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## ***A Wedding in the Village: Synopsis***

(Tragedy in one act; no chorus, small ensemble, chamber orchestra)

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*A poor, bombed-out Eastern European town in the mid-20th century. Except for Scene 1, the action is continuous.*

### **Scene 1: A roadside at dawn**

The roadside is littered with dead and wounded young men. A disheveled young civilian scavenges among them and extracts a set of identity papers. He reads the name and the other information on the papers over and over. "Marko" tries to memorize the facts of his new identity. He repeats some liturgy as the light fades to black. (Action from here is continuous.)

### **Scene 2: The forester's hut on a country estate. Also storage for the wine harvest. A year later.**

The forester and Marja, "Marko's" beloved, are carrying bricks and cement. With the threat of enemy occupation looming, they are preparing supplies for "Marko," now working as a vintner on the estate, to hide the wine. Set-up for "Marko" entrance. Enters with cart and wine, etc. Forester exits on some pretext, to leave the lovers alone. "Marko" and Marja decide to announce their engagement despite the hardship of occupation that awaits.

**Scene change / Interlude** (with chorus voiceover offstage): Marja and "Marko" change jackets a vista, hut slides away, and the church and altar slide in. The blessing of the priest, followed by the ringing of bells and the announcement of the marriage going further and further away, then coming closer, then drowned out by rhythmic pounding:

### **Scene 3: A factory / A church (ENTIRE SCENE ATTACHED BELOW)**

A lineup of four women on the assembly line. The bell rings for break. Three of the women start out, but Stefa keeps working.. One of co-workers, Anna tries to convince Stefa to take her break. Stefa, whose son Marko was abducted to a labor camp, refuses, saying work is the only cure. Anna joins her colleagues outside. The sound of the engagement announcement is a ray of sunlight in the gloom of their lives. Anna listens carefully goes back in and fetches Stefa. When Stefa hears the wedding announcement, she flares up at Anna: "How can you make me listen to that when you know Marko will never have a wedding?!" Anna urges her to listen more carefully, then reveals to her it is an announcement of Marko's wedding. Stefa is riveted, almost no expression on her face. She gets her coat and leaves work. Crossfade to:

**Scene 4: Split scene / duet**

Stefa entering her miserable little house, immediately starts baking a ceremonial bread for the engagement. She stops: "Why hasn't Marko told me he's alive, much less invited me to his wedding?" She forces herself to continue rolling dough.

Crossfade to "Marko," now alone and building false walls to hide the precious wine. Thoughts overtake him while he works. He can scarcely believe his new life, yet fear grips him.

Add lights back on Stefa. The two scenes continue simultaneously. Stefa: "Unless...something is wrong. Unless something is very wrong....." She finishes the bread and strides out.

**Scene 5: The general store in the village..**

Stefa enters the general store in "Marko's" town and pretend to inquire innocently about her son. The store owners tell her is the assistant to the forester on a country estate just outside of town. She takes two expensive bottles of wine from a basket. The store owner apologizes: because of the bombings, that is the last harvest and the last few bottles, therefore so expensive. Stefa smiles, saying if they are so rare, she must buy them for Marko and his bride as part of the engagement present. The store owner laughs and says that's taking the mountain to Mohammed: that wine comes from the estate where Marko works. In fact, Marko is the assistant vintner. But Marko never knew anything about wine. She leaves the wine behind and exits.

**Scene 6: The mayor's office, immediately after**

Stefa demands that the mayor's office conduct an investigation of "Marko." Musical transition expresses the terror of the ensuing investigation, simultaneous with the preparations for the wedding. The mayor's office slides away as agents are going through files and file cabinets, phones are ringing and official voices giving orders and asking questions.

**Sc. 7: The next day: The church, Marko and Marja's wedding.**

As the happy couple prepare to exchange vows,. Stefa and officials enter, unmask "Marko" as a member of the enemy, and the altar is quickly turned into a gallows. Marja is dragged off and the guests run away. The stage goes black except for the gallows. As the hanging is about to take place, guilt begins to overtake Stefa. She suddenly realizes what she has done. She covers her mouth, but too late. Blackout. End of opera.

