65 *

KAZIK lost. He moves along a right to left trajectory, i.e. North, heading away for the campsite, his sight beginning to fade with the light.

65 EXT. CAMPSITE - NIGHT 65

The group range out from the fire calling KAZIK's name. VOSS turns to JANUSZ.

VOSS

He has night-blindness.

66

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

66

KAZIK stumbling through the whiteout. He stops. Did he hear his name? He moves on, pleased to find by his side the Professor from the mine.

KAZIK

I thought I was alone!

PROF.

I've been walking with you for
some time.

KAZIK

I'll just sit for a minute.

The PROF. sits beside him.

PROF.

Not far to go.

He points, and KAZIK sees - the Pyramids of Giza, deep
inside the fog.

KAZIK

We made it. We really made it.
Isn't that something.

They find KAZIK not a hundred yards from where they
camped. The weather has broken, the fog gone. He sits
looking toward them, his bare feet stretched out before
him, his eyes wide open. On his lips a frozen smile.

They stand by his grave.

JANUSZ

A free man died here today.

Amens are muttered. The group remain by the grave
reluctant to leave. All but VALKA who looks about
restlessly.

VALKA

Young always die first.

The others look at him.

VALKA (CONT'D)

In the camps.

He looks at their somber faces.

68

CONTINUED:

68

VALKA (CONT'D)

Still, one less mouth to feed ...
 what? You're all thinking the
 same thing.

He wanders away toward the embers of their fire.

**

A69

A STREAM, FOREST - DAY

A69

**

SMITH hauling in fish, hand over hand. The others
 watching in fascination.

**

**

TOMASZ

Where did you learn to fish like
 that?

**

**

**

SMITH

Lived in the woods a while.

**

**

VALKA

In America.

**

**

SMITH

In America.

**

**

ZORAN

And how did you come to be in
 Russia?

**

**

**

SMITH

I made a mistake.

**

**

69

EXT. SIBERIAN WILDERNESS - TIMELAPSE - DAY/DUSK/DAWN 69

High, wide, panoramas, the tiny figures of the fugitives
 threading their way through the trees heading steadily
 Southward.

70

EXT. SIBERIAN WILDERNESS - DAY

70

Close on Nature naturing - birds calling from high
 branches, bees buzzing, a grub crawling along a leaf.
 And a large animal grazing. Or what appears at first to
 be an animal.

It's VALKA, on all fours, picking up and eating bugs.
 Others are there grazing too. The weeks have taken their
 toll and they look thin and starving. We see in detail
 their search for anything edible: hands digging out
 roots and berries of various kinds which are tested with
 a tentative nibble and sometimes spat out if too bitter;

(CONTINUED)

70 CONTINUED:

70

VOSS has made a small trap - a noose rigged on a branch and just beyond it a nut. A squirrel watches.

Not all food is shared in this extreme situation and some, with a furtive look about them, eat what they find. **

71 EXT. CAVE - SAME TIME - DAY

71 **

They are camped at the mouth of a cathedral like cave, and here TOMASZ amuses himself by sketching on the cave wall using charcoal from the fire. Among portraits of the group are scenes from life in Camp 105. On the fire a stew of water and pine-needles bubbles away.

ZORAN watches idly from where he lies near the cave entrance.

ZORAN

They'll find our bones and your
drawings a hundred years from now,
and say - 'a fine example of Early
Gulag Man'.

71 CONTINUED:

71

TOMASZ

Shut up with your jokes! Go and
find food like the others.

ZORAN

You do the shutting up! Drawing
like you're on holiday. I'm sick.

TOMASZ

I cook. They find food. What do
you ever do? Nothing!

ZORAN

I make them laugh.

TOMASZ

Not any more.

ZORAN turns away from him, curling up into a foetal
position.

72 EXT./INT. CAVE - DUSK

72 **

SMITH walking through the vast cave, his attention caught
by two massive holes in the roof. He walks on toward
their camp outside an opening at the far end.

**
**
**

73 EXT. CAVE - DUSK

73 **

TOMASZ has water boiling on the fire. He calls to the
others -

TOMASZ

What do you have? Come on, no
holding back.

SMITH approaches from the cave, hands over two small
fish, his day's catch. VOSS steps forward with a dead
squirrel. VALKA has nothing. TOMASZ reaches for their
cooking pot cooling by the fire. He passes a cup to
JANUSZ.

**
**
**
**
**

TOMASZ (CONT'D)

Pine-needle tea.

**
**

73 CONTINUED:

JANUSZ sips, reacts to the bitterness of the brew, then passes it on. *
*

74 EXT./INT. CAVE - NIGHT 74

Sleeping figures by the fire. TOMASZ tosses and turns, muttering in his sleep. JANUSZ is awake as is VALKA who sits close beside him. A whispered conversation -

VALKA
Who will be first?

JANUSZ looks at him.

JANUSZ
You mean the first to die?

VALKA nods, indicates TOMASZ.

VALKA
I think that sucker, the artist.
But better if it was him.

He nods toward ZORAN. *

JANUSZ
It might be you.

VALKA shrugs.

JANUSZ (CONT'D)
Why 'better' if it's Zoran? *

VALKA squeezes the flesh of his upper arms.

VALKA
More soft. More tender.

JANUSZ shakes his head, 'no'.

VALKA (CONT'D)
Mister only gets little fish now. *
We must have meat, or we die. *
You're the Pakhan, you've thought
of it. We all have. That's why
you brought extra people isn't it?
For food? An old Urka escape
trick. I swear to God you were an
Urka in another life.

JANUSZ
We'll get food when we get to Lake
Baikal, plenty of fish there.

(CONTINUED)

VALKA

You said we should have seen Lake
a week ago. We're lost, Pakhan.

JANUSZ stares into the fire as VALKA lays down to sleep.

A75 LATER, NIGHT

A75 *

It is ZORAN's turn on watch and he stands near the
entrance to the cave, his blanket about his shoulders,
looking out into the still night. Behind him a low
growling sound, coming from deep in the cave. He turns,
a look of terror on his face. He can see nothing but a
dim light deep in the cave where moonlight penetrates
through two large holes in the cave roof. He wakes
JANUSZ, alerting him to the sound. JANUSZ in turn wakes
VALKA, and after taking burning sticks from the fire they
walk back inside the vast cave toward the source of the
sound, VALKA drawing his knife.

*
*
*
*
*
*
*
*
*
*

75 INT. CAVE - NIGHT

75 *

The dim light shows a wolf-pack growling as they pick at
a carcass on the cave floor. They drop their bones and
face the intruders, baring their fangs, all now growling.
On a signal from JANUSZ they rush the wolves, who run
back toward another exit from the cave. MR. SMITH,
TOMASZ and VOSS come hurrying to join them, woken by all
the barking and shouting.

*
*
*
*
*
*

VALKA falls on part of the carcass, cutting off chunks of
raw meat. The others do likewise. Wider on the group,
down on all fours chewing on the remains of the kill,
only JANUSZ stands back, watching them.

*
*
*
*

76 EXT./INT. CAVE - EARLY MORNING

76

Some sleep on, others stir, their movements slow and
listless. They are near the end. This has been JANUSZ's
point of view as he packs a few scraps of food into his
pockets and picks up his staff. Those awake stare at
him.

JANUSZ

I'll be back in a week - if I find
the lake. If not, you're on your
own.

VALKA

I come too.

76 CONTINUED:

76

JANUSZ
 (shakes his head)
 I'll travel faster alone. Mr.
 Smith will be the Pakhan while I'm
 gone.

JANUSZ turns and with a nod of the head 'follow me', to
 SMITH, he moves off.

77 EXT. SOME DISTANCE FROM CAMP - DAWN

77

Now out of earshot, JANUSZ turns to SMITH. SMITH knows
 what it's about.

SMITH
 I know. Valka.

JANUSZ
 Don't let him out of your sight.

SMITH
 Good luck.

As JANUSZ heads off into the forest.

78 EXT. OPEN COUNTRY, SIBERIA - DAY

78

A magnificent vista - a broad plain sweeping toward a
 distant line of hills. It's a beautiful clear day and
 the lone figure of JANUSZ, dwarfed by the landscape,
 walks steadily Southward.

79 EXT. ROCKY HILLSIDE - DUSK

79 **

Sheltering from the wind on the leeseide of a hill, he
 takes pine-cones from his pocket, breaks them open and
 eats the seeds. Then he's up and off again, leaning
 heavily on his staff.

80 EXT. A BARREN PLAIN - DAY

80

The weather changes from a clear Spring morning to cold
 and overcast as gusts of wind whip down from distant
 slopes. JANUSZ bends into the wind, his pace slowing.
 He stumbles, sinks to the ground, fighting the desire to
 let go, to give himself to sleep, and the swift death
 that will surely follow. His eyes begin to close. Then
 he sees it. Just ahead of him. The gate. The gate from
 his vision in the mine. He struggles to his feet,
 staggers on -

(CONTINUED)

80 CONTINUED:

80

JANUSZ'S VISION: A repeat of his earlier hallucination - the click of the gate latch, the flagstones at his feet as he moves down the path. (All the while the accompanying sound is of JANUSZ's laboured breathing in the present 'reality'). He's at the front door, camera pans to the loose brick in the wall beside the door.

81 EXT. CAMPSITE, FOREST - DUSK

81

JANUSZ staggers back into camp, half dead and shivering with cold. VALKA is quickly beside him with SMITH and VOSS.

JANUSZ

Three days from here. South by West.

He collapses. VOSS shouts for the fire to be built up, hot water to be boiled. He feels his pulse, checks his eyes.

VOSS

Stones! Gather stones! Heat them in the fire!

82 EXT. CAMPSITE, STILL LATER - NIGHT

82

Throughout the night they take turns replacing the hot stones surrounding his body and massaging his feet and hands. On one such occasion SMITH finds himself at JANUSZ's side. JANUSZ opens his eyes.

SMITH

What's the 'brick'?

JANUSZ

What did I say?

SMITH

Something about a loose brick.

JANUSZ nods, offers no explanation.

SMITH (CONT'D)

You know if you don't pull through soon we'll have to leave you.

JANUSZ

I expect nothing less.

(CONTINUED)

82 CONTINUED:

82

SMITH

So you better get better quick if
you want to see home again.

JANUSZ

We could've used you in the Polish
army. Fired you out of a cannon.

He closes his eyes, lapses back into a deep sleep.

83 OMITTED

83 **

84 EXT. HILLSIDE, SIBERIA - DUSK

84 **

It's a beautiful evening as the file of travellers climb
toward the crest of the hill.

85 EXT. MOUNTAIN, SIBERIA - DUSK

85 **

From the crest, a panorama of Lake Baikal - a massive
body of water stretching to the horizon.

