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Drama by
ALEXANDER GALIN

Translation by ELISE THORON

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STARS IN THE MORNING SKY

"It is a theatrical performance of sensational, histrionic intensity, deeply moving, often funny, and boldly and brilliantly orchestrated." —Michael Coveney, Financial Times

"It is filled with a harsh—but not grim—reality. The evening is buoyed by its humanity and its sardonic humor. For the prostitutes there is no escape, but their dreams continue and the play's final stirring image, a rooftop shout of joy for the flame and the fortune of the Olympics, summarizes their residual hope." —Mel Gussow, The New York Times

Drama. By Alexander Galin. Translated by Elise Thoron.

Cast: 2m., 5w. Referring to the standing ovation given to the premiere of this play in England, the Financial Times critic said, "There was no other possible response. Galin's play is a new Lower Depths." The play is concerned with a small group of prostitutes who have been evicted from Moscow just before the tourists arrive for the 1980 Olympics. They've been sent to some dilapidated barracks in a mental asylum. There is strong dramatic interaction among these "Olympic Girls"—in a sad love affair between one of them and an escaped patient, and in the demands of some offstage clients, which have violent repercussions. All the while the runner with the Olympic flame who will pass their barracks is getting closer. One int. set. Approximate running time: 90 minutes. Code: S81.





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> < THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY

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(STARS IN THE MORNING SKY)

STARS IN THE MORNING SKY

A Dramatic Story in Two Acts For Two Men and Five Women

CHARACTERS

MARIA
ANNA
LORA
KLARA
ALEXANDER
VALENTINA
NIKOLAI

TIME: Summer, 1980

PLACE: A village 101 kilometers outside of Moscow

IMPORTANT BILLING AND CREDIT REQUIREMENTS

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ACT ONE

SCENE: The roof of the barracks is full of holes. The walls are cracked: A strong wind slowly blows open the door with a creak – for an instant a distant road unfolds over the hills. Then darkness returns. Dusty sunlight filters through the cracks and brings to life the tightly boarded windows and rows of old, rusted bunks. VALENTINA enters, secures the door and puts a suitcase down on a bed. LORA, with her travel bag in hand, remains in the entrance staring into the distance.

LORA. What more can I tell you about myself? Life is full of surprises... who said that? Voltaire, wasn't it? Way back when, my ancestors belonged to the nobility... Mama's family were scientists. Papa was very handsome – a cross between a gypsy and a Yugoslav. Imagine Mama, young, sophisticated – runs away from home with a juggler.

VALENTINA. What's your name again...

LORA. Mama named me Loren.

VALENTINA. Loren!

LORA. Grandfather called me Larisa. To close friends I'm Lora.

VALENTINA. Who's close?

LORA. Those who aren't far away.

VALENTINA. To everyone else you're Loren? Do we know your father's name?

- LORA. Dad was called Florien.
- VALENTINA. Loren and Florien. So you're another little blossom of the prairies... I don't know about the others, but you give off quite a smell... bees are circling... watch out, there's a hive not far from here...
- LORA. It's Chanel No. 5. Have a splash.
- VALENTINA. I'd only attract flies. Look... another one's turned up, like a golden bride. (Shoos a fly.) You live with your parents, Loren?
- LORA. You don't listen. I already told you. Mama ran away from home with a juggler. I was born on tour. She sent me to my grandmother.
- VALENTINA (following the fly). And where's your grand-mother?
- LORA. Grandmother lived with grandfather he was a professor of medicine. (VALENTINA has caught the fly and raises her fist up to her ear.)
- VALENTINA. Little girl's whimpering begging to be free. Your mother was an actress?
- LORA. Oh no, she got hooked up with the circus! First she helped the juggler, then the animal tamer. (Falls silent, fights back tears.)
- VALENTINA (smiles). And then? (Silence.) Was she eaten?
- LORA. Poor Mama was shredded by a tigress. Papa jumped off a cliff. He loved Mama very much. (Pulls out cigarettes and a lighter.)
- VALENTINA (sharply). Put it back!
- LORA. Hunh? What's wrong?
- VALENTINA. I told you, put it back! No smoking inside. If I catch you in here, I'll throw you out no ifs, ands or buts.
- LORA. But I always have a drag in bed before I get up...