**Scene 3: A Factory / A Church**

*(The factory comes into view: stage left, four women working at identical machines on a gray work table. Stage right, a run-down "break area" outside the door to the factory, with one beat-up chair, a large garbage can, etc. The factory music keeps mounting in volume and rhythmic intensity until a brash sounding bell (more like an alarm) sounds, signaling a break. The factory music*

*continues, but in miniature; all the women shut down their machines, except Stefa who keeps working. Anna last to exit, starts SR, turns back:)*

Anna

Stefa.

*(Nothing. Anna has been through this before.)*

Stefa.

Stefa

What?

Anna

Break time.

*(Nothing)*

Anna

You need to stop.

Stefa

What for?

Anna

You need it.

Stefa

*(without looking at her, and still working)* How do you know what I need?

*(At the same time on SR, the church slides in and envelops Marko and Marya, the Priest on the altar( that will later serve as a gallows for the hanging)  
Outside, the factory, Anna + 2 other factory co-workers, smoking.*

Co-worker 3

Again?

Anna

*(crossing outside and lighting a cigarette)*  
The same every day.

Co-worker 4

She never stops.

Co-worker 3

She *can't* stop.

Co-worker 4  
Work dulls the pain.

Co-worker 3  
Drowns it out.

Priest  
*(recitative?) My children, this was not our custom....*

Anna  
She can't forget.

Priest  
.... to wed so quickly....

Co-worker 3  
Who can forget?

Priest  
... but these times defy reason. (Beat.) All your parents are gone ...

*After exchange with Anna, Stefa (who hasn't stopped working), suddenly cries out; her finger was caught under a stamping mechanism. The factory music stops. Stefa looks around to see if anyone heard her, or more important, that there was a glitch in her work. She turns off her machine. She looks at her finger, then away from it.)*

Priest  
... Were they here, they would surely rejoice ...

Stefa  
*(to herself, but talking to Anna and the rest of the world)* You don't know.

Priest  
... so we must bend to the times ...

*(She looks SR where Anna exited.)*

Stefa  
You don't know ...

Priest  
Let the engagement begin ...

You don't know...- *(suddenly louder)* how it hurts!

Priest

... Let the call *go* out throughout the villages:

Stefa

*(then softer again, like a litany)* ... losing him ...

Priest

"... Has Marko or Marya been married before?"

Stefa

... losing him, *(overlapping priest, suddenly saying the name)* Marko.....!

Priest

If a spouse should appear ...

Stefa

*(saying his name with difficulty)* ... Marko ...

Priest

... Or if you be not of our faith ...

Stefa

...losing him ...

Priest

... then this marriage shall not be ....

*(Churchbells.)*

A girl's voice in or near the church

Marko Buyarin ... Marya Derchova ....

then echoed by another voice

Marko Buyarin ... Marya Derchova ....

*(Fadeout on church. The church slides away / flies out)*

and then another voice:

Marko Buyarin ... Marya Derchova ....

Then all three voices  
(as if the call is going out throughout the villages and countryside☺)

Marko Buyarin ... Marya Derchova ....

*(Lights come up on the three factory women as the call continues simultaneously. They look up while smoking:)*

I'd forgotten that sound. Co-worker 3

How long since we heard it? Co-worker 4

It feels like years. Co-worker 3

*(with a smile)* No not that long. Anna

Offstage voices, echoing  
Marko Buyarin and Marya Derchova.....