**
**

The fugitives rest, and consider the next stage of their
journey.

**
**

SMITH

**

(to JANUSZ)

**

We're going to have to follow the
Western shore.

**
**

ZORAN

**

But look, it bends like that -
won't it take us longer?

**
**

JANUSZ

**

See all those settlements on the
other side? We'd never get
through.

**
**
**

VALKA

**

I swear to God, those mother-
fuckers would cut off our heads,
take them to secret police. Get
more for us than they would for
their fish.

**
**
**
**
**

JANUSZ, impatient to move on, is already on his feet.
ZORAN rolls onto his back with a groan.

**
**

86-87 OMITTED

86-87 **

88

EXT. A TRACK, LAKESIDE - DAY

88 **

SMITH and VOSS are last in line as they move cautiously along a dirt track. SMITH keeps looking back over his shoulder.

VOSS

What is it?

SMITH signals JANUSZ to stop, while holding a finger to his lips for silence. JANUSZ joins him, followed by the others.

SMITH
We're being followed.

JANUSZ
Followed? Where?

SMITH
Fifty yards back. A man on his own. May have seen us - crossed into the trees beside the track.

A silence as they consider their options. VALKA draws his knife.

VOSS
No killing.

VALKA
(to VOSS)
No? I think you've killed before. You say too many prayers for an innocent man.

VOSS looks uneasy.

SMITH
He gives us away, the soldiers will be on us in no time.

JANUSZ
Valka, go back on the other side of the track, then come up behind, in case he makes a run for it.

VALKA moves off, gliding through the trees on the left of the track. The others wait a beat, then move into the trees on the right side of the track picking up fallen timber as weapons.

JANUSZ is in the lead when in a clearing not fifty paces ahead, a figure steps out from behind a tree. JANUSZ stops, holding up a hand for the others to stay where they are. He stares at the small figure - a young woman. There's a glimpse of a dirty skirt under her coat, a scarf tied loosely about her neck. Wisps of chestnut hair stray out from under a moth-eaten fur hood. She looks frightened and desperate.

88 CONTINUED: (2)

88

From her waif like appearance, it's hard to tell her age - an old thirteen or a young sixteen?

The men discreetly drop their improvised weapons. She looks ready to make a run for it on seeing VALKA with his drawn knife. JANUSZ gestures for the others to fall back, as he cautiously approaches, uttering reassuring words.

89 EXT. PATHWAY, WOODS - LATER - DAY

89

The others sit smoking by the pathway, watching as JANUSZ crosses back from the GIRL to join them.

He says something to TOMASZ in Polish. A rapid exchange between them.

SMITH

What? What is it?

JANUSZ

She's Polish. Been following us for several days.

VALKA

What does she want?

JANUSZ

Food? Protection? She's been too afraid to approach us until she was sure we weren't Russians.

*

SMITH

She wants to travel with us?

JANUSZ

She's on the run, like us. Escaped from a Russian collective farm.

VALKA

I swear to God I know this type - street gypsies, there are thousands like that, less use than a dog!

JANUSZ looks back to the GIRL who watches them from the clearing.

VALKA (CONT'D)

Pakhan. Don't do this.

JANUSZ

She's starving.

(CONTINUED)

89 CONTINUED:

89

SMITH

We can't feed ourselves.

JANUSZ

Zoran?

ZORAN

Maybe it's kinder to leave her.

VOSS

She's been sent to us. We can't
leave her.

SMITH

We have no choice.

JANUSZ knows this is true.

90 EXT. THE CLEARING, WOODS - DAY

90

The GIRL watches as JANUSZ approaches. From the way he doesn't look at her she knows their answer. JANUSZ stands before her a moment. They speak in Polish (sub-titled).

JANUSZ

I'm sorry.

He reaches into his bag, passes her a fish and some nuts and berries. It's all she can do to refrain from eating it right away.

JANUSZ (CONT'D)

What will you do?

**

**

THE GIRL

Go back.

**

**

He guesses at what this might mean.

JANUSZ

If we had enough food ...

**

**

She stares at him, nods, then walks back toward the path, returning in the direction from which she came.

91 EXT. PATHWAY, WOODS - DAY

91

The group walk in silence, the encounter with the girl and their subsequent decision weighing heavily on some. VOSS keeps looking back over his shoulder.

92 EXT. LAKESIDE - DAY 92

LATER, the group walking out in the open by the lake when their attention is caught by the sight of a flock of ravens circling and diving on something up ahead - just out of sight around a bend in the lake.

93 EXT. LAKESIDE, MOMENTS LATER - DAY 93

SMITH is the first to see it - a full grown reindeer bogged to the shoulders in the soft mud by the lake's edge. As they approach the ravens rise in a great flapping of wings. The group circle the wild-eyed beast, pathetic in it's attempts to pull itself out of the bog, faced now with this new and more deadly threat. VALKA draws his knife.

94 EXT. A COVE, LAKESIDE - DAY 94

TOMASZ already has a fire going when the rest of the party appear dragging the carcass of the reindeer on an improvised sled made of driftwood. VOSS watches a moment as preparations are made to butcher the animal, then he turns and hurries back in the direction from which they came. JANUSZ watches him. He knows where he's going.

95 EXT. LAKESIDE/PATHWAY - DAY 95

VOSS moving fast beside the lake, then onto the track, running now, retracing their steps.

96 EXT. CAMPSITE, LAKE - DUSK 96

TOMASZ butchers more meat from the reindeer using VALKA's knife, while SMITH sets up a wooden rotisserie on the fire assisted by ZORAN. JANUSZ and VALKA are part way through skinning the beast when they pause on hearing footsteps. Around the point comes VOSS, followed by the girl. As they approach, an expectant silence.

*
*
*
*
*
*

VOSS
Her name is, Irena.

97 EXT. CAMPSITE - LATER - NIGHT 97

They eat in silence, savoring every mouthful. We hear the sounds of eating - bones sucked to the marrow; fingers licked; bones crunching.

97 CONTINUED:

97

IRENA is like a half-starved animal, eating with absorbed concentration, the others sneaking looks in her direction as they savor the fresh killed meat.

98 EXT. CAMPSITE, LAKESIDE - DAWN

98

JANUSZ has been on the last watch of the night, and as dawn breaks he approaches his sleeping companions. He stares down at IRENA, sleeping like a child by the fire. Slowly the others stir, all moving slowly and quietly, not wanting to disturb her sleep.

*
*
*

99 EXT. LAKESIDE, CAMPSITE - DAY

99

ZORAN has set himself up as camp barber - trimming hair and shaving heads using the razor-blade inserted in the end of a stick, and for shaving cream, a chunk of fat from the reindeer. JANUSZ has just been shaved and trimmed, the last but for VALKA. While the others wash themselves and their clothes, ZORAN calls for VALKA, who approaches reluctantly and sits on the rock before the barber.

*
*
*
*
*
*
*
*

VALKA

Why do we do this?

ZORAN

So we don't look like thieves and robbers.

ZORAN approaches him, blade in hand.

ZORAN (CONT'D)

Very still, please.

He tilts VALKA's neck, seemingly the better to shave him. In fact, he enjoys teasing VALKA and his movements are slow and ominous, VALKA clearly nervous.

*

100 EXT. MONTAGE, CAMPSITE - DAY/NIGHT

100

Various scenes of maintenance, repairs and the breaking down of the reindeer into anything of use during their journey. Two fires burn - their regular cooking fire and one for the smoking of meat.

*
*
*
*

VOSS; Cleaning bones of shreds of meat then beginning the construction of a bone frame for a backpack. He later gets part of the skin to form the bag attached to the frame. Still later he collects nearby vines, rolling them up for future use.

*
*
*
*
*

(CONTINUED)

TOMASZ; In between sketching scenes of his friends at work he skims fat from the pot filled with boiling bones, and lays out strips of meat given to him by VALKA to dry in the sun, part of the jerked meat they will carry as a long term food supply.

*
*
*
*
*

VALKA; With the 'Wolf' he separates sinews and tendons from the beast, to form much needed bindings for their journey. He also cuts meat for their jerked supply, or to be smoked.

*
*
*
*

SMITH; Makes firstly a large bone needle, then later makes repairs in his clothes.

*
*

ZORAN; After cleaning his teeth with a twig, hangs his suit on a driftwood hanger and is seen brushing it with a branch from a pine tree. TOMASZ teases him and suggests he do something useful. Later this leads to him sorting the boiled bones into various sizes, a sort of accountant of the 'bone-bank'. 'Customers' come to him looking for bones or teeth for various uses.

*
*
*
*
*
*
*

JANUSZ; Works on the reindeer skin. With SMITH's help he stretches it to dry on a driftwood frame. Later, he cuts a piece off and gives it to VOSS for the back-pack. He also works scraping the skin of strands of unwanted meat and fat.

*
*
*
*
*

IRENA; Sleeps and eats. It is only at dusk one day she seems to come to life and moving to the lakeside washes her clothes and hair. The men try not to stare, and whether their thoughts are carnal or not, whether she reminds them of family or girlfriend, they are all affected by her transformation from boy/urchin, into a young woman when she returns washed, and wearing the dress she has carried rolled-up on her back.

*
*
*
*
*
*
*

*

101 EXT. CAMPFIRE, LAKESIDE - NIGHT

101 ***

SMITH and JANUSZ some distance from the campsite collecting wood. By the fire ZORAN leads the 'Survivors Band'. He has them drumming on logs, tapping sticks, harmonizing, amid much laughter. JANUSZ watches IRENA. Then he turns to SMITH.

JANUSZ

She's educated. Speaks good English. And French.

SMITH

That right.

JANUSZ

You don't like her, do you?

SMITH

Speak to Valka about her. He doesn't even think she's Polish.

JANUSZ

I did speak to him. And the others. They agree she comes with us.

SMITH

It's decided then?

JANUSZ

You disagree.

SMITH

Apart from food she'll slow us down. There's no room for sentimentality. You know that.

101 CONTINUED: 101

And he turns, moving back to the fire with his load of wood.

102 EXT. PATHWAY, WOODS - DAY 102

Refreshed and revived and laden with their supplies from the deer, they make their way along a narrow dirt track by the lake. IRENA is aware that the main opposition to her joining with them comes from VALKA and SMITH. SMITH she knows is the more important, and she tries to keep up with him. Occasionally catching his eye, she tries to charm him with a coquettish smile beyond her years.

