

C 1

ELEPHANT

by

JEREMY PATRICK LONG

B.A., University of British Columbia, 1971

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF  
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF ARTS

in the Department

of

Creative Writing

We accept this thesis as conforming to the  
required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

April, 1973

In presenting this thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements for an advanced degree at the University of British Columbia, I agree that the Library shall make it freely available for reference and study. I further agree that permission for extensive copying of this thesis for scholarly purposes may be granted by the Head of my Department or by his representatives. It is understood that copying or publication of this thesis for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission.

Department of CREATIVE WRITING

The University of British Columbia  
Vancouver 8, Canada

Date APRIL 26, 1973

## ABSTRACT

Elephant, a collection of material produced during the past two years, attempts to create an environment within which the persona of the writer may exist without benefit of a corporeal reality. It becomes an environment of memory.

By definition, the genres of drama and poetry must be presented to an audience if they are to succeed in their avowed purpose of communication between creator and audience. It is only the medium of presentation which distinguishes between the two genres. The drama is presented in the "live" medium of the stage, whereas poetry is presented by the "dead" or inanimate Gutenberg technology. In this particular instance, both genres are presented within the same medium, the thesis. They are therefore similar components of a unique environment.

The environment of Elephant, can only be that of memory, as it was written in the past from material rooted in memory, the memory of the persona and the collective memory of the environment in which he exists. It is not "now", it is "then".

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

TITLE.....	i
ABSTRACT.....	ii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGMENT.....	iv

## POEMS - PART ONE:

I. Our Lady of the Rocks.....	1
II. 2-Our Lady of the Rocks.....	3
III. Habitat.....	5
IV. Refraction.....	6
V. Preparation.....	7
VI. Trophy.....	8
VII. Collapse.....	9
VIII. Continuance.....	10
IX. The Name.....	11
X. Face Under Water.....	12
XI. Wound.....	13
XII. Patsy Jean Oregon.....	14
XIII. The Apathy.....	15
XIV. Lighthouse Barbara.....	16

## THE FINAL PERFORMANCE OF VASLAV NIJINSKY

SAINT MORITZ-DORF, 1919.....	17
I. List of Characters.....	18
II. Act I.....	20
Act I - scene 2.....	33
Act I - scene 3.....	41
III. Act II - scene 1.....	44
Act II - scene 2.....	60
Act II - scene 3.....	62
IV. Act III.....	68

## POEMS - Part Two:

I. Savage.....	75
II. Seeds of the Water.....	77
III. Sleeper.....	78
IV. Driftwood.....	80
V. An Older Poem (For Barbara).....	82

TABEL OF CONTENTS (Con't)

FOOTNOTES.....83

BIBLIOGRAPHY.....84

VITA

# ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Mrs. Kathleen Long for the time

Dr. Douglas Bankson for the energy.

OUR LADY OF THE ROCKS

## 1. Bella Donna

we lay day  
breaking on coasts

a horizon bloody  
enough to be virgin  
we lay together  
puddle of water  
amid the rock  
Bella Donna we lay

this rock supports moss  
insect existence in the ice  
preserved for the future

the past falls  
deep as night into the vast  
invisible belly of the horizon

Bella Donna  
concerned with temperature  
while a new age marches  
down mountain to sea

and we in paths  
cracked in the cliff  
by now

Now Bella Donna  
the minutes of your life  
stand sentry to your sleep  
for in the morning cries  
as you look blind  
folded into rock

Fire  
a horizon of riflemen  
Cassandra executed for her crime

Bella Donna we lay  
together in a morning  
too distant for us



2. Bella Donna man lion

climbs a jungle

to this cave

morning with a mane of light

drags a dark carcass

the ocean flames to death

Bella Donna beautiful

lady in the rock

your poison your

child your

blood burns across

a morning dying

Bella Donna beautiful

lady dying in mourning

Bella Donna the dead

child is yours is

not the birth of morning

is not a corpse  
in a rock coffin  
Bella Donna

the poison  
to a child dead  
the history of you

## HABITAT

The oasis wastes  
itself entertaining

useless caravans of traders  
and camels.

All the available water  
drains away

to the other side of the world.