*(Three women again, overlapping)*

(ironically) Twice a year ... a wedding. Co-worker 4

... Every once in a while... Anna

...a wedding. Co-worker 3

Good luck to them ... Co-worker 4

Do I know the parents? Co-worker 3

... They'll need it. Co-worker 4

*(During the preceding Stefa has been looking at the open door. Now she joins the other women outside, knowing they will remark on this, she pretending there is nothing special about it. She stands or leans DS in the doorway, away from the other women.)*

Even you. Anna

*(without looking at her)* Even me what? Stefa

Need a break. Anna

*(still without turning around)* A cigarette. Stefa

*(Silence. All four smoke.)*

They may get in some sugar soon. Co-worker 3

How about butter? Anna

Let's bake a cake. *(chuckles sarcastically)* Co-worker 4

*(picking up the ironic mood)* To celebrate. Co-worker 3

*(chiming in but still not turning around)* Let's bake it now. Stefa

*(women snicker)*

Right now... Anna and Co-worker 4

*(Silence and smoking again)*

*(to co-worker 4, without much emotion)* How is your husband? Co-worker 3

He needs the medicine. Co-worker 4



Co-worker 3  
Still waiting.

Co-worker 4  
Still waiting.

*(Beats. Co-worker 4 gets up as if to exit into factory. The wedding call starts up again, this time from another part of the stage, and echoes among several voices, this time including men's voices. Stefa pretends not to notice. The wedding call echoes around.)*

Anna  
There it is again.

Co-worker 3  
It's coming closer. The word's (getting out) –

Stefa  
*(interrupting)* I hate that sound.

Co-worker 4  
Oh, Stefa ...

Stefa  
Don't "Oh, Stefa" me ...

Co-worker 4  
*(louder, on purpose, sarcastic)* Oh, Stefa!

*(beat.)*

Stefa  
*(under her breath, but loud enough for the others to hear)* You haven't lost what I lost.

Co-worker 3  
*(showing emotion for the first time, but not looking at Stefa)* I have lost something.

Anna  
*(annoyed with Stefa, under her breath, reminding Stefa of something she already knows)* She lost her husband at the front.

Stefa  
*(too loud)* She can get another husband. I can't get another son.

*Stefa and co-worker 3 snuff out their cigarettes and start to exit angrily into the factory, but collide at the door. Stefa counters SL and co-worker 3 exits into factory. Wedding call starts up again. Co-worker 4 puts out cigarette and exits into factory. Marko's name echoes around, very close this time. Anna X to Stefa.)*

Stefa (to Anna)

*(sensing her approaching)* If you don't like what I say, just leave me alone.

*(Anna stops, distracted by what sounds like Marko's name. Beat. She listens. Stefa snuffs out cigarette and XR to exit back into factory.)*

Anna

*(without turning to Stefa)* No, wait.

*(Stefa looks at Anna impatiently)*

I could swear ... that was Marko's name. *(Stefa looks at her blankly)* Marko's name ... in the wedding announcement ....

*(Stefa looking at Anna blankly)*

It sounds like ... "Marko Buyarin."

*(Stefa riveted)*

Listen....

*(both women listening)*

"Marko Buyarin." *(looks at Stefa)* Is it true?

Stefa

It can't be true.

*(Beats., The two women listen to the call echoing around them.)*

Anna

Stefa, listen. It's Marko ... getting married ....

Stefa

*(confused)* Marko is dead ...

*(Beat.)*

Anna

*(stronger)* I think ... I think he's alive ...

*(Beat.)*

*(Bell/Alarm sounds as at the top of scene, signaling "back to work." Anna hesitates, then puts out her cigarette and starts back in. Stefa riveted on the sound of Marko's name, does not hear the bell, does not move.)*

Anna

Stefa. Back to work.

*(Nothing.)*

Come.

*(Beat. Stefa suddenly put out her cigarette, determinedly exits back into the factory, Anna follows her. Lights remain dark in factory. Stage is empty as the wedding call resounds. Beats. Suddenly Stefa re-enters from factory, wearing her threadbare coat and hat and carrying her beat-up bag, and exits SR determinedly.)*

Anna's voice (offstage)

Stefa!

*(Sound of Anna running toward the door)*

Anna's voice

*(Closer to the doorway but still offstage) Stefa!*

*(End of scene 3.)*

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