103 EXT. RIVER/LAKE - DAY 103

A river flowing into the lake presents an obstacle. They walk along the edge to where the river begins to narrow, but here it's still frozen, and a quick test with JANUSZ's staff shows it to be too thin to take their weight. They look upstream - a distant figure of a man, a hunter possibly, a shotgun over his shoulder, on their side of the bank. There's clearly no choice but to swim for it. They make hasty preparations, removing outer clothing, except shirts and trousers, tying their boots about their necks. IRENA watches.

**
**
**
**
**
**

SMITH

Can you swim?

IRENA

Yes, Mister.

SMITH

You wouldn't lie to me?

IRENA

I'm not lying, Comrade.

That was a slip of the tongue, and SMITH is made uneasy by it.

SMITH

And don't call me, 'comrade'.

With a shout the group plunge into the icy water, swimming one-handed, their packs held above water level in the other. It's only when they reach the other side they realize IRENA is still on the opposite bank. The others urge her to swim across. She hesitates a moment then runs upstream to where the river is frozen.

**

103 CONTINUED:

103

They watch in astonishment as in a series of leaps and bounds she's out on the ice heading for the opposite bank. Ice cracks beneath her feet and a couple of times it seems she'll fall in, but with a last great leap over a section of free-flowing water she makes it to the other side, hurrying down to join the others a broad smile on her face. She looks defiantly at SMITH. JANUSZ is worried about the man having seen them, and urges them to follow him into the tree-line. **

104-105 OMITTED

104-105 **

A106 EXT. FOREST, A SHORT TIME LATER - DAY

A106 **

They scramble up a steep, forested slope, with occasional backward glances to see if the hunter is following. There's no sign of him. **

106 EXT. LAKESIDE - DAY

106

Some time later the group, still a little damp, walk by the lake. IRENA walks beside SMITH whose long strides force her to jog occasionally to keep up. They swat at mosquitoes as they walk. **

SMITH

Janusz tells me your family were Kulaks?

IRENA

Yes. Just a cow and some pigs.

SMITH

Were your parents arrested with you?

IRENA

They're dead.

She swats at a few mosquitos hovering around her face.

IRENA (CONT'D)

We lived on a farm outside Warsaw. When the Russians came they said we were 'kulaks', and exploiting the peasants. My parents were afraid and hid me in the barn.

The mosquitos are getting worse and SMITH grabs swatches of leaves, passing one to IRENA as they walk on, swinging away at the annoying insects.

(CONTINUED)

106 CONTINUED:

106

IRENA (CONT'D)

I found them later. Face down in
the mud. They'd been bashed and
strangled with barbed wire.

She looks up at SMITH, her eyes filling with tears.

(CONTINUED)

106 CONTINUED:

IRENA (CONT'D)

Later, the Russians caught me, and sent me to a collective farm. They were cruel to me. I ran away. I had no food. Then I saw you.

They walk in silence a few paces, and she dries her tears with the corner of her sleeve.

SMITH

You can't swim can you?

She looks up at him.

IRENA

What?

SMITH

You've never been in the water in your life.

She laughs coquettishly.

IRENA

But I got across, didn't I?

SMITH

And, you said you lived on a farm near Warsaw?

IRENA puzzled.

IRENA

Yes.

SMITH

The Soviets didn't get that far. That was German territory.

She nervously swats the mosquitos.

SMITH (CONT'D)

Your parents weren't murdered were they? You made it all up.

She won't look at him, her face looks thin and pinched, she seems older.

SMITH (CONT'D)

We've all done terrible things to survive. But don't ever lie to me again. We've had enough of lies.

(CONTINUED)

106 CONTINUED: (3) 106

She sneaks a glance back over her shoulder at the others, then up at SMITH. She nods.

107 OMITTED 107 **

108 EXT. ROAD, OUTSIDE A SMALL TOWN, LAKE BAIKAL - LATE AFTERNOON 108 **

A fishing village by the lake. Timber houses straggling back up into the surrounding hills. From cover, they consider the obstacle.

JANUSZ

We'll have to go 'round it.

VALKA

Quicker through it.

JANUSZ

They'll have dogs. Raise the alarm. We wouldn't stand a chance

VALKA

We need food again, Pakhan.

108 CONTINUED:

108

JANUSZ

I know we need food, but we're not going into that town, risk everything.

SMITH gets up.

SMITH

We're wasting time.

He strikes off up a slope toward the hills behind the town.

109 EXT. HILLS BEHIND VILLAGE - DUSK

109 **

The group make their way uphill and around the town.

**

A110 EXT. TOWN, LAKESIDE - NIGHT

A110

Their P.O.V. down to the few lights of the town and the lake glimmering in the moonlight. From the direction of the town - the sound of a dog barking in an agitated fashion.

**
**
**

AB110 EXT. HILLS BEHIND VILLAGE, SAME TIME - NIGHT

AB110

SMITH joins JANUSZ. Off his expression:

SMITH

(to JANUSZ)

What is it? What's wrong?

JANUSZ

Where's Valka?

SMITH

He was behind Zoran.

JANUSZ

(to ZORAN)

Didn't you watch Valka?

ZORAN

I'm not his keeper.

JANUSZ

Damn him!

He looks back down to the town.

**

110 EXT. THE GROUNDS OF A HOUSE, VILLAGE - NIGHT 110

A dim light through a side window - the glimpse of a woman crossing through frame, followed shortly after by the weathered face of a fisherman. He's heard something. He crosses to the window, peers out into the darkness. The moment he turns away the camera moves on around the side to the rear of the building, past a rabbit in a cage. VALKA's shoulder comes into frame as he edges his way toward the back door, passing the sightless skull of a dried fish swinging from a cord under the eaves. He reaches for the door-handle, opens it, and slips silently inside.

**
**

A111 EXT. TOWN, LAKESIDE - NIGHT A111

A view along a road to the town. (P.O.V. now on the opposite side of town to that seen earlier.)

**

111 EXT. TREES, ROADSIDE - NIGHT 111

The above P.O.V. is that of the group waiting for VALKA. They sit by the roadside looking toward the town. They swat at a cloud of mosquitoes.

**
**
**

SMITH

He could turn us in for the bounty.

JANUSZ

And risk arrest?

SMITH

He'd bribe his way out of it.

JANUSZ

(to IRENA)
Would he do that?

IRENA

He might.

ZORAN

It's an opportunity. We're rid of him.

TOMASZ

We don't need his knife. We can make one from deer bone.

ZORAN

Come on! Let's go!

A movement behind them, they turn as VALKA steps out from behind a tree. He stares back at them a crooked grin on his face.

VALKA

So.

SMITH moves swiftly, grabs him by his collar and spins him into the tree.

VALKA (CONT'D)

Hey, easy cowboy!

SMITH

Could have got us all killed.

VALKA

You tear my coat ...

SMITH

Fool!

He releases him and VALKA staggers back, reaching down to a bulging sack. He tips out the contents - various foodstuffs including a freshly killed rabbit and a bottle of vodka. **

VALKA

'Fool' is it?

It's then they notice blood splashed over his trousers.

VALKA (CONT'D)

What? Did I kill you ask? Yes.
A dog.

(He laughs)

Don't believe me? So don't eat.
But you will won't you? Because
you want survival. I know about
survival! All my life.

He holds up the bottles of vodka, one half empty.

VALKA (CONT'D)

And it's my birthday!

With a wild look in his eyes, he passes a bottle to JANUSZ, then flicks the side of his neck with his middle finger.

VALKA (CONT'D)

In Russia that means we drink!

112 EXT. CAMPFIRE - LATER - NIGHT

112

TOMASZ tends the rabbit roasting on the fire, while the vodka bottle is passed hand to hand. When not drinking, the group are swatting at the persistent mosquitoes, ZORAN now badly bitten. VALKA doesn't seem bothered by the mosquitoes, perhaps tatoos keep them away, anyway he's feeling generally pleased with himself and is very talkative.

**
**
**
**
**
**
**

VALKA

You know ... when they put the children of the political prisoners in the orphanage, they change their names, so later, the parents can never find them.

ZORAN

Is that what happened to you?

VALKA

(shakes his head)
I didn't have parents. But that's what happened to her.

He passes IRENA the bottle. She glares back at him.

VALKA (CONT'D)

Isn't it? You told me that.

She glances at the puzzled faces of the others, finally looking at SMITH. He holds her gaze. Then she takes a slug of the vodka.

IRENA

They called me 'Rykov', but I remembered our Polish name - 'Zulinski'. I used to say it every night before I went to sleep.

JANUSZ

The story you told us ...

IRENA (OVERLAP)

I thought that story would be more sad, and you wouldn't leave me behind.

Again she looks at SMITH. She made a promise to him.

IRENA (CONT'D)

My parents were Polish communists.
They took us to live in Soviet
Union - to Moscow. They want to
work for the Revolution.

(MORE)

112 CONTINUED: (2)

112

IRENA (CONT'D)

We lived in the Hotel Luxe with lots of foreign communists. But they arrested them. In 1937. Said they were spies. The police put me in the orphanage. And my brother. He died. I was ten years old.

JANUSZ

And you ran away.

She nods. VALKA grinning proudly at her.

VALKA

She lived in the streets, like me!

He breaks into one of his Urki songs. IRENA translates.

IRENA

It's about a mother complaining to her son that he's a thief, just like his father...it goes on and says, 'but if you are strong enough to fight 'til death - you will conquer fate'.

She joins VALKA in the chorus.

113 EXT. LAKESIDE - DAY

113 **

The mosquitos continue to plague them, swirling in clouds about their heads, crawling into ears, eyes and mouths. They have improvised headgear - coats, swatches of leaves, improvised masks. Many are badly bitten, faces swollen, bites infected. SMITH walks beside JANUSZ. **

SMITH **

What can we do? Steal a boat? **

JANUSZ **

No. **

SMITH **

People are going to get ill. **

JANUSZ **

I know. **

SMITH **

After all we've faced, how strange, these tiny insects might defeat us. **

115 EXT. VARIOUS LOCATIONS, LAKESIDE - DAY/DUSK 115

The group have by now a walking routine which they rarely vary, always occupying the same positions in extended line. JANUSZ as navigator in the lead, SMITH generally bringing up the rear. IRENA is the exception - varying her place, now with one, now with another. They don't talk much to each other as they walk but they do talk with her. She has the knack of getting anyone to talk. No doubt a skill learnt in her life on the streets.

116 EXT. FOREST NEAR THE ROAD - DAY 116

A small fire burns as TOMASZ cooks a fish stolen by VALKA. The smoke from the fire is not enough to alleviate the mosquito problem and the group swat in miserable silence. Suddenly SMITH throws dirt on the fire, suffocating it with his jacket. He points to the road. **

117 EXT. ROAD - DAY 117

From their point of view a fisherman in his fifties, a basket in a sling on his back, walks abreast of them on the track. **

118 EXT. FOREST - DAY 118

As he passes, ZORAN speaks in a whisper to JANUSZ.