The palm tree

then, the cypress  
dig up their roots

and dissolve,  
on their knees.

Wind comes out of the  
surrounding sand.

The desert collects.

## REFRACTION

The reflection of one  
or less, we had  
Last night, is gone.

I spilled into distance  
Between mirror and image,  
While you lay amid gasps of light  
And shadow faulted your face  
Into mountains too distant  
for morning.

## PREPARATION

Nothing is left to hunt.

The wilderness holds

Only the empty skin,

Hung, frozen

In the treeless air.

Below, the carcass,

Shapeless against the tundra,

Howls into the voiceless night.

Snared between the teeth

And the appetite to kill,

I must take

The animal with me.

## TROPHY

I am clear; prepared  
to vanish  
with the gaunt issue of  
consciousness.

Pinned, brittle  
against the wall,  
the skin of the single  
celled insect  
whose track wasted  
in the wadded air  
after I had killed  
him,  
because he was behind me  
and thick with the blood  
of my passage through.

## COLLAPSE

The tortoise moves old  
Out of the water  
Unprotected white he crawls  
Inland

Silent the ocean senses  
The empty shell

One wave another the last  
Forage for the route of his escape  
Between the rocks

Static the body of water  
Falls inward

The tortoise climbs a tree  
To the ground and spins  
His web over sand  
Between rocks

## CONTINUANCE

## 1. snow covers

the length of your body

sleep lady

ask no questions of me

cold futures itself

in my seed

ice winters in my south

an age preserving itself



## THE NAME

I was born in August,  
the month of lions.  
You often said...

A raindrop roars  
in an empty bucket.  
The consequence of  
speech that

you give away the secret  
time of your sex.  
The sense that  
the man dies

if he admits he may  
have made a mistake.  
Now, secretly  
we sit, say

nothing.  
Happy in this  
lion life, where the name  
gives too much sense of purpose.

## FACE UNDER WATER

Usually you cry  
when we make love.  
The light attaches itself  
to your body. I observe  
you from the shelter  
of a bus-stop  
and like drizzle you dissolve  
into the shallow puddle  
at my feet.

When the next express arrives,  
I'll step through you,  
into it  
and carry you only  
in the ruined shine of my shoes.

## WOUND

He streams from the bottom,  
upriver. Green  
dark and stinking,  
riparian seaweed drips  
a new wound.

This city  
pure flesh, perfumed  
and he  
the cannibal  
has never tasted  
the absence of blood.

## PATSY JEAN OREGON

beyond, the surf mumbles,  
sand shivers under  
spectral mists.

a hag picks  
fractured-shell  
from the shore,  
washes them in brine,  
piles them.

consecration to the feet  
of the naked  
girl-child.

who it was  
didn't matter, her breast  
in my hand,  
damp-hair stranded  
the bed in abeyance  
of interest. ice-salt  
water rushes her feet.  
she refutes the flesh.

her tone irrelevant,  
only sleep.

## THE APATHY

waves clean over  
the breast of shore-  
line to the starved-black  
hinterland that bursts  
  
an anarchy of lips  
on the surface of the ocean  
  
and he a white man  
shivers on the nipple  
nourished secure  
above the tide line  
  
eruption curdles  
below the belly food  
excuses everything

## LIGHTHOUSE BARBARA

Your eye opens  
regularly, in the dark,  
intent on salvation.

You light candles,  
in the pupil of your eye  
to attract,  
dozens of dizzy moths,  
or another blind man,  
who cannot find you  
when daylight  
swarms ashore.

Nevertheless, your thighs  
dried me out and you  
saw me  
flutter away.

THE FINAL PERFORMANCE OF VASLAV NIJINSKY  
SAINT MORITZ-DORF, 1919

THE FINAL PERFORMANCE OF VASLAV NIIJINSKY

SAINT MORITZ-DORF, 1919

CHARACTERS

NIJINSKY, the great ballet dancer.

ROMOLA, his wife.

EMMA, Romola's mother.

SERGEI DIAGHILEV, the Russian entrepreneur.

KOSTROVSKY, a Russian technician with the Ballet Russe.

KARSVINA