

ROBERT KARMON

A Play Script & companion
piece to *ISAAC* the novel.



The
RESETTLEMENT
of
ISAAC

With an additional five stories of Isaac's
life before and leading up to WWII.

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SCENE ONE

(Cold Winter Night. 1998. New York. Riverside Park, overlooking the Hudson River, Upper West Side.)

(Isaac, 73, sits on his park bench, holding a mahogany cane topped with an ornate brass handle. He wears a ragged Russian mouton cap with ear flaps. He is covered from shoulder to ankle by a frayed and faded long coat hiding the fact that he is wearing just boxer shorts and an undershirt beneath the coat. On his lap is a frayed cloth satchel.)

(The bench overlooks the Hudson River, swollen by recent rains. It is near a well-traveled bridge. Isaac thinks he hears the sound of rushing water, interrupted from time to time by the very real sound of the clattering wheels of cars going across the bridge which sound like marching boots to Isaac.)

(His face is marred by a deep scar across his forehead, but his eyes reveal an inextinguishable vitality in spite of his aging, world-weary body. He seems to be waiting for someone to appear. Lights dim. Sound of rushing water triggers Isaac's memory.)

(He puts cane aside and reaches into his satchel and pulls out an old East European map. It is crumpled and difficult to handle. He spreads it out on his lap, looking intensely for some location, but his eyes fail him. He struggles with the map. It slips off his lap, and he hurriedly goes to his knees to recover it from the ground. He is kneeling when he imagines Anya.)

(Anya, 29, a beautiful Russian woman, appears in Isaac's memory as if emerging up from the river. She wears a leather vest, a dark cap, fatigues and carries a rifle strapped to her shoulder. Isaac sees her. He is startled. Looks at her.)

(They speak in Russian throughout their scene.)

ISAAC

Anya?

(He grabs the map, then leaning on his cane, he struggles to get up, but has difficulty standing. Kneels down again painfully on one knee, holding on to cane to keep his balance. He imagines the sound of rushing water.)

ANYA

(Loudly)

Sergei!

(Isaac looks around as if someone heard her.)

What are you doing kneeling? That's not like you. Did you forget me?

ISAAC

No, Anya! Never!

(He struggles once more with the help of his cane and raises himself up. Then collapses, sitting back on the bench.)

ANYA

Now, now, Sergei, enough of that. Hurry, little cricket. Very little time. Very little. Don't forget to get far enough away before the train explodes. But then you know all that. Remember it's a short fuse Alyosha put in your satchel. It's always a short fuse.

ISAAC

A short fuse?

ANYA

Don't forget. Meet me as usual by the eddies where the rivers cross.

(Isaac looks endearingly at Anya.)

(Lights begin to fade on her.)

Hurry. The Nazis are retreating from Mother Russia. The war will be over soon.

(Isaac keeps looking at her.)

Sergei? Are you listening? Soon we'll be together. Yes? No more hiding. Yes?

ISAAC

No more. Yes.

ANYA

Come back, safe and sound. Promise.

ISAAC

Yes. Safe and sound. Promise.

ANYA

Safe and sound. For me. For us. No time left. Hurry.

(Lights fade on her.)

I'll be waiting.

(She is gone.)

ISAAC

Anya! Anya, don't go. Help me. "Skolko Vremeni?"

(Then in Yiddish)

How much time...?

(Sound of cars clattering over bridge and honking of horns drown out the sound of rushing water.)

(Isaac grabs the map and, painfully, with the help of his cane, he stands, looking for Anya.)

(Male passerby is seen, back to Isaac. He wears a ski cap and puffy ski jacket. Isaac approaches him, thinking he knows him, but confused by his outfit. He taps him on the shoulder and speaks to him in Russian.)

ISAAC

Alyosha? Eto ty? Is it really you?

(Male passerby turns. He is a stranger to Isaac.)

MALE PASSERBY (IN ENGLISH)

What the hell kind of language are you talking?