ZORAN
There it is! Again!

JANUSZ mystified.

ZORAN (CONT'D)
Look at him.

JANUSZ stares again at the man.

ZORAN (CONT'D)
No mosquitos!

ZORAN is up and off before anyone can stop him. They watch in appalled silence as he approaches and speaks to the man, who regards this stranger appearing from the forest with some suspicion. ZORAN does a kind of crazy dance, talking all the while.

118 CONTINUED: 118

Soon the man is laughing, and putting down his bag and gun he takes something from around his neck and places it on ZORAN's neck. A few more words, and more laughter, then with a handshake ZORAN heads back into the forest, the man continuing on his way. ZORAN rejoins them, holding up the gift from the old man - strands of intertwined bark.

ZORAN (CONT'D)
Mosquito repellent! And I have
the formula!

119 EXT. ROAD - DAY 119

LATER. They all wear necklaces of the entwined bark and are mosquito free. ZORAN is the hero of the hour.

TOMASZ
But what did you say to him?

ZORAN
That I was an escaped convict who
was being plagued by mosquitos.

As they round a bend and disappear from sight, TOMASZ's voice drifts back.

TOMASZ (V.O.)
Very funny. But what did you
really say?

A120 LAKE'S END, SIBERIA - DAY A120

JANUSZ scoops up a handful of water where it laps a beach. It's a symbolic end to their lake trek, and they turn and walk on, the lake behind them.

120 EXT. A FIELD, SIBERIA - DAY 120

In the far distance a large town dominated by a collection of smoke stacks, belching out columns of smoke into the sky, as the group hurry across open ground to the shelter of the forest.

A121 EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - DAY A121 *

A rustic cart passes by. After it has gone the fugitives emerge from concealment and resume their journey. *

AB121 EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - DAY AB121 *

VOSS, ZORAN and TOMASZ talk of their pre-Gulag days with IRENA. *

VOSS *

...A small stone church in a little village. Very peaceful. I grew up in that village. *

Then, *

ZORAN *

...I went on business. Once a year - government clients of course! *

Then, *

TOMASZ *

...layers of very fine pastry, so when you bite there is a lightness, a delicacy - it should almost melt in the mouth. *

121 EXT. OPEN COUNTRY - DAY 121

The group move at a brisk pace. IRENA walks beside SMITH.

121 CONTINUED: (2)

121

IRENA (V.O.)

And Tomasz is a pastry chef but
wants to be an artist?

SMITH

Is that right?

IRENA

And Zoran was on business in
Moscow, arrested in Red Square, he
said he was just taking a photo of
the Kremlin! He's an accountant.

SMITH

Well, I'll be damned. Never knew
a funny accountant.

IRENA

Don't you talk to each other?

SMITH

In the camps you learn to say as
little as possible.

They walk on in silence, IRENA sneaking a look up at him.

122 OMITTED

122 **

123 EXT. COUNTRYSIDE, LATER - DAY

123 **

IRENA now walking with JANUSZ.

JANUSZ

Mr. Smith? An American? Working
on the Moscow metro?

IRENA

(nods)

He's an engineer. His father was
Finnish. Grew up in America, but
he could speak Russian.

JANUSZ

Why did he come to Russia for
God's sake?

IRENA

The Depression. His son came with
him.

123 CONTINUED: 123

JANUSZ

What happened to his son?

IRENA

They shot him. He was seventeen.

124 EXT. A STREAM - DUSK 124

The group fords a shallow stream when IRENA sees SMITH limp to a rock where he sits and inspects his blistered, bleeding feet ... IRENA kneels before him, dries his feet with her dress. The others watch silently as she tears strips from her petticoat and binds up the raw spots between his toes.

125 EXT. A RIDGE ABOVE THE TRANS-SIBERIAN RAILWAY - DAY 125

The GROUP look down to see the railway track lined with villagers every few miles, making a crossing especially hazardous.

JANUSZ

The Mongolian border is on the other side of those tracks.

Two ARMED SOLDIERS can be seen walking along the tracks.

TOMASZ

Can't we go around this?

JANUSZ

This is the main line. It's going to be like this everywhere.

SMITH

We don't have a choice.

JANUSZ

We cross at night.

Their attention is caught by the passing of a long freight train, horn sounding over the bucolic scene.

126 EXT. A RIDGE ABOVE THE RAILWAY-LINE - DAY 126 *

A visible tension in the group as they wait. VALKA whittles a piece of deer-bone.

TOMASZ

What's that you're making?

VALKA

A cross for your tombstone.

126

CONTINUED: (2)

TOMASZ surprised at his tone.

VALKA (CONT'D)

Why should you care what I'm making?

The evening is hot and VALKA has his shirt open, the tattooed portraits of Lenin and Stalin on his chest appear and disappear in the folds of his shirt. This amuses ZORAN.

ZORAN

Valka?

VALKA

What?

ZORAN

Why do you have arseholes tattooed on your chest?

VALKA stops. Stares back.

ZORAN (CONT'D)

Shouldn't they be on your arse so you sit on them every time you take a shit?

VALKA

You think it's funny? They are great men.

ZORAN laughs.

VALKA (CONT'D)

Watch your eyes, crowbait!

He makes a 'V' with his fingers followed by a short stabbing motion. ZORAN reels back.

**

VALKA (CONT'D)

Don't you know what 'Stalin' means funny man? Man-of-Steel. He takes from rich and gives to poor.

**

ZORAN

Sure he does. Then he puts both of them in a camp for twenty-five years.

VALKA goes back to his carving.

A127 EXT. RAILWAY TRACKS - NIGHT A127 *

JANUSZ stands on the tracks looking down the line to a cutting where the track disappears around a bend. The sound of an approaching train, a dim light already reflected on the side of the cutting. He turns and looks toward the trees where the others are approaching down a wooded hillside. He hurries toward them, urging them to take cover in the bracken beside the track. SMITH points out a glowing red light further down the track from the approaching train. *

AB127 EXT. RAILWAY TRACK - NIGHT AB127 *

The train thunders into the cutting with a squeal of breaks as the driver sights the red light on the track ahead, and the train slows to a stop. *

127 EXT. BESIDE THE TRACK - NIGHT 127 *

Close on the faces of the escapees as they look up to the carriages stopped in front of them. They are cattle-cars, but its soon apparent their cargo is human. From the high windows, hands can be seen clutching the bars. From inside a communal groaning and sighing. Voices, female voices, cry out for water, and on the agonized faces of the fugitives a mixture of pain and empathy. Then the train seems to sigh, like a great beast, and from beneath the carriages flow streams of blood and urine. As the distant light turns green the train slowly moves forward, and as it does so, letters and notes drop to the tracks from the barred windows. *

After it is gone they scramble over the tracks into the woods on the other side, all but VOSS. He is picking up as many of the notes and letters as he can. *

JANUSZ (V.O.)
Andrejs, for God's sake!

VOSS slowly crosses the tracks, and disappears into the brush.

128 EXT. BRUSH, TRACKSIDE - NIGHT 128

VOSS, overwhelmed with emotion sits down, examining the letters and notes in his hand. JANUSZ hurries back for him. *

(CONTINUED)

128 CONTINUED:

128

JANUSZ

(whispers)

Come on!

But VOSS doesn't move. JANUSZ sits beside him, and VOSS passes him a sample of the prisoners' pathetic messages — some scrawled on the back of photographs. They are mostly names and addresses, pleas for someone to mail or inform relatives of what happened to them — some have even clipped a few bank-notes to pay for postage.

129 OMITTED

129 **

130 EXT. RUSSO-MONGOLIAN BORDER, COUNTRYSIDE - DAWN

130 **

Tall striped posts at intervals, strung with rusted wire — beyond, a dirt road and distant fields. From a concealed position in the nearby trees they carefully watch for signs of a patrol. JANUSZ goes first, passing easily through the sagging fence. ZORAN calls to him.

ZORAN

(shouts)

What's it like in Mongolia?

JANUSZ holds up a hand — 'Keep your voice down'. ZORAN crawls through the wire followed by the others.

ZORAN (CONT'D)

I love Mongolia.

SMITH

Love it later. We need to get as far from this border as possible.

ZORAN faces Russia and as if bowing at the end of a performance.

ZORAN

Thank you Mother Russia for your hospitality! I definitely will not be coming back!

It's only then that we notice that VALKA has not crossed through. He stands staring at them from the Soviet side. It's clear he's going no further. JANUSZ crosses back to him, and they talk through the wire.

(CONTINUED)

JANUSZ

They'll catch you if you stay, you know that.

VALKA

(shrugs)

Prison is o.k. Debt is bad. But there are many prisons. They don't find me.

They stand a moment, watching the others moving toward a line of trees.

JANUSZ

No, America?

VALKA

It's not for me - 'Freedom'.
Wouldn't know what to do with it,
I swear to God.

He places his hand on the wooden hilt of his knife, sticking out of his waistband.

VALKA (CONT'D)

So we must say goodbye, my Wolf and me.

JANUSZ glances at the knife.

VALKA (CONT'D)

You don't need him any more.

JANUSZ

Good luck, Valka.

VALKA

Good luck, Pakhan.

And he turns and walks away. JANUSZ walks toward the distant group and by the time he looks back, VALKA is gone.

*

A vast plain stretches to distant snow-capped peaks. Dotted on the hills the Gers - circular tent-like structures, home to the nomadic Mongolians. In the distance walk the band of survivors, strung out in a line abreast. Their voices drift back - snatches of conversation, and laughter.

132 OMITTED 132

133 EXT. ROAD - DAY 133

The travellers striding confidently down the dirt road. Around a bend, a decorative archway over the road, a town visible a few miles further on. They stop in their tracks. On one side of the timber structure a portrait of Josef Stalin. On the other the local Mongolian leader, a red star on his military cap. In the centre, the hammer and sickle over a painting of a brown hand shaking a white one. Small flags of both nations flap ominously.

CLOSE on the stunned faces of the fugitives.

VOSS

It's here too.

SMITH

This changes everything.

IRENA looks at the grassy plains all about them.

IRENA

Nowhere to hide.

134-135 OMITTED 134-135 **

A136 EXT. MONGOLIAN STEPPE, LATER - DAY A136 **

The group walk toward a distant line of hills, feeling very exposed to any watching eyes. **

ZORAN **

How far is China? **

JANUSZ **

Five, six hundred kilometers. **

ZORAN groans. **

IRENA **

Is China free? **

SMITH **

There's a war on with the Japanese, I know that much. **

VOSS **

After China is Tibet. Religious people. Buddhists. **

(CONTINUED)

A136 CONTINUED:

A136

JANUSZ

But isn't Tibet closed to
foreigners? I remember reading
that.

