

CHRISTMAS IN LENINGRAD

By

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## Cast of Characters

- Pyotr: 35-years-old, tired, hungry, wants to do the best for his family.
- Ekaterina: 32-years-old, bitter, resentful, wants her son to survive.
- Grigor: 45-years-old, perseveres and endures with a good heart
- Guard: 25-years-old, paid government official, judicious.

EXT. LENINGRAD

(DISTANT MACHINE GUN FIRE.  
SPITFIRES DOGFIGHT. BOMBERS BOMB)

SOUND: A MAN RUNNING, OUT OF  
BREATH. HE OPENS A DOOR AND SLAMS  
IT CLOSED BEHIND HIM, HIS BREATH IN  
STIFLED GASPS

INT. PYOTR'S HOUSE

(THE WAR OUTSIDE MUTED, BUT EVER  
PRESENT)

EKATERINA: (HARSH) Well?

PYOTR: (CATCHES HIS BREATH) I was almost  
caught. They asked for my papers. Shot  
at me when... Have I been hit?

EKATERINA: Did you get any?

PYOTR: It's difficult, Ekaterina.

EKATERINA: Dmitry is hungry.

PYOTR: Leningrad is hungry.

EKATERINA: He has a fever. He will die.

PYOTR: Has he eaten his rations?

EKATERINA: He needs real food, Pyotr. Real meat.  
Protein.

PYOTR: I'll try again at first light. See if I  
can find some worms, or...

EKATERINA: No. Not worms.

PYOTR: Patrols have orders to shoot scavengers  
on sight. They hang a sign over your  
corpse that tells everybody you are a  
cannibal. Like a badge of shame.

EKATERINA: Keep your voice down. The shame would be  
unbearable. But how would you cope  
with the death of your son. Due to your  
own negligence?

PYOTR: OK. I will try.

EKATERINA: For the sake of your son. It is  
Christmas tomorrow.

PYOTR: Share my biscuit with Dmitry. Perhaps  
the added hunger will give me courage.

EKATERINA: Imagine his little face when he sees we  
have steak for him on Christmas day.

INT. PYOTR'S HOUSE

(PYOTR DRESSES)

PYOTR: (WHISPERS) Ekaterina. Wake up.

EKATERINA: (WAKES) Have you been already?

PYOTR: I'm going now.

EKATERINA: Then why did you wake me?

PYOTR: I thought... I'm sorry. Go back to  
sleep.

(SOFT SNORES QUICKLY FILL THE ROOM)

PYOTR: (WHISPERS) Merry Christmas, my love.

SOUND: A DOOR OPENS AND CLOSES

EXT. LENINGRAD

(OCCASIONAL CRACK OF DISTANT  
GUNFIRE. CARTS PULLED BY MEN ARE  
WHEELED BY)

GRIGOR: (PULLS A HEAVY CART) Ho, Pyotr. What brings you on this road?

PYOTR: Ekaterina's cousin is missing.

GRIGOR: And she has you go to the dump to look, huh?

PYOTR: And you?

GRIGOR: Our youngest...

PYOTR: I'm sorry.

GRIGOR: She was sick for a while. I know it may sound bad, but we welcomed death for her in the end. You know, she smiled? Can

(GRIGOR/CONT'D OVER)

GRIGOR                   you believe it?

PYOTR:                   God must have whispered something nice  
to her.

GRIGOR:                 Yes, that must be it. I'll tell Kristina  
that when I get home. It might make her  
smile too, you think?

(THEY WALK IN SILENCE FOR A WHILE)

GRIGOR:                 Be careful at the dump. The patrols  
don't like people hanging around.  
Apparently some have been stealing meat  
from the cadavers. Even whole cadavers.  
Can you believe such a thing?

PYOTR:                 Seems an excuse so the patrols can kill  
even more of us. Do the Nazi's job for  
them all the faster.

GRIGOR:                 Perhaps you're right. We're all hungry  
but are we so desperate we need to eat  
each other? I don't think so.

PYOTR:                 Perhaps some are. When was the last time  
you saw a family pet being taken for a

(PYOTR/CONT'D OVER)

PYOTR walk, or, even, a bird in the sky?

GRIGOR: We shall endure.

PYOTR: Would you like me to bury her? Your daughter?

GRIGOR: No. Thank you. I need my own hand to gather the blisters. It's the least I can do for her.

PYOTR: I will help.

GRIGOR: What of your wife's cousin?

PYOTR: If she is at the dump, she will still be there later. You're my friend, let me help.

GRIGOR: Do you have a shovel?

PYOTR: We can take it in turns.

GRIGOR: Thank you, old friend. I see, like me, the hunger saps your strength, perhaps the two of us will make lighter work of it.



EXT. GRAVEYARD

(SHOVEL HITS DIRT. HEAVY BREATHING)

PYOTR:                    Would you like me to finish off filling  
                          in? Your hands are covered in blood.

GRIGOR:                   (OUT OF BREATH) Thank you. I will sit  
                          over here.

PYOTR:                    No, go home, get some sleep. Let me deal  
                          with this.