- VALENTINA. Then make your bed outside, with a bucket of sand nearby...
- LORA. Tough conditions, ma'am...
- VALENTINA. All I need is a fire here. Stand in the door and smoke...
- LORA (lighting up). Look, I'm tired, lady. I only just got in.
- VALENTINA. Where do you live? Or don't you have an address?
- LORA. It's an amazing story. When my grandfather, the professor, died, his apartment was divided among the relatives... my grandmother and I were sent to Sudak... and I grew up there in a tangerine grove... then my grandmother died... left me her summer cottage well not exactly a cottage, but a two-story villa with an ocean view. Come visit.
- VALENTINA. You're registered in Sudak?
- LORA. Yes... I came to Moscow this summer to visit a friend, the one I was telling you about.
- VALENTINA. I see... a vagrant. (Suddenly in a loud voice.) What's the door doing wide open?
- LORA. You're asking me? (Pause.) You have a strange way of communicating with people...
- VALENTINA. Do you have a job, Loren? Or are you a parasite.
- LORA. My grandmother never worked, but my grandfather did a lot of good for people.
- VALENTINA. Why go on about your grandmother! What about you... Do you have a profession of some sort?
- LORA. I'm a trapeze artist en volante. That means flying.

 I get tossed about under a circus tent. I fly all in red,
 you know from one pair of hands to another.

- VALENTINA. Like a relay flag?
- LORA. Well on the whole, it's sad that a girl has to worry about feeding herself. My grandmother used to take me in her arms: 'Lora, Lora,' she'd say, 'Why does a woman need a profession? If she's a woman she's born to beautify the world.'
- VALENTINA. So you're beautifying the world? Planting flower beds?
- LORA. What a piercing mind you have, Valentina. You've been interrogating me for almost an hour now let's take a breather, all right? Here's my passport. It's real... you can test it with your teeth.
- VALENTINA. You bring any good stuff to sell? I need a support bra, size 38C, imported... well?
- LORA. This conversation is becoming most unpleasant... Valyusha, dearest, I've come here to rest. Brought a book... and some yarn.
- VALENTINA. You knit?
- LORA. Yes, to calm my nerves...
- VALENTINA. You're nerves will calm down plenty here. There's no one around. (Unexpectedly loud.) What's the door doing wide open!? (Silence.) Come on in, Loren... come. What are you looking at?
- LORA. Who's that boy? (Points to the yard.) Strange looking boy.
- VALENTINA (coming up to her). Who? That one? He's no boy, he's older than you think.
- LORA. One of your locals?
- VALENTINA. That's just... no one... we'll get rid of him. (Shoos him away.) Well come in, look around at least, see where you're going to live.
- LORA. My friend was promised a summer cottage.

VALENTINA. This is for summer. You can't live here in winter. They took out the radiators.

LORA (comes inside). It's a big place.

VALENTINA. They shut off the electricity... I'll rig up a light bulb somehow, so you won't fool around with candles.

LORA. So how do we heat water to wash our hair?

VALENTINA. Go to the woods... to the river. Remember, don't smoke. Don't burn anything. And tell your friend when she gets here I'll be on the look out. (Ironic.) Is she another one of these hothouse flowers?

LORA. Don't talk like that...

VALENTINA. I'm only allowing you to sleep here – no additional comforts. I won't say who you are or why you came. Just keep it quiet! No wild parties. No orgies. Doors are kept unlocked and I have all the keys. What's in the suitcase? Dresses? No one around here wears your size anyway. Look at you... a little painted doll. Why do men take chances for the likes of you? Men. All they need is one good look to tell who you are.

LORA. I hate remarks like that...

VALENTINA. My, how touchy we are. So sensitive! There's a heart clinic three stops from here. Maybe someone from there will take a chance. You and your girlfriend gonna raise the death rate around here. Don't worry! No one will drop by. It's not a very popular place... people don't come up here.

LORA. What was here before?

VALENTINA. Patients lived here – now they've built a new building for them down the road.

LORA. What kind of patients?

