

CALL OF THE REVOLUTION

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adapted for the stage by WALTER WYKES

CHARACTERS

MAN

WOMAN

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MAN

My brother?

WOMAN

He's gone. He knew you'd try to stop him, so he left as soon as it started. I saw him go.

MAN

Why didn't you wake me?

WOMAN

What could you have done?

[Silence.]

MAN

It's really happening. I can't believe it.

[She clasps his hand.]

WOMAN

Are you afraid?

MAN

Are you?

[She shakes her head "no," but cannot control her trembling.]

I had a feeling it would happen. A premonition. It's been too quiet. There's been nothing for days now. The factories have been closed. The roads have been almost empty. Even the air feels cleaner. I went outside tonight ... there were no lights, no cars, nothing. Not a single sound of the city, just ... quiet. If you closed your eyes you really would have thought you were somewhere far out in the country. It had that smell, you know, whatever it is—that smell of spring nights—of fields and flowers and dew. I heard a dog bark, and it rang out so clear. It struck me ... you never notice things in the city—there's too much going on. It made me laugh.

[A dog barks.]

Listen, a dog is barking now.

[Somewhere, hammers begin to pound. The WOMAN rushes to the window and points.]

WOMAN

There they are again! On the corner!

[They stare out into the darkness, holding each other. The blows of an axe join in the clamor.]

It sounds so cheerful, so resonant, like in a forest or a river when you're mending a boat or building a dam. Cheerful, harmonious work.

MAN

It's the sound of the future.

[Silence.]

I have to go too, you know.

WOMAN

I knew you would.

MAN

You understand then?

WOMAN

Of course.

MAN

It's my duty.

WOMAN

And the children?

MAN

You'll be with them. They'll have a mother—that will have to be enough. I can't stay behind.

WOMAN

And I? Can I?

MAN

What?

[Surprised, he stretches out his hands, but she pushes them aside.]

WOMAN

Something like this happens once in what—a hundred years? A thousand? Do you really expect me to stay here and change diapers?

MAN

Do you want to die? They'll kill you just as quickly as they will me. They won't hesitate because you're a woman.

WOMAN

[Still trembling.]

I'm not afraid.

MAN

And what about the children—without you to look after them, what chance do they have?

WOMAN

This is bigger than the children.

MAN

What if they die?

WOMAN

What if they *do* die? If it's for the cause?

MAN

Are you really saying this—are you speaking these words?! *You* who have lived for nothing but those children?! Who have been filled with fear for them day and night?!

WOMAN

That was before.

MAN

What's come over you?!

WOMAN

The same thing that's come over you. I can see the future.

MAN

You want to go with me?

WOMAN

Yes!

[Pause.]

Don't be angry. Please. But tonight ... when the sounds began ... when the hammers and the axes began to fall ... you were still asleep ... and I suddenly understood that my husband, my children—all these things are temporary.... I love you very much ...

[She clasps his hand again.]

... but can't you hear how they are hammering out there?! They are pounding away, and something seems to be falling, breaking apart, some kind of wall seems to be coming down—the earth is changing—and it is so spacious and wide and free! It's night now, but it seems to me the sun is shining! I'm thirty years old and already I'm like an old woman, I know it, you can see it in my face. And yet ... tonight I feel like I'm only seventeen, and that I've fallen in love for the first time—a great, boundless love that lights up the sky!

MAN

It's as if the city were already dead and gone. You're right, I feel like a kid, too.

WOMAN

They're pounding, and it sounds to me like music, like singing of which I've always dreamt—all my life—and I didn't know who it was that I loved with such a boundless love, which made me feel like crying and laughing and singing! This is freedom! Don't deny me my place—let me die with those who are working out there, who are calling in the future so bravely and rousing the dead past from its grave!

MAN

[Strangely.]

There is no such thing as time.

WOMAN

What?

MAN

The sun rises and sets ... the hand moves around the dial ... but time doesn't exist. It's an illusion. Who are you? I don't know you. Are you a human being?

[The WOMAN bursts into ringing laughter, as if she really were only seventeen years old.]

WOMAN

I don't know you, either! Are you a human being, too? How strange ... how beautiful it is—two human beings!

MAN

I have to go. I can't wait any longer.

WOMAN

Wait, I'll give you something to eat. You should eat first. A few more minutes won't make any difference. See how sensible I am. I'll come tomorrow. I'll give the children away and find you.

MAN

Comrade.

WOMAN

Yes, comrade.

[The strokes of the axe can be heard through the open window. She gives him some bread to eat—sets it on the table, but he only stares at it.]

Why don't you eat?

MAN

Bread—it's so strange. Everything is so mysterious and new. I feel like laughing. I look at the walls and they seem so ... temporary. They're almost invisible. I can see how they've been built—how they will be destroyed. Everything will pass. The table ... the food on it ... you and I ... this city ... everything seems so transparent and light.

[The WOMAN glances at the stale, dry crust of bread. She turns her head slightly, very slightly, in the direction where the children are sleeping.]

Do you feel sorry for them? The children? That they've come into the world now? This time of all times?

[She shakes her head without removing her eyes from the bread.]

WOMAN

No ... I was only thinking of our life before.

[Pause.]

How incomprehensible it seems! It's like waking from a long dream.

[She surveys the room with her eyes.]

Is this really the place where we lived?

MAN

You were my wife.

WOMAN

And they were our children.

MAN

We worked.

WOMAN

We made love.

MAN

We paid our bills at this table.

WOMAN

How we sweated over those bills!

MAN

It seems so pointless now—doesn't it? All that worrying over a few dollars here or there.

WOMAN

And here, beyond this wall, your father died.

MAN

Yes. He died in his sleep. He told me this day would come—but he didn't live to see it.

[The sound of a baby crying comes suddenly from the hallway.]

Her cry seems so strange now ... amidst these phantom walls, while there, below, they're building barricades.

[The WOMAN, jolted out of her dream, moves towards the sound.]

WOMAN

Well, go!

MAN

Wait. I want to kiss them first.

WOMAN

You'll wake them up.

MAN

You're right.

[The WOMAN disappears into the hallway. The MAN goes to the window and stares out into the darkness. The pounding continues. The baby's cry subsides. After a few moments, the WOMAN returns.]

WOMAN

Will you take your gun?

MAN

Yes.

WOMAN

It's behind the stove.

[He retrieves the gun.]

MAN

Well ...

[She kisses him.]

What unfamiliar ... what strange eyes! For ten years I've looked into these eyes—I've known them better than my own—and now there's something new in them ... something entirely new ... something I can't define.

WOMAN

Will you remember me?

MAN

Of course.

WOMAN

How can you be sure? Everything will be different now.

MAN

I'll remember.

WOMAN

And if you die?

MAN

I don't know.

[He looks around at the walls, at the bread, at the candle. He takes his wife by the hand and moves towards the door. A pause.]

Well ... 'till we meet again!

WOMAN

Yes ... 'till we meet again!

[He goes out into the darkness. She watches after him as the sounds of hammers and axes fill the air.]

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