(SHOVEL HITS DIRT, ONCE, TWICE)

GRIGOR:                   You've done enough for me already, the  
                          least I can do is wait while you fill it  
                          in. There's still an hour or two worth  
                          of work in it.

(SHOVEL HITS DIRT)

PYOTR:                    We're so hungry, my son, he is dying.  
                          Yours is already dead.

GRIGOR:                   (UNNERVED) What are you talking about?

PYOTR:                   You would do anything for your daughter.  
                          If she was alive?

GRIGOR:                 Where are you going with this?

PYOTR:                   Let me take her.

GRIGOR:                 What?

PYOTR:                   If the worst happens, then I will do the  
                          same for you. I would do the same for  
                          you if the roles were reversed.

GRIGOR:                 (GASPS) You're a cannibal!

PYOTR:                   Keep your voice down.

GRIGOR:                 (SHOUTS) Help! Cannibal!

(THUD)

PYOTR:                   (SOBS) I'm sorry, Grigor. I'm sorry.

(THUD)

GRIGOR: (WEAKER) Please, eat me. Not, not my  
little girl.

(THUD)

PYOTR: She's dead you stupid fool. Your meat is  
old and rotten, why would I want it?

GRIGOR: Take me, please, please, ple--

(THUD, THUD, THUD, THUD, THUD,  
THUD, THUD, THUD)

PYOTR: Why didn't you just go home?

(PYOTR UNEARTHS THE BODY OF  
GRIGOR'S DAUGHTER)

PYOTR: You were a pretty girl. I remember the  
day you were born.

(PYOTR HEFTS GRIGOR'S DAUGHTER ONTO  
HIS SHOULDER AND TRUDGES AWAY)

GUARD: Hey, you. What have you got there?

(PYOTR RUNS, GRUNTING WITH EXERTION  
DUE TO THE EXTRA WEIGHT)

GUARD: Halt!

SOUND: GUNSHOT

(PYOTR GASPS AS THE AIR IS TAKEN  
FROM HIS LUNG. HIS AGGRAVATED  
BREATH COMES WITH A SLIGHT WHISTLE.  
HE DROPS THE BODY AND STAGGERS  
AWAY)

GUARD: He's wounded, he won't get far.

(HEAVY BOOTS DISTURB EARTH TILL  
THEY STOP WITH A VERY HUMAN GASP OF  
SHOCK)

GUARD: Such a pretty little girl. She deserves  
a proper burial.

INT. PYOTR'S HOUSE

(THE DOOR OPENS AND CLOSES. PYOTR'S  
BREATH AN AGONISED, SPORADIC  
WHISTLE)

EKATERINA: (HARSH) Well?

(PYOTR'S FEET DRAG AS HE MOVES  
SLOWLY AWAY FROM THE FRONT DOOR)

PYOTR: (AGONISED) Can't... you... see? I'm...  
dying.

(PYOTR SOBS, CLUTCHES FOR A CHAIR,  
BUT FALLS TO THE FLOOR)

EKATERINA: Perhaps fresh meat is what will help  
Dmitry?

PYOTR: (WEAK) What... what... do... you... No!

SOUND: KNIFE SHARPENED

EKATERINA: A father should provide for his family,  
that is his job, and that is your job.

SOUND: BLADE SCRAPES AGAINST METAL

PYOTR: Wait... I will be... dead-soon.

EKATERINA: It is a mercy you are still alive.

(PYOTR GURGLES AND GASPS AS  
EKATERINA SLICES A STEAK FROM HIS  
THIGH)

EKATERINA: Dmitry shall have his Christmas dinner  
after all.

(STEAK SIZZLES. DOGS BARK IN THE  
BG. PYOTR'S WHISTLED GASPS BECOME  
FEW AND FAR BETWEEN. THE BARKS GROW  
LOUDER, NEARER)

GUARD: (MUFFLED) Here!

(BOOM! THE FRONT DOOR IS SHOT OFF  
ITS MODEST HINGES. THE DOGS BARK  
EXCITEDLY AT THE STENCH)

GUARD: Oh, my God.

EKATERINA: Please take pity, sir. Our son needs the protein.

GUARD: Son? (pause) What? In here?

(GUARD KICKS OPEN BEDROOM DOOR AND RECOILS INSTANTLY FROM THE STENCH. FLIES BUZZ AND MOMENTARILY ENVELOP HIM AS HE SLAMS THE DOOR SHUT)

GUARD: He's been dead for at least a month.

EKATERINA: No! He's a strong boy. He just needs food.

SOUND: GUNSHOT

(EKATERINA SLUMPS TO THE FLOOR)

GUARD: A disgusting woman.

(PYOTR GASPS, STILL ALIVE)

GUARD: You were going to eat that little girl?

PYOTR: (WHEEZES) Merrrrrrrrcccccyyyyyyyyyy

SOUND: GUNSHOT

GUARD:

Burn this place.

(FUEL INDUCED FLAMES WHUMPH INTO  
LIFE. WOOD AND WORLDLY POSSESSIONS  
BURN. MEAT CRACKLES. BODY FAT  
POPS.)

END.