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HOMELAND

RANDY VADER AND JAY ROUSE

DRAMA COMPANION WRITTEN BY ROSE ASPINALL

CAST:

Anya Petrov– 14, youngest daughter of Ivan and Zoya

Yulia Petrov– 17, oldest daughter of Ivan and Zoya

Zoya Petrov– Russian immigrant, wife of Ivan

Ivan Petrov– Russian immigrant

Em Walker– 14, Anya’s classmate

Grace Walker– Em’s mother

Teacher– Anya and Em’s history teacher

Extras– classmates of Anya and Em

I’ve chosen a Russian ethnicity for the immigrant family in this drama. However, should you be so fortunate as to be part of a multicultural group, then you may want to take advantage of this by using actors of the ethnic group available to you. With just a few adjustments, you can personalize this drama and make it even more meaningful for your specific group. Of course, it will be necessary to change the names of the family. It will also be necessary to change some of the references that are specifically Russian; the samovar, chai, etc.

Scenes 1, 2, 5 and 6 take place in the home of Zoya and Ivan Petrov. Although sparsely furnished, it has an Old World, homey charm. A Russian samovar would be a wonderful addition if you can find one. If not, teacups will suffice (no tea bags) and the samovar can be assumed.

Scene 3 takes place in Anya and Em’s history class. With just a few desks, you can achieve the effect of a classroom or if you have room for something more elaborate, add a teacher’s desk, a chalkboard (with some history lesson/assignments written on it) and an American flag.

Scene 4 is in the lunchroom at Anya and Em’s school. Again a few tables with chairs will work. Have students sitting with lunch trays sitting at other tables eating and talking among themselves but keep the focus on Anya and Em.

SCENE 1

begins after This Land is Your Land (before the narration on page 24)

Mama is rolling out dough to cut into noodles. She wears an apron. Papa is still at work. Yulia and Anya are at a table doing homework. Anya is frustrated. She erases her paper furiously making exasperated noises. Finally, Yulia can take no more.

Yulia: (exasperated, raising her eyebrows) Anya! You are having difficulty? Ask for help!

Looks up at her sister frowning, shoves her paper away, crosses her arms on the table in front of her, drops her head into her arms and begins to cry.

Yulia, sorry that she spoke harshly to her sister speaks more gently. She sets aside her own work and touches the top of her sister's head.

Yulia: Anya, don't cry. I'm sorry. Show me your paper. Perhaps I can help.

Anya: (Not raising her head, sullen) It won't do any good Yulia. I can't get it.

Yulia: Anya, don't say that. No quitting.

Anya: Why not?

Yulia: You know why.

Anya: I do not!

Yulia: (*Coaxing*) Anya, we talked about this. Now come on.

Anya: It's not fair. Why do I have to work extra hard?

Mama puts down her work and marches over to Anya.

Mama: Sit up! (*She pushes the paper back to Anya and firmly lays the pencil in front of her*) What is wrong? Listen to your sister. Get your paper and work!

Anya: (*Objecting*) But Mama.

Mama: (*Holding up a finger of warning*) Anya Petrov! Work! No more words.

Mama turns and walks back to her cooking.

Yulia looks sympathetically at her sister but says nothing. She goes back to work on her own paper.

There is silence except for a few snuffles from Anya. The door opens and Papa enters. He carries a lunch box. He is weary and sits down heavily.

Yulia: Papa! *(Pecking him on the cheek, she reaches for his lunch box)*

Papa looks at Anya, who remains sullen, but does not say anything.

Mama: *(Drying her hands on her apron, she reaches for a plate of food that she has set aside. She places it at the table where the girls are doing their school work.)* You're late tonight. Come, sit. I saved dinner. How was work?

Papa: Difficult, our shift was short some men. We had to work our job and the job of the men who didn't come in.

Mama: There is extra money for this?

Papa: No, for such work, I get to keep my job.

Mama: *(Sighs)* Yes, well, we'll be grateful that you have work then.

Papa: And the strength to do it.

Papa bows his head and silently offers thanks before he begins eating. He picks up his fork, takes a bite and chews thoughtfully. He studies Anya who is doing her best to avoid his gaze.