**
**
**
**

VOSS

Their religion would compel them
to shelter us. We could go to
Lhasa, the capital.

**
**
**
**

ZORAN

We break out of one 'closed
country' and now we plan to break
into another? I like 'open'
countries.

**
**
**
**
**

TOMASZ and JANUSZ exchange a few excited words in Polish.
IRENA translates.

**
**

IRENA

They say we could go beyond Tibet.
Over the mountains. To India.

**
**
**

ZORAN

What mountains?

**
**

SMITH

(shakes his head)
The Himalayas.

**
**
**

TOMASZ

We could join the British Army.
First fight Nazis then Russians!

**
**
**

ZORAN

Go over the Himalayas? How? On a
magic carpet?

**
**
**

A silence as they contemplate the massive distances
stretching ahead of them.

**
**

AB136 EXT. ABANDONED STONE BUILDING, MONGOLIA - DAWN AB136 **

In the middle of an empty plain a small circular stone
ruin.

**
**

**

136 INT. RUIN - DAWN

136

Sleeping figures. A gentle tip-tapping sound. VOSS opens his eyes. Staring back at him from the doorway, half a dozen sheep. He nudges TOMASZ who wakes sleepily, takes his eye-line. Carefully, slowly, they rise, VOSS drawing his deer-bone knife. Then they move. The sheep retreat, bumping into each other, and outside the chase is on. TOMASZ tackles a ewe and VOSS approaches with a knife, but JANUSZ is behind him, grabs his arm.

JANUSZ

No! Andrejs, no!

VOSS tries to free his arm.

JANUSZ (CONT'D)

Don't kill it!

TOMASZ

Why not? We're hungry!

JANUSZ

You want the locals after us too?

They break into Polish, a blazing argument, months of pent up frustration. VOSS picks up the sheep and carries it inside the ruin.

137 INT. RUIN, LATER - DAY

137

Milk squirting into their aluminium bowl as VOSS expertly milks the ewe, IRENA and ZORAN holding it steady.

138 EXT. STEPPE - DAY

138

The sun is blazing as they cross through a sea of grass, hills rising in the distance like islands.

TOMASZ and ZORAN play a long distance walker's game - each in turn kicking a rock out ahead, continually passing it from one to the other.

JANUSZ and SMITH look to the hills surrounding them as they walk.

JANUSZ

You feel it?

SMITH

Yes.

(CONTINUED)

IRENA

Feel what?

JANUSZ

We're being watched.

IRENA uneasy, squints in the direction of the hills. And you can feel it. Like a John Ford western there's a sense of being in Indian territory, of their every move watched by unseen eyes.

A139 EXT. BUDDHIST TEMPLE - DAY A139 *

A distant view of a temple complex at the base of low hills. *

AB139 EXT. STEPPE - DAY AB139 *

The above has been pointed out by VOSS to the group, and they decide to make their way to the temple, in the hope of getting food. *

139 EXT. ABANDONED TEMPLE COMPLEX, STEPPES - DAY 139 *

Within a walled compound they wander between a series of recently abandoned Buddhist temples and out-buildings. By the size of the compound, several hundred monks may have lived here. Everywhere are signs of violence - doors hang from hinges, and a large statue of Buddha lies smashed in a courtyard. JANUSZ points to a line of bullet impacts, stitched across a wall.

140 INT. TEMPLE - DAY 140

There are bloodstains on the floor, and the wind howling about the building makes a haunting accompaniment. IRENA and VOSS are alone inside.

IRENA

What happened here?

VOSS

The same as happened in Russia. Churches closed, priests shot or taken to camps, religion banned. They came to my church, in Latvia. Destroyed everything, declared it a 'museum'. Later that night, there was a lone guard. A boy.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

140 CONTINUED:

140

VOSS (CONT'D)

I strangled him until his eyes
popped right out of his head.
Valka knew somehow. Knew I'd
killed in cold blood.

He bows his head. IRENA looks up at him, and they stand
together in silence, but for the moaning wind.

141 EXT. MONGOLIAN STEPPE - DAY

141

As they head South, each is lost in their own thoughts
when seemingly out of nowhere a half-dozen Mongolian
horsemen are galloping toward them. The horsemen circle
them, far from friendly looks on their faces. They wear
the traditional costume of Steppe nomads and range in age
from a man in his seventies down to a six-year-old boy.
The OLD MAN pulls up his horse in front of SMITH,
figuring as he's the oldest he'll also be the leader.
The groups stare at each other. The OLD MAN speaks in
Russian, a rough guttural accent.

[THE FOLLOWING DIALOGUE IS IN RUSSIAN.]

*

OLD MAN

Russki?

A glance between SMITH and JANUSZ. Much may hang on his
answer.

SMITH

No. American.

The OLD MAN maybe doesn't get the 'American' part, but he
gets that they are not Russian. He seems pleased about
that.

OLD MAN

Lhasa?

SMITH nods.

SMITH

Lhasa. Yes. Tibet.

JANUSZ points South.

OLD MAN

Pilgrim?

SMITH

Yes.

OLD MAN

No horses?

(CONTINUED)

141 CONTINUED:

141

SMITH

We are too poor to have horses.

The OLD MAN points at IRENA.

OLD MAN

Wife?

SMITH looks at IRENA.

SMITH

Daughter.

IRENA moves closer to him. SMITH puts a protective arm about her shoulder. The OLD MAN considers the situation for a moment longer before abruptly turning, and followed by his band, galloping off toward the distant hills.

Looks between the group, not exactly of relief, as there's a feeling it may not be the last they see of the riders. IRENA looks up at SMITH, smiles at him. Something about him calling her his daughter has touched some hidden place. SMITH, a little embarrassed, smiles back.

142 EXT. RIVER'S EDGE, MONGOLIA - DAY

142

While SMITH fishes in the river, others tend to their battered feet. VOSS passes around deer fat in his improvised deer skull container. This they rub over raw patches, and between their toes where deep cracks have developed. JANUSZ repairs their footwear, while TOMASZ sits by the fire sketching IRENA. ZORAN, the camp barber, trims hairs and beards

**
**

143 EXT. CAMPSITE - DAWN

143

TOMASZ is smoking fish over the fire as the group stir. He gives ZORAN a kick.

ZORAN

What did you do that for? I was in the middle of this beautiful dream - just about to eat some salt, I could already taste it. I want to go back to that dream.

144 EXT. STEPPES, MONGOLIA, LATER - DAY

144

The figures seen walking away in the distance. Floating back the voice of TOMASZ giving a recipe of a favorite Polish dish to ZORAN.

(CONTINUED)

TOMASZ

Then add two sprigs of rosemary
and a pinch of nutmeg.

ZORAN

Nutmeg? What about the salt?

TOMASZ

We'll get to that. Now, add the
oil and leave it to marinate,
while you prepare the chicken.
That's where the salt comes in...

ZORAN

Good.

TOMASZ

Rub it into the skin of the
chicken with a little of the
paprika.

ZORAN

Double the salt.

TOMASZ

I can't just double the salt!
It'll be too salty.

ZORAN

I don't care, just do it.

TOMASZ

I'm not going to ruin it.

145

EXT. A CHANGING LANDSCAPE, MONGOLIA - DAY

145

A primaevial and austerely beautiful landscape stretches *
before them. Tufty knolls of dry grass are the only *
detail that break up the flat immensity. *

146

RIDGE-TOP - DAY

146

Up ahead of them on the edge of a ridge a lone Mongolian *
horseman watches them approach. He's the young boy from *
the group of horseman who originally approached them. *
They pause before him. He looks at them a moment then *
tosses a goatskin bag at their feet before galloping off *
in the direction from which they came. VOSS picks up the *
skin bag, gives it a shake. Water. *

They continue on to the edge of the ridge and a view of a *
vast desert plain is revealed. *

(CONTINUED)

146 CONTINUED: 146

They look back to the disappearing horseman before scrambling down the rocky slope.

A147 EXT. GOBI DESERT - DAY A147

The group crossing into the heart of the Gobi.

147 EXT. GOBI DESERT, LATER - DAY 147

VOSS is the first to see it - a vast glittering lake. They hurry toward it.

148 LATER, 148

The lake leads them on, but appears no closer.

149 LATER STILL, 149

JANUSZ has taken a reading of the sun, using his stick method. He points out their direction - it is away from the beckoning lake.

VOSS

Janusz!

*

JANUSZ hesitates, looks at VOSS who holds up their water-bag.

VOSS (CONT'D.) (CONT'D)

We should go to the lake. Water is getting low.

JANUSZ

What lake? It's a mirage.

He plods on, away from the shimmering vision. There's little the others can do but trust JANUSZ, and slowly they follow.

150 EXT. THE GOBI - MIDDAY/DUSK 150

The sun is directly above, the land shimmering with heat ... The group have stuck their sticks in the ground and draped their jackets over them, making a sunshade they SHELTER under.

JANUSZ

(Nods.)

Yes, but haven't you noticed?

He points upward to the low clouds obscuring the stars.

SMITH

What about water?

JANUSZ

What about it?

SMITH

I don't see any. I'm trying to remember my school geography but I seem to recall the Gobi Desert somewhere in Southern Mongolia.

JANUSZ begins scooping out a hole in the pebbly ground. It's funnel-shaped, narrow at the base. The others watch as he lines the sides with dried deerskin, placing their cooking pot in the base.

JANUSZ

We may pick up a little morning dew.

Glad of something practical to do they all set about digging and lining holes with anything to hand.

154 EXT. THE GOBI - DAWN

154

As they wake, they harvest the precious droplets of water caught overnight, trickling the contents into their pot, barely a quarter cupful.

155 EXT. GOBI - DAY

155

No-one has slept much and they walk like zombies, strung out in a line, no-one speaking, all just dully concentrating on placing one foot after the other. ZORAN notices VOSS, walking behind him is actually asleep. He has swung his backpack onto his chest and with his head resting on it he is actually sleep-walking. ZORAN tests his theory by walking away from the group, in a small circle. VOSS follows, guided by the sound of ZORAN's footsteps. He wakes him, VOSS looking around with a start.

ZORAN

You were asleep!

VOSS

No I wasn't.

ZORAN

You were following the sound of my footsteps - sleep-walking.

The others have stopped. ZORAN takes the backpack from VOSS, and places it on the exhausted IRENA.

(CONTINUED)

155 CONTINUED:

ZORAN (CONT'D)

Just follow the sound of my
footsteps.

She nods, not fully understanding.

ZORAN (CONT'D)

Put all else out of your mind, and
sleep. I'll wake you in Calcutta.