VALENTINA. Don't worry. Safe ones. They're just lacking something upstairs. They slept here and worked across the way, gluing little boxes. There are lots of beds – pick any one. Get settled in. How long are they making you stay here?

LORA. Stay? What are you talking about?

VALENTINA. Did Klepov send you to me?

LORA. I don't know... You'd better talk to my friend.

VALENTINA. All right, doll... grandmother, friend... I know all about you. They cleared you off the streets before the Olympics, so you won't ruin the picture... so you'd be out of sight...

LORA. We came here on our own, because we wanted a vacation.

VALENTINA. And if you hadn't wanted one, you'd have had to clear out anyway in twenty-four hours, or they'd send you back to Sudak on tour. Don't you dare bring anyone here! You'll just get drunk and burn down my barracks. (Loud.) Anna! Anna!

(There's a moan from a dark corner. A heap of rags stirs on one of the bunks. ANNA sits up.)

ANNA. Mama, I'm dying!

VALENTINA. Another Venus – how did I get myself into this! (Loud.) Anna, look what kind of a bird has flown our way.

ANNA. Mama... mama, dearest, I'm dying...

VALENTINA. Yesterday she was an orphan. Anna, I've brought you a roommate.

ANNA (weakly). I'm dying... I saw my mother, imagine... she leaned over the back of the bed above me... looking down. And before that I saw... it was like the

house had fallen down... there was a cloud of dry dust. A man came out – all white and bloody...

- VALENTINA. Your Mama's a virgin to this day. Maybe your papa bore you. Take some medicine and you'll feel better. (VALENTINA produces a bottle, which ANNA carefully hides under her pillow.) So this is where you're to stay, Loren. Will it do? (LORA takes out a big round pair of glasses and looks around the barracks.)
- ANNA. So what? They say in Africa there were two cases. You listening, Valya? This black man gave birth to a baby by a Caesarean. They kept it in an aquarium.

VALENTINA. What?

- ANNA. Some sailors told me this black man gave birth VALENTINA. Why an aquarium?
- ANNA. You're really dense, Valentina! They got money for showing the thing. The black man was from Indonesia or India...
- VALENTINA. Ever seen a map of the earth, you poor thing?
- ANNA. Have you ever seen evening light over Sicily? Or mid-day sun on the savannah?
- VALENTINA. Oh-oh! You're just as hot as the savan-nah!
- ANNA. Yes, there was this sailor from a freighter, "Simon the Vigilant,"... he brought me these post-cards, you know... carnivals, harvest festivals...
- VALENTINA. Why don't you show them to us?
- ANNA. I dropped them into a pot of food. Cooked the hell out of them. Someone probably ate Sicily... I told the sailor to bring back stockings mine are all worn out. No... stockings are for the wife, he says, for you the whole world.

VALENTINA. She's alive again. (To LORA.) Don't pay any attention. She'll have a drink and go back to sleep.

LORA. You know, Valya... my friend and I were looking to rent something a little more pleasant. Maybe one of your neighbors...

VALENTINA. Who would take you?

LORA. Do we really have to stay here? They told my friend to leave, but they didn't care where... isn't that right?

VALENTINA. I don't know... it's your problem. Leave... I won't talk you out of it. It's probably better. This one drinks, but she's not an eye-sore.

LORA. I'll wait for my friend, if you don't mind... she gave me your address, told me to wait.

VALENTINA. Wait then. (Goes up to ANNA, sits on the bed opposite.) Anna, why don't you tell me anything? (Pause.) Don't make like you're stupid. Did someone come?

ANNA. Hunh? Someone came... she came...

VALENTINA. Who?

ANNA. Some girl...

VALENTINA. Was her name Maria?

ANNA. Maria... that's the one...

VALENTINA. Is this her suitcase?

ANNA. Guess so... how would I know... (VALENTINA gets Maria's suitcase and lays it down on a bed.)

VALENTINA. This is her place. (Pause.) Tell me more, Annyuska.

ANNA. What's there to tell? I scrubbed the floor... cleaned your whole house... came here... had a drink... there was a swallow left from what you gave me to do the wash... from yesterday evening... I saved it specially... then I fell asleep... and there was my

mother wandering around the yard... with a bucket of cement... and I couldn't see the house because they'd smashed it all up... and I'd never seen that man before either...