Papa: Yulinka, tell me about your day at school, it was *(searching for the word)* successful?

Yulia: Yes Papa.

Papa: *(With his eyes still on Anya)* Good... I see, and your sister, her day, was it successful also?

Yulia: *(Slowly, eyes on Anya)* No Papa, Anya is having a difficult day.

Papa: Anya, your sister thinks that this has been a difficult day for you.

Anya: *(Eyes downcast)* Yes Papa. Yulia is right.

Papa: I see, and can you tell me why?

Anya: *(Trying to be brave)* I tried to talk to the teacher today but *(dissolving into tears)* oh Papa, I'll never understand this, never.

Papa wipes his mouth on a napkin and stands pushing the chair back.

Papa: *(Calmly, holding out his hand)* Anushka, come.

He walks to the couch. He sits her down, and then sits down himself.

Papa: Now, tell me your heart Anushka.

Anya: Papa, teacher doesn't understand ...

Interrupting and laying a finger across her lips

Papa: Anya, I said tell me your heart. Do not accuse your teacher.

Anya: *(Thinking)* Papa, I want to do well in my school work.

Papa: *(Nodding)* Yes. Go on.

Anya: When the teacher calls on me, I don't answer quickly enough. She calls on another student and I am marked down. Papa, she speaks too fast.

Papa: Anya, is she a good teacher? Compassionate?

Anya: *(Slowly)* Yes, Papa. *(pause)* She has a pretty smile.

Papa: And you believe she wants you to succeed?

Anya nods her head affirmatively

Papa: Good, very good. Then we will find a way to help her help you. Yes?

Anya: How Papa?

Papa: You must promise me that you will be patient Anya.

Anya: *(Eyes down)* Yes Papa. I will try.

Papa: Good. Now go, finish your work. Let me talk to your Mama.

Anya: But Papa...

Papa: Anya, do your best.

Anya: Yes, Papa.

Lights out

SCENE 2

begins after Livin in the Homeland (before narration on page 47)

Later that evening, the girls have gone to bed. Papa and Mama are sitting at the kitchen table. Papa pulls out an envelope and slides it across the table to Mama. She pulls out his paycheck from it and looks at it and nods.

Mama: *(matter of fact)* Yulia needs shoes. We cannot wait any longer. Maybe this month we send a little less back home?

Papa: No, I will find extra work. Maybe one of the men has work at home that needs doing. A handyman is always useful, no?

Mama: You work too much already. I'll buy less at the grocery.

Papa: No, you already buy so little. I'll take care of it. Send the money home. Tell Yulia, we buy shoes next week. Now, Anya...

Mama: Yes

Papa: She is a bright girl. We talk to her teacher.

Mama: She hides at the back of the classroom to keep the teacher from calling her.

Papa: She should sit in the front. It will help her learn better.

Mama: She's afraid. She hasn't made any friends. She eats her lunch alone. The children in her class all know each other. They don't need a friend from a foreign country who won't talk to them.

Papa: She only needs time.

Mama: It's not like home. She is a different girl here. Today, when she came home from school, she told me she heard a teacher talking. The teacher said foreign students were square pegs in round holes. When she came home she asked, what did it mean? I couldn't tell her. They think she doesn't belong.

Papa: These things take time. People are different on the outside but inside here *(taps his chest)* we are all the same. They will learn. *(Papa reaches across the table and covers Mama's hand with his.)* It will be all right, Zoya. Do you regret our choice? You remember the good things of our country but have you forgotten what it was like?

She turns her face away and coughs before she answers.

Mama: *(Head up, bravely)* I have not forgotten. I won't complain. Anya and Yulia will manage. I grieve for Papa. I cannot bear to think of his face. We came ahead and he and Mama left behind. Maybe we will never see them again.

Papa: Maybe, but they would not trade us places.

Mama: That only makes it harder.

Papa: *(Firmly)* It will get better.

Mama begins coughing again as lights fade

SCENE 3

begins after Salute to the Armed Forces (before narration on page 62)

This scene is in Anya's history classroom. Class time is nearly over and the teacher is standing in front of the class finishing a discussion on current events. Anya is sitting at the back of the classroom.