She smiles, nods, already half asleep.

156 EXT. GOBI, LATER - DAY 156

ZORAN looks over his shoulder, smiles proudly as he sees
IRENA is sleep-walking, trusting to the steady sound of
his footsteps.

157 EXT. GOBI MID-DAY 157

The group rest under the meagre shade provided by their
coats. SMITH walks away from them, and crests a slight
rise. From here he has a clear view to the horizon. Off
in the distance a dark patch against the light sand.
Through the dancing mid-day light he sees shapes. Trees?
He staggers back to the group.

SMITH

Janusz?

JANUSZ follows him to the rise. SMITH points to his
discovery. JANUSZ squints against the light.

JANUSZ

It's another mirage.

SMITH shakes his head 'no'.

SMITH

We have no more water. I see
trees. Where there's trees
there's water.

JANUSZ

It's East. We must head South.

The others have joined them, staring toward the distant
shape.

(CONTINUED)

157 CONTINUED:

SMITH

I've never doubted you, Janusz.
Not once. But we must give it a
try.

JANUSZ

No. We must keep going South!
You'll kill us all!

SMITH

Damn it, we're already dying.

JANUSZ goes to move on, SMITH grabs his shirt sleeve, a short pathetic struggle sees them fall to their knees, VOSS and TOMASZ move to separate them. SMITH is the first to stand, brushing sand and dirt from his clothes. He turns to the others.

SMITH (CONT'D)

You have a choice.

He looks at IRENA, then turns and goes back for his staff and jacket. The others watch as he turns East toward his discovery.

JANUSZ

It's a mirage. Just a mirage.

SMITH keeps walking away - a strange echo of the incident in Siberia when he walked away from the guards. Perhaps it is this memory that causes the others to turn silently, and collecting their few possessions, to follow him. JANUSZ watches a while, then slowly follows.

158 EXT. THE GOBI - DAY

158

Close on SMITH as he squints against the glare. His point of view:

OASIS OR MIRAGE? THE DISTANT OUTLINE OF TREES SEEMS TO DISAPPEAR IN THE SHIMMERING WAVES OF LIQUID HEAT.

159 BRIEF TIME LAPSE:

159

Close on TOMASZ as he stares ahead of him. His point of view:

CLOSER NOW, BUT STILL IT WEAVES, APPEARING AND REAPPEARING IN THE HEAT-SHIMMERS.

160 BRIEF TIME LAPSE: 160

Close on ZORAN. His point of view:

CLOSER AGAIN. A BIRD RISES INTO THE SKY FROM THE NOW MORE SOLID TREES.

Back on ZORAN.

ZORAN

Mirages don't have birds!

Wider, and they're running, running with the last of their precious energy.

161 EXT. WELL - DAY 161

A clump of straggly tortured trees surround a desert well - a low square of ancient stones. They sprawl by the well, SMITH reaching down inside with their bowl to bring up a scoop of crystal clear water. It's passed around rapidly.

SMITH

Just a little. Don't fill yourselves.

More scoops follow in quick succession, enough to splash hands and faces.

VOSS calls from a few yards away.

VOSS

Fire. Coals are still warm.

SMITH and JANUSZ join him, examining the ground about the fire.

SMITH

Lots of tracks. Nomads?

VOSS

Maybe others will come?

TOMASZ

Over here! The remains of a meal!
There's still meat on the bones!

He points to the cooked remains of some animal. Using VOSS's deer-bone knife he scrapes meat from the bones, others just attacking any bone they find.

*

(CONTINUED)

161 CONTINUED:

90.
161

JANUSZ
Don't eat it all!

He manages to save at least half of the meat, wrapping it in a cloth, and putting it in VOSS's backpack.

162 EXT. WELL, LATER - DAY 162

They lie stretched out under the shade of the trees dozing, and every now and then going back to the well to drink or just to lay their hands in the cool water.

163 EXT. CAMPFIRE - NIGHT 163

IRENA sleeps while the men discuss their situation in hushed tones.

TOMASZ
At least we have water here.

JANUSZ
But no food.

VOSS
Other nomads will come. Water their flocks.

JANUSZ
When? Next week? Next month?

ZORAN
We could wait a few days, at least.

*
*

JANUSZ
Without food, we'll only get weaker. Maybe too weak to travel.

TOMASZ
These last days - I don't know that I could go through that again.

VOSS
(looks at the water)
It was a miracle finding this.
Can we count on another?

TOMASZ
I say we stay.

(CONTINUED)

91.

163 CONTINUED: 163

They look to SMITH. He looks up to find them watching him. *

SMITH

What are you looking at me for?
Ask Janusz. He's already made up
his mind for us, haven't you,
Janusz?

JANUSZ says nothing.

164 EXT. WELL - DAWN 164

They all take a last drink from the well, then pour water over their faces and clothes. VOSS fills the skin water-bag, then ZORAN fills their cooking bowl to the brim.

Steam is rising from their damp clothing when they set off. ZORAN walking on tip-toe, anxious not to spill a drop from the bowl in his outstretched hand.

165 EXT. GOBI DESERT - DAY 165

Close on TOMASZ as he looks back over his shoulder to see:

THE WELL, STILL NOT MORE THAN 500 YARDS BEHIND.

166 BRIEF TIME LAPSE: 166

Close on ZORAN as he too turns for a last look at:

THE WELL, NOW UP TO HALF A MILE BEHIND AND LOOKING LESS REAL IN THE SHIMMERING HEAT.

167 BRIEF TIME LAPSE: 167

Close on VOSS, he shades his eyes to see:

THE WELL IS BELOW THE HORIZON NOW, AND ALL THAT CAN BE SEEN IS THE ENDLESS FLATNESS, THE SAME EMPTINESS THAT STRETCHES OUT BEFORE THEM.

168 EXT. GOBI, DESERT - TIMELAPSE - DAY 168 *

They walk in a desert void. There are no features, no distant hills, no growth of any kind. It is an emptiness, the only sound that of their footsteps and their labored breathing. *

(CONTINUED)

168 CONTINUED:

168

All the while their water supply is dwindling - water from ZORAN's bowl long gone, the goat-skin water-bag no longer sloshes, but has to be squeezed to get out even a mouthful.

169 EXT. GOBI - DUSK

169 *

JANUSZ hands out small portions of the scavenged meat from the waterhole.

All of them are subject to cramps, the result of the lack of water, and from time to time they are seen reacting to a sudden bolt of pain, attempting to stretch against it, or massage the limb out of its paralysis.

170 LATER, SAME CAMPSITE - NIGHT

170 *

SMITH and JANUSZ collect more dried camel dung for the fire. SMITH looks to where the others sit.

SMITH

We're in trouble.

JANUSZ

I know that, but they mustn't.

SMITH

They know.

JANUSZ

You can survive a month or more without food, but water?

SMITH

Days?

JANUSZ

Maybe two days, maybe less in this heat.

SMITH

What about what we're getting from condensation?

JANUSZ

It's the only thing keeping us alive. But for how long?

SMITH

Can you get us back to the waterhole?

(CONTINUED)

172 EXT. GOBI - LATER - DAY

172 *

As they walk VOSS picks up a pebble, holds it up to show ZORAN who walks behind him.

VOSS

When we worked the fields, during the hot summers, we used to suck on small stones like these. Don't know why but it made us feel less thirsty.

ZORAN picks up a pebble.

ZORAN

We've eaten just about everything else.

VOSS

You don't eat it, just suck on it.

At this moment IRENA falls again, her knees buckling and her face pitching into the sand in almost one movement. They turn her over again, wiping the sand from her nose and mouth. SMITH makes a shelter over her with their sticks and jackets. She lies with her eyes closed, her breathing coming in harsh gasps. Both legs are now swollen to the knees. He touches the swelling and the marks his fingers make remain for some seconds.

*
*

VOSS (CONT'D)

Sunstroke?

IRENA wakes.

IRENA

I'm becoming a nuisance.

She looks down at her legs.

JANUSZ

Do they hurt you?

IRENA

No, not at all. They must be swelling because I've walked so far. Don't you think, Mister?

SMITH nods reassuringly then quickly turns away, a look of deep anguish passing across his face.

*
*

173 EXT. GOBI - NIGHT 173 *

The others keep watch over her as she sleeps. SMITH passes around a splash of water in the cup. They all refuse it.

ZORAN

Save it for Irena. We've got our pebbles.

And he pops one in his mouth, makes out it's delicious and soothing.

In the now familiar ritual they scoop out holes in the sand, lining them with their jackets, hopeful of collecting a little moisture overnight.

174 EXT. GOBI - DAWN 174 *

They walk on, ZORAN carefully carrying the partly filled bowl of water. IRENA seems refreshed, but JANUSZ and SMITH walk beside her, watching her every step.

IRENA

I can walk alright if I can lean a little on you.

They each lightly lay a hand on her elbow.

175 EXT. GOBI - LATER - DAY 175 *

IRENA starts to fall forward, they steady her, and she walks on for a bit before slumping forward, and falling to her knees. SMITH too falls with exhaustion. VOSS hurries back to them.

JANUSZ

Can you go on?

IRENA

I think so. But what about Mr. Smith?

SMITH struggling for breath is back on his feet, waving them on. VOSS and JANUSZ each put an arm about her and half-carrying, half-dragging her, they set off again but it's no use, she's lost all her strength.

VOSS

I'm going to carry her.

(CONTINUED)

- 178 EXT. GOBI DESERT - DAY 178 *
- A lizard, in close up, listens to an approaching sound. As the volume builds he runs for his life. A beetle too, has heard it and burrows into the sand as a foot in a battered moccasin looms large in frame. We follow the foot a few staggering steps, then a blur, as a body falls through frame, ending in a close-up of TOMASZ, his breath coming in short gasps.
- 179 EXT. WIDER, GOBI DESERT - DAY 179 *
- The five figures, small in frame, TOMASZ the last in line, down on his knees. He raises a hand, hasn't the strength to call out. Then one of the figures sees him, calls to the others.
- CLOSE on TOMASZ.
- He pulls the leg of his trousers up with difficulty - the tell-tale swelling of the ankles, just as with IRENA. As JANUSZ approaches he quickly covers his legs and staggers to his feet. JANUSZ steadies him, and taking his arm they continue.
- 180 EXT. DUNES, GOBI DESERT - DAY 180
- As they walk the landscape changes from the endless scrubby plain to sweeping sand dunes. The nature of the terrain makes the going slower and they move forward on the edge of exhaustion. In a curious freak of Nature the wind whips across the top of the dunes creating an eerie singing sound. Ahead, and across their path a massive dune - no way forward but over it. TOMASZ looks up, staring in horror -
- TOMASZ'S HALLUCINATION:
- The dune is moving, rising up, higher and higher, like a massive sand wave.
- Back on TOMASZ. He collapses, unconscious.
- 181 EXT. BASE OF THE GREAT DUNE, GOBI - TWILIGHT 181 *
- An eerie, ghostly twilight, the group all sitting together in a rough circle around TOMASZ. He seems to revive as he passes around sketches he's made during their imprisonment and escape.