VALENTINA. Where is this Maria?

ANNA. How would I know? What am I, tied to her? Your son came and they up and left.

VALENTINA. Why didn't you tell me? All this time you go on with your nonsense. Did you see where they went?

ANNA. No, I was scrubbing the porch...

VALENTINA. Didn't I give you orders? Give me that bottle! (Grabs the bottle from under the pillow.)

ANNA. What, I'm supposed to protect your kid from her... is that my job?

VALENTINA. Where did they go?

ANNA. Down... to the river. Give me the wine! I'll burn this place down!

VALENTINA. I'll burn you!

ANNA (pulls out matches). Nothing's going to happen to me... but you're the fire warden, you'll be in trouble!

VALENTINA. Put those matches away!

ANNA. Scared? Give me back my wine! You don't have the right.

VALENTINA. I have every... you filthy... (VALENTINA grabs Anna's matches.)

ANNA. You'll pay for the insults. I have a witness. (To LORA.) You heard that? Back me up... (LORA doesn't pay any attention to them. She stares out the open door.)

VALENTINA. Come on, get your rags packed! I pitied you... let you stay here for nothing! Now get going!

ANNA. Like hell you did! You have your interests... Klepov is happy - you watch us for him... he has a clean district... and Kolya, that son of yours, is under his orders too... What's Kolya doing out here anyway? What if I tell them your son was mending the roof while he was on duty?

VALENTINA. What are you babbling on about, you idiot?

ANNA. I only say what I see... nothing more...

VALENTINA. Shut up!

ANNA. Me? What's it to me... it's your roof...

VALENTINA. Remember, in the future, unless you want me to tie you to Maria's leg, you better stick to her and don't let her out of your sight! Here's her suitcase!

ANNA. Why mix me up in your problems?

VALENTINA. Find them I said...

ANNA. I won't go... your son works for the police... I don't wanna pick a fight with him. Give back the wine.

VALENTINA. Earn it first.

ANNA. Then give back the matches... there's no light – I'll break my ass on the bed at night...

VALENTINA. Find them! You hear?

ANNA. All right. Give me that wine.

VALENTINA. Find them and tell them that her place is here in the barracks and not in my house. (Exits. ANNA gets up, goes to the door, watches VALENTINA go and returns to her bed.)

ANNA (animated). Bitch! She got off work early 'cause of that girl. I was washing her floor yesterday... or to-day... that's right... this morning. And there's a knock-knock on the door. In walks a little skeleton... eyes on the floor... hands by her side: 'Hello, my name is Maria. Are you Kolya's mother?' No, I say, I'm the

maid... of course I didn't really say that... I said she was out. 'Call Nikolai!' And he's right there. Been waiting all along.

LORA. What Nikolai?

ANNA (even more animated). The landlady's son, get it? His beat is in our district – the Savelov train station. I'd run into him before this... pulled me in a couple of times... big healthy stud... took all the girl's things, even this suitcase, into the house. First there was a little pss-pss-pss from behind the wall... giggles... then they head for the woods... looks like the little skeleton is also one of the Olympic girls. (Silence. ANNA waits for a response.) Well.. the tattooed ring on her finger... the look in her eyes. Are you an Olympic girl?

LORA. What?

ANNA. People call us the Olympic girls... I'm an Olympic girl. Klepov told me not to show up before the games are over. Who are you? Local whore, or you work with foreigners, right? God how I hate those "gentlemen." I could fuck someone for a drink as long as he's one of ours... why're you so quiet?

LORA. What do you want, you old bag?

ANNA. Old bag!? Watch your mouth! When I wash up I'll be younger than you are. How old are you anyway? (LORA is silent, pulls out a cigarette.) Put it back! No smoking here!

LORA. Oh yeah?

ANNA. Yeah! Wanna smoke, get out! It's not like with your "gentlemen"... we have rules here. If the fire warden sees - it's my ass. I'm in charge of this barrack... I'm the boss here.

LORA. Yeah?

ANNA. Yeah! Put that thing away!