Teacher: I want you to come back ready to discuss what events led directly or indirectly to the Civil War. Why was it called the first modern war? There were certainly people then who believed that the decision to go to war was wrong. Be ready to discuss that, in light of current events. *(pause)* Okay, class, that's enough Civil War for today. *(She looks at her watch)* Before I let you go, next Monday is Veterans Day. There will be an assembly in the afternoon. This is an important day to thank and honor all veterans who have served in the military. This weekend, may I suggest, that if you know someone who has served our country either in the past or who may still be serving, go out of your way to show them your appreciation. Are there any of you who currently have a family member serving in the military?

Students look around the room. A couple of students raise their hands. One of the students is Em.

Teacher: On behalf of this class and the school please convey our gratitude. Okay, class dismissed.

The students get out of their seats and file out. Anya gathers her books and organizes her notes while exiting. She inadvertently walks right into the back of Em who is standing by her desk gathering her books also. Books and papers scatter. Anya is flustered.

Anya: *(Embarrassed)* Oh! I'm sorry. Please excuse... *(Her voice trails off as she stoops and quickly retrieves the papers and books)*

Em: *(Regaining her composure)* It's all right, don't worry about it. No harm done. *(There is an awkward pause. Em frowns and is a little embarrassed.)* I'm sorry, what's your name?

Anya: *(Looking down)* Anya *(pausing)* Anya Petrov.

Em: *(Smiling)* I'm Em. *(Another awkward pause and then talks in a rush to fill in the awkwardness)* Nice to meet you. Well, we didn't just meet, I guess. I mean, I should know you, at least your name, 'cause we're in the same class, but... I guess I just forgot or something. *(giving up the embarrassing explanation with a big sigh)* Are you going to lunch now?

Anya nods affirmatively

Em: Would you like to eat with me? You don't have to. I mean if you're eating with someone else that's okay.

Anya: *(Smiling shyly)* Oh no, I'm not eating with anyone.

Em: Oh well, good, I brought my lunch so...

Anya: Me too. *(She holds up her brown paper sack and smiles)*

Em: School lunches are terrible.

Anya: *(Grinning)* Yeah, terrible.

Lights fade

SCENE 4

begins after Count the Cost (before narration on page 73)

The scene opens with the girls settling in at one of the tables in the school lunch room. Set up a couple of tables in another area of the stage with some students sitting at the tables eating.

Anya deposits her papers and books on the table. Something about one of the papers catches Anya's eye. She picks it up and realizes immediately that it is not hers.

Anya: I think this is yours. *(She extends the paper to Em)*

Em: *(A little emotional)* Oh, thank you. I must have dropped it when we had our collision. I sure don't want to lose this. It's from my Dad

Anya: He doesn't live with you?

Em: Well, yeah, but not right now. He's in the military and he's out of the country. I miss him.

Em opens her lunch bag and pulls out a sandwich and a bag of chips. She opens the chips and offers some to Anya who reaches in and takes one.

Anya: That must be hard.

Em: *(Shrugging)* Yeah, I'm used to it though. Dad's been in the service my whole life. We live with my grandparents. It's easier for my mom when Dad has to be gone. They help take care of my little brother while mom's at work. *(picking up half of her sandwich and offering it to Anya)* Here, share my sandwich? I can't eat the whole thing. Anyway, my mom is a nurse and she works nights at St. Joe's Hospital. That's why my grandma and grandpa help her take care of us. They drive us to church and youth group and stuff when mom can't.

Anya: *(Reaching for the sandwich)* Thanks. You live with your grandparents? I really miss my grandparents.

Em: Where are they?

Anya: Russia. They didn't get to come when we moved to America.

Em: Oh, do they want to move here?

Anya: Well, yeah, but it's complicated.

Em: Yeah, I guess it would be. When will you see them again?

Anya: I don't know *(pause)* maybe never.

Em: *(Stricken)* Anya! That would be terrible. At least I know I get to see my Dad again.

Anya: *(Shrugging)* We knew it when we left. It's the way it is.

Em: Are you homesick?