(CONTINUED)

181 CONTINUED:

181

It's an almost cheerful scene, like a traveller showing happy snaps taken on holiday.

VOSS

I like this one. When did you do that?

He holds up a sketch of KAZIK, showing him examining one of his battered shoes. *

TOMASZ

On the train. Poor Kazik, always the trouble with his feet. *

ZORAN holds up a drawing of himself.

ZORAN

Who's this?

TOMASZ

You.

ZORAN looks at it again genuinely shocked.

ZORAN

My father maybe, but ... is that how I look now?

A chuckle from the others.

SMITH stares at a sketch of IRENA.

SMITH

You caught her smile. *

SMITH passes the sketch to JANUSZ as TOMASZ lays back down, a smile on his face. He looks up at the stars. He knows he's dying and has accepted the fact. This in turn has given strength to his friends, and between them all is a feeling of love and a kind of peace.

182 EXT. BASE OF THE GREAT DUNE, GOBI - DAWN

182

*

They've tied his pencil to a length of hide, and hung it from the top of the cross over his grave. A faint breath of morning breeze sets it swinging like a pendulum, the others long gone.

183 EXT. DUNES - DAY

183

As they stagger on JANUSZ has moved well out in front, when he stumbles and falls. Then he sees it, just out ahead, and he begins crawling toward it.

(CONTINUED)

183 CONTINUED: 99.
183

JANUSZ'S MIRAGE - DAY: *

It's the hedge and gate from his vision. Behind the hedge the hint of a roof. Through the gate can be seen the path to the front door.

184 EXT. DUNES - DAY 184

JANUSZ crawling faster now, when ZORAN appears beside him.

JANUSZ
Do you see it?

ZORAN
Come on, Jan.

JANUSZ
But do you see it?

ZORAN
No.

He helps him to his feet and they continue on.

185 EXT. DUNES, GOBI DESERT - DAY 185

In the glare of the noon-day sun they shelter under their coats propped on their walking staffs. No-one speaks.

186 EXT. DUNES, GOBI DESERT - DAY 186

SMITH and JANUSZ support each other as they stagger on. SMITH's eyes are on the ground, following the dancing shadows before him. JANUSZ nudges him, points - above them two magnificent eagles, the source of the shadows.

JANUSZ
Eagles live in mountains.

SMITH looks at the featureless landscape ahead.

SMITH
They also fly long distances.

187 EXT. LANDSCAPE, MONGOLIA - DAY 187

The dunes are more intermittent here, the ground more stony and undulating.

(CONTINUED)

189 CONTINUED:

189

VOSS hears it first, and with his remaining strength moves out of the circle of firelight into the desert. He pauses, listens again.

A scraping sound. Then he sees them coming out of the gloom - JANUSZ dragging an unconscious SMITH by his shoulders. VOSS hurries to them. A look from JANUSZ - 'water'? VOSS shakes his head, 'No'.

190 EXT. CAMPSITE - SAME - DAWN

190

A black snake, thick as your wrist, slides over ZORAN'S leg. He stares, too close to death to feel fear. He's not even entirely sure it's real. He watches its progress as it slithers up the rocky hillside. Then he gets it, and he's up, running on pure adrenaline, following after the snake, leaving his sleeping companions by the fire.

191 EXT. HILLSIDE - BRIEF MONTAGE - DAY

191

ZORAN tracking the snake. He mutters to himself in a kind of delirium. He is crawling after the snake, scraping skin from knees and elbows. The snake disappears down into a rocky defile, followed by ZORAN.

192 EXT. CAMPSITE - DAY

192

SMITH in a death-like sleep. A distance away VOSS and JANUSZ stand, staring upward at the waving figure some fifty metres up the hill. A native? Black mud obscures his face. It's ZORAN. He waves, dances about, then in a cracked voice, a single word drifts down to them.

ZORAN

Water!

193 EXT. VALLEY FLOOR - DAY

193

ZORAN, JANUSZ, VOSS - lie flat out like lizards, their faces in damp, black mud. Sucking sounds. They slurp at small pools of water, split lips, puffed and bleeding. At first, just to swallow is painful, but it is life. After each mouthful there is a moment they must wait as the seepage re-fills the little hollows.

194 EXT. MUD-POOLS - LATER - DAY 194

They've carried SMITH to the water and JANUSZ supports him in a sitting position while VOSS and ZORAN, in turn, soak their shirts in the mud, dripping the life-giving liquid into SMITH'S mouth. He coughs, splutters, as he sucks at the moisture.

195 EXT. ANOTHER PART OF THE VALLEY - DAY 195

A black snake protruding about a foot out of a hole in the sandy soil. ZORAN points, and is joined by JANUSZ and VOSS. JANUSZ holds his hand up for them to go very still. He speaks in a whisper.

JANUSZ

Knife.

VOSS passes him the deer-bone knife. With it, he splits the end of his staff, to make a fork out of the end.

ZORAN

What if it's poisonous?

JANUSZ

You can still eat it. Just cut off its head.

He passes the knife to VOSS, then creeps toward the creature, and striking quickly he attempts to trap the snake in the fork. Too slow. The snake disappears into its hole.

196 EXT. VALLEY - LATER - DAY 196

Like snake-fishermen, they sit waiting by the snake-hole - ZORAN too, has a snake-catching stick. Then they see a second snake, slithering across the rocks. At a signal they strike, ZORAN deftly trapping the snake's head in the cleft stick.

197 EXT. CAMPSITE, VALLEY - DAY 197 *

Chunks of whitish snake meat are cooking on a thin flat stone over a fire of twigs and grass. The men grab pieces of the snake and eat, nodding approval.

JANUSZ

It's not bad.

(CONTINUED)

197 CONTINUED:

197

JANUSZ helps SMITH sit up, feeding him a small piece of meat. SMITH waves him away, sinking back to the ground too tired to eat.

VOSS

Kind of like chicken.

ZORAN

Yeah, a long black poisonous chicken with no legs.

JANUSZ

You know Valka talked of eating each other? In Siberia?

ZORAN

He did? Would you have eaten me?

JANUSZ

Probably.

ZORAN

I would never have eaten you - too stringy and bitter, I'd rather eat snake.

VOSS nearly chokes on something, reaches into his mouth, pulls out a tooth.

JANUSZ

Scurvy.

198 OMITTED

198

199 EXT. CAMPSITE - NIGHT

199

The fire burns low, VOSS and ZORAN sleep. SMITH wakes from time to time and JANUSZ forces him to eat and drink. SMITH is deathly pale, his life ebbing away. He speaks in short, croaky stabs, every breath an effort.

SMITH

It can kill you, remember?

JANUSZ puzzled.

SMITH (CONT'D)

'Kindness'.

JANUSZ tries to force more water on him but SMITH waives him away.

(CONTINUED)

SMITH (CONT'D)

How long can you survive on snakes
and mud? You should leave me, but
you can't can you? You're a fool.
I'd leave you.

*
*
*

He lays back down. JANUSZ studies his face, pain and
suffering etched in sharp lines.

JANUSZ

Mister?

SMITH

What?

JANUSZ

I mightn't know your first name,
but I know your son's name.

SMITH stares at him.

SMITH

Irena told you.

JANUSZ nods.

JANUSZ

Can I say his name?

Nothing from SMITH.

JANUSZ (CONT'D)

'David'.

SMITH

Saying his name won't bring him
back.

He struggles onto his elbow, staring intently at JANUSZ,
an ironic smile on his lips.

SMITH (CONT'D)

You trying to give me the will to
live? That it? Stop me giving
up?

JANUSZ

Are you giving up?

SMITH

In the camps, some saw death as
'freedom'.

(CONTINUED)

JANUSZ

So why didn't you kill yourself?

SMITH

Survival was a kind of protest.

JANUSZ makes him take a little water.

SMITH (CONT'D)

Now being alive is my punishment.

JANUSZ

Punishment for what?

SMITH

I brought David to Russia didn't I? *

JANUSZ

And no-one can forgive you? And you can't forgive yourself?

SMITH

Be easier if I had religion, or a home to go back to, like you.

JANUSZ

For us, the old life is gone.

They sit in silence for a while.

SMITH

Irena told me they tortured your wife and she informed on you.

JANUSZ

Yes.

SMITH

They did that to my boy.

JANUSZ

(nods)

My wife was released, that much I know. She lived, but like you she won't be able to forgive herself. Only I can do that.

He leans closer to SMITH, speaks just above a whisper, his voice intense, his eyes burning.

JANUSZ (CONT'D)

She'll torture herself for what she did. Just like you. That's why I have to get back!

199 CONTINUED: (3)

This last, has impressed SMITH, and despite his death-wish a flicker of life surges through his bones.

200 EXT. CAMPSITE, MUD-FLAT - DAWN 200

Next morning, and the figures of the four men are seen in wide-shot sleeping by the embers of their fire. One figure gets up, picks up his staff, and begins to walk slowly South, toward the distant mountains. It's SMITH. The others stir, their attention caught by the sight of SMITH staggering onward. JANUSZ knows what the effort to walk is costing him, and he knows this is SMITH's gift to him. They hurriedly pack up, VOSS cramming the back-pack with roasted snake-meat, ZORAN collecting a last bowl of water, which he pours carefully into their goatskin water-bag.

201 EXT. DESERT - DAY 201

JANUSZ catches up with SMITH, giving him his arm in support, and together they slowly continue their journey Southward.

202 EXT. CHANGING TERRAIN - DAY 202

They leave the desert behind as they climb gently rising ground.