ISAAC

I thought...No!...

(He speaks in English.)

I'm sorry, sir. I am looking for this.

(He holds out the map.)

What is the name of this village?

MALE PASSERBY

Village? You mean like Greenwich Village? It's way downtown, old man.

ISAAC

No. This has to be Rovno here. Yes? Rovno. Poland. I'm looking for Brovary, near Kyev Ostrov. Many kilometers west of here. See?

Yes? Look at the map. My eyes are not so good. Look, please. Now that the war is over, I must get back to my Anya.

(Man takes the East European map. Holds it up and down and realizes it has nothing to do with where they are.)

MALE PASSERBY

What war did you say?

ISAAC

The war! Against Hitler, against the Nazis. It's over. It's been over for a year. Everyone knows.

MALE PASSERBY

That war? That's ancient history. You must be kidding, man.

ISAAC

Can you tell me? I need to find the way to Brovary near Kyev. I am near? Yes?

MALE PASSERBY

Are you nuts? Near what? This map's a joke! What freakin' planet are you from?

(He laughs in Isaac's face. Gives the map back.)

Old man, you're way off. Way off. It's 1998, Pop, Manhattan. Get it? That's the Hudson. There's the George Washington Bridge. You're somewhere else. Seriously. Get a grip.

(He shakes his head and is gone.)

ISAAC

(Stands, a bit unsteady, leaning on his cane.)

No. No.

(He falls back onto the bench. Spreads map on his lap. Puts finger on what he thinks is Anya's town.)

Here! Here! Brovary! Very near.

(A moment passes as he catches his breath.)

(Anna, 29, appears on stage. She has thrown a winter coat over a bathrobe. She should be the same actor who plays Anya.)

(She carries a stadium blanket with her.)

(They speak in English.)

ANNA

Issac, I saw you from my window. It's deathly cold out here. You're going to freeze if you don't come inside.

(Her quiet voice is muffled by the sound of cars honking; Isaac doesn't see or hear her.)

Here. This will help.

(She drapes a blanket over his shoulder. He stands up as if to defend himself. Looks at her.)

ISAAC

Anya?

ANNA

No. I'm Anna.

ISAAC

Anna?

ANNA

I didn't mean to frighten you.

ISAAC

It's just...nothing.

(Begins to realize where he is.)

Forgive me.

ANNA

I thought you might be cold so I brought...

ISAAC

You shouldn't have.

ANNA

Why don't you come inside with me?

ISAAC

I'll be fine. I do know you, don't I? But you look like someone else.

(Looks around.)

I think I've lost my way.

ANNA

**It's all right. You live right over there. I'm across the hall from you.
You gave me your key just in case. Remember?**

ISAAC

I did?

ANNA

Come. I'll make you some tea.

ISAAC

You're not Anya?

ANNA

No. I...I wish I was. No. Just Anna.

ISAAC

She called me Sergei. Like I remember, just before...

ANNA

You told me many times.

ISAAC

Sergei. Yes. And you are Anya.

ANNA

Come. Inside.

ISAAC

(Looking inside his satchel.)

Wait. I've saved such a gift for you.

From the last German train I blew up.

(Looks for it but his satchel is only filled with his yellow handwritten pages.)

Where is it? I saved it just for you...A German service medal, pure silver. I don't understand. Where...?

(Anna shakes her head.)

ANNA

You'll find it later. I'm sure. Later

ISAAC

But when? When, Anya?

ANNA

Please try and understand, I'm Anna. Not Anya. Come. Please.

ISAAC

(To Anna.)

Anna? How much time, Anna?

(In Russian.)

Skolko vremeni?

(Blanket starts to slip off Isaac, but Anna keeps it from falling off him. He starts crying, shivering, frightened. Anna holds him, trying to comfort him. He clutches the map tightly. (Mumbles in Yiddish as he clings to her with the map still in his hand.)

Vos? Vos?
(Lights fade)

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