Anya: Yes, but things are better for us here. There are so many things I miss though. It feels like... like I have no roots, like they're cut off. You understand?

Em: I think so. I know I'd be homesick.

Anya: I miss having chai with my grandparents. Americans do not drink chai like in Russia.

Em: Chai?

Anya: Tea... nobody here uses samovar, all the tea here, it's in bags... you dip... *(Makes motion of dipping tea bag in a mug)*

Em: *(Laughing)* How else do you do it? What's a samovar?

Anya: You heat water inside. There is a... spout and tea is in the top. Very strong. You add water to it to drink it. We drink tea all day.

Em: It's better than tea bags?

Anya: Oh yes, very good. Maybe you would like to come over and try it sometime?

Em: *(Smiling)* Sure. Hey, let me give you my phone number. That way you can call me.

Anya: Okay! Em?

Em: What?

Anya: Thank you.

Em: For what?

Anya: Lunch.

Em: Lunch?

Anya: Yes, lunch. Best lunch since I came to America.

Lights out

SCENE 5

begins after Let Justice Roll on (before narration on page 87)

Anya and Yulia have just arrived home from school. As they come through the door they see that their Papa is already home. Anya is so excited about her new friendship that she doesn't realize that something is wrong or Papa would still be at work. She doesn't notice that he is just sitting in the chair looking distressed. She comes in all in a rush and drops her books on the table talking the whole time.

Anya: Papa, guess what? After history class today, I had an accident but it turned out to be a good accident and now I have a friend. She's nice. I bumped into her and our books fell all over the floor. Her name is Em. It's a nice name, don't you think? She asked me to eat lunch and I invited her to come for chai. Is that alright? She's so nice and...

Yulia puts her hand on her sister's arm to get her attention so she will stop talking.

Yulia: What's wrong, Papa? Why are you home from work?

Papa: It's Mama, she's sick.

Yulia: Sick? What do you mean sick? Where is Mama?

Papa: I don't know. They took her to the hospital.

Yulia: What?

Papa: I got a call at work from someone. When I arrived home, she is not here. They took her— a neighbor said the ambulance took her. I don't know where.

Yulia: We need to find a way to get to the hospital.

Papa: There is no insurance, what are we to do?

Yulia: Papa, we need to get to the hospital first. Then we will figure out the rest.

Papa: How Yulia?

Yulia: I don't know. What hospital? Did they tell you what hospital?

Papa: It was a man's name... Joe, St. Joe,

Anya: Papa! Em's mom works at St Joe's. She's a nurse, maybe she can help.

Papa: Anya, we don't know her. She is a stranger.

Anya: Let me try Papa. I have her phone number. What can it hurt?

Papa: *(Resigned)* Nothing Anya, nothing. Call her.

Anya reaches in her pocket for the phone number that Em gave to her, finds it and begins to dial.

Anya: *(Nervous)* Hello? This is Anya. May I speak to Em? Anya... Anya Petrov. Yes, I will wait.

Yulia and Papa stand there watching Anya and waiting for Em to come to the phone.

Anya: Em, this is Anya. Hi. I'm sorry, I need some help, some information. They took my mom to the hospital. *(Pause for Em to answer)* We don't know. *(Starting to cry)* We don't know anything. Do you think that she might be able to find out where they took her? We need to know what is wrong. *(Pause)* No, we have no car. We don't know how to find the hospital. *(Pause)* Yes, Zoya Petrov. Oh thank you. It means so much. *(Pause)* What? *(Pause)* Uh, 35th and Cermak Ave. Why?

Anya: Oh Em, I don't know... are you sure? *(Pause)* Okay, thank you very much!

Anya hangs up the phone and looks at Papa and Yulia.

Anya: Em's mama is at work. She is calling her. Perhaps, they can find out information about Mama. Em is on her way here with her grandfather. They will drive us to the hospital.

Papa: But we can not pay them.

Anya: Papa, it's alright, she doesn't do it for payment. She does it for friendship.

Papa: But you only just met her.

Anya: I know Papa. They are kind people.

Papa hangs his head in relief. Anya and Yulia go to him and put their arms around him.

Lights out