203 RIVER, MONGOLIA - DAY 203 *

The survivors each seen alone as they experience the life-giving water: one simply lets water run through his fingers; another submerges himself entirely; one drinks, savoring every mouthful as if it were the finest vintage wine. SMITH fishes. Beside him several of his catch gleam silver in the light. *

204 - OMIT *

205 EXT. HILLSIDE - DUSK/NIGHT 205

Walking abreast they head toward a pass between two massive mountains - in the distance gleaming snow-capped peaks rise even higher. *

- 206 EXT. CAMPSITE, MOUNTAINS - DAWN 206 *
- They sleep, huddled together amongst the stony rubble. It is snowing. VOSS is the first to rise. He looks about him in disbelief, shakes the others awake, pointing. Just beyond where they've slept a high wall towers above them. In this extreme Western section it's in poor shape - not built of stone, but of ancient mud bricks, tumbled down in many places, but to the East the outline is distinct as it straggles over ridges to the horizon - the Great Wall of China.
- 207 EXT. THE GREAT WALL, CHINA - DAY 207
- They enter through a keyhole-like opening formed by collapsed masonry, now dressed in their cold weather clothing.
- 208 EXT. SKY - DAY 208
- From high above a series of aerial shots take us over a massive snow covered mountain range. *
- 209 EXT. SNOWY LANDSCAPE, TIBET - DAY 209
- The men climb steadily up snow-covered hills, pausing at a cairn of stones covered with tiny flags.
- SMITH
- Tibetan?
- They move on with renewed energy.
- 210 EXT. COUNTRYSIDE, TIBET - DAY 210
- CLOSE on the deeply lined face of a SHEPHERD. He wears Tibetan costume and squints his eyes as he stares into the distance.
- From his P.O.V., four distant figures walking across the snowy plain toward him. The sound of dogs barking.
- 211 EXT. A RIDGE NEAR THE SHEPHERD'S HUT - DUSK 211
- Far below in a valley lies the legendary Lhasa - the stepped palace and surrounding town burnished by the last of the golden light. A sprinkling of lights come on as the shadows lengthen.

(CONTINUED)

211 CONTINUED:

211

Above and beyond, like a massive wall, rise the snow-capped peaks of the Himalayas. This has been the view stretching out before the four fugitives and their tour-guide, the old shepherd. As if pointing out the choice confronting them, he labels each of these spectacular features.

SHEPHERD
(pointing down)
Lhasa ... LHA-SA!

Then, indicating 'over' the mountains -

SHEPHERD (CONT'D)
IN-DI-A!

In dumb-show, he mimes that the mountains would be very cold.

212 EXT. SHEPHERD'S HUT - NIGHT

212

Three horses arrive at the door of the lonely hut and its associated outbuildings. THE SHEPHERD dismounts and with much bowing opens the door for two other Tibetans who follow. One is a LAMA, the other a local OFFICIAL. They stoop as they enter - a glimpse inside to where the four survivors sit at a table, surrounded by bowls and plates of food.

*
*

213 INT. SHEPHERD'S HUT - NIGHT

213

The LAMA and the OFFICIAL sit opposite the group. Tea is served. The official speaks English with difficulty, and as in Mongolia, he addresses the elder of the group - MR. SMITH.

OFFICIAL
India? Yes. There is the track
to Sikkin, over the mountains.
Many people go there.

SMITH
And food?

OFFICIAL
Small villages there. They give
food. Wood for fire. Yes, but
you don't go now.

CLOSE on JANUSZ, intensely following the conversation.

(CONTINUED)

JANUSZ

Why can't we go now?

OFFICIAL

If big snow come - very difficult.
You wait here until Spring. This
family keep you.

He confers with the LAMA.

JANUSZ

(to SMITH)

That's three months.

OFFICIAL

(indicates the LAMA)

He go to Lhasa. Get permission
for to stay. Only to Spring. Not
possible foreigners stay Tibet.

SMITH bows his head, mutters thanks, all of the group
doing likewise.

THE SHEPHERD has seen JANUSZ, ZORAN and VOSS to their
quarters. He passes VOSS a battered oil-lamp and retires
with much bowing. They settle on the straw covered
floor, laying out their heavy wool fleeces and blankets
given to them by the shepherd's wife.

ZORAN

Well, we can't cross in Winter.

JANUSZ

He said it was 'difficult'.

SMITH comes in, and they make room for him in the cramped
space.

ZORAN

I'm going to sleep 'till Spring.
Like a bear in a cave. What about
you, Mister?

SMITH settles with his back to the wall, draws up his
sheepskin.

SMITH

I'm going to Lhasa.

The others are stunned by this.

(CONTINUED)

SMITH (CONT'D)

The Lama has a contact - maybe get me out through China. There's a U.S. military mission there.

They don't like it. A feeling he's deserting them, breaking up the team.

ZORAN

'Looking after number one.' Isn't that what Americans say?

SMITH

Zoran?

ZORAN eventually looks at him.

SMITH (CONT'D)

We escaped. We made it.

VOSS blows out the lamp. Silvery moonlight from a small window.

ZORAN

He's right. I just realized it.

VOSS

Realized what?

ZORAN

Apart from a few mountains, we're there. We made it.

VOSS

Not all of us.

ZORAN

No. Not all of us.

Their thoughts drift back to their lost companions.

ZORAN (CONT'D)

What will you do, Mister? When you get home.

SMITH

'Home'?

*

ZORAN

Build metros?

SMITH

Might drift for a while.

(CONTINUED)

ZORAN

(laughs)

Haven't you had enough of that?

CLOSE on JANUSZ, hardly listening, his thoughts elsewhere. Their late-night conversation drifts over him.

VOSS

I will fight. First Germans, then Russians.

ZORAN

Then re-build your church?

VOSS

I will die fighting.

This statement has an oddly prophetic sound. JANUSZ look across at him.

ZORAN

I'm going to get Tomasz's pictures to a newspaper, or get them published somehow. Then I'm going to cook his chicken - but with extra salt just to annoy him.

Chuckles from the group.

SMITH

And you, Janusz?

VOSS (TO SMITH)

As long as the Communists are in Poland, he can't go back.

ZORAN

They'd shoot you wouldn't they, Janusz?

They settle down to sleep, outside the wind is picking up.

JANUSZ

I'll just keep on going. Until it's over. Keep on walking.

SMITH looks through the gloom to where JANUSZ sits - moonlight slashes the side of his face, but he can't quite see his eyes.

CLOSE on JANUSZ. He's wide awake. No thought of sleep.

- 215 - OMIT *
- 216 INT. STABLES - DAWN 216 *
- ZORAN and VOSS agitated at the discovery that JANUSZ has gone. Much coming and going in and out of the hut, checking that he isn't somewhere close by. Only SMITH remains undisturbed as he sits with his back against the wall, the ghost of a smile on his lips. He expected nothing less. *
- 217 EXT. HIMALAYAS - DAY 217
- Up ahead a figure, JANUSZ, dwarfed by the mountain chain, struggles on, climbing toward the snow-capped passes.
- 218 EXT. HIGHER PASS DAY 218
- As he climbs he hears a cry, mingling with that of the wind - a voice echoing about the mountains. He ignores it for a few paces, before he looks back - far below two figures waving and calling - VOSS and ZORAN.
- 219 EXT. MOUNTAIN SLOPE/VALLEY, TIBET/INDIA - DAWN 219
- The change from the barren mountains of Tibet, to the lush green of Sikkim is abrupt and startling - from rocky upper reaches the slope to the valley becomes rich in scrubby birch-woods, rhododendrons, and deciduous forest, until finally it becomes dense rain forest. It is with a backdrop of this luxuriant green that Indian faces look up toward the slopes. Here they watch three wild looking bearded men descending toward them. The additional cost of this final leg of their journey is plainly visible on their faces, and in their slow stumbling movements. They walk like automatons, only their senses fully alive. Shouts from the locals produce a village ELDER, then a POLICEMAN. Older children squeal with delight, while some of the very young cry out in fear, one even bursting into tears - are these the dreaded Yeti their grandfathers told them lived up in the mountain peaks?
- 220 EXT. VALLEY PATH, INDIA - DAY 220
- Close on JANUSZ, VOSS, and ZORAN as the beaming POLICEMAN escorts them past dozens of smiling faces.

(CONTINUED)

This being India, a small crowd of the curious rapidly swells, until the path is lined two and three deep on either side, like a welcoming crowd at the end of a marathon. Small children are held up for a better look, while hands reach out patting their backs and shoulders - it's as if they know these men have achieved something remarkable.

Close on JANUSZ, as amongst the sound of the gathering crowd other voices join in, cheering voices, hundreds of them, rising in volume until the cheering changes into that of a chant, now seemingly swelled by thousands of voices. Still CLOSE on JANUSZ walking as behind him the Indian scene dissolves into a series of black and white images. (Throughout, the image of JANUSZ walking is from this scene in India).

- VICTORY IN EUROPE. CROWDS CELEBRATE IN TRAFALGAR SQUARE...SUPER, 'V.E. DAY, 1945'

*

JANUSZ walking.

- FIGHTING IN BUDAPEST, THE UPRISING AGAINST THE COMMUNIST GOVERNMENT...SUPER, 'HUNGARIAN UPRISING, 1956'

*

JANUSZ walking.

- THE BERLIN WALL BEING BUILT, SOME ATTEMPT ESCAPE. A MAN IS SHOT AS HE CLIMBS THE WALL...SUPER, 'BERLIN WALL, 1961'

*
*

JANUSZ walking.

- RUSSIAN TANKS IN PRAGUE, CONFRONT DEMONSTRATORS...SUPER, 'PRAGUE UPRISING, 1968'

*

JANUSZ walking.

-LECH WALESZA ADDRESSES STRIKING MINERS AT GDANSK SHIPYARDS, POLAND...SUPER 'SOLIDARITY MOVEMENT, POLAND, 1980'

*
*

JANUSZ walking.

- THE BERLIN WALL COMING DOWN. SHOUTS AND CHEERS FROM THE ECSTATIC CROWD ON BOTH SIDES...SUPER 'BERLIN WALL COMES DOWN, 1989'

*
*

JANUSZ walking.

- CROWDS IN WARSAW CELEBRATE THEIR FREEDOM...SUPER, 'POLAND FREE, 1989'

*
*

JANUSZ walking.

221 EXT. A HOUSE, POLAND - DAY

221

The camera moves toward a gate in a hedge. The click of the latch as it opens. A downward view of the flagstones. The front door, the camera pans left. The loose brick. A hand into frame removes a key from behind the brick. Into the lock of the door, the door pushed open.

222 INT. HOUSE, POLAND - DAY

222

A WOMAN sitting by a window. She's in her early seventies, and she looks up expectantly on hearing the door closing in the hallway. At the entrance to the room appears a young man in Polish cavalry uniform - YOUNG JANUSZ, as he was just before the war. He smiles at his wife. Cut back to the seat by the window to see his pretty YOUNG WIFE, as she was back in 1939. YOUNG JANUSZ, smiling broadly, crosses toward her. Cut back to his WIFE of 1989 - on her face there are lines of suffering which fade as she smiles up at him. She's waited a long time for him to come home. On JANUSZ now as he sits opposite her, and for the first time we see him as he is in 1989 - also in his early seventies. Without a word he reaches across the table and takes her hand in his.

FADE TO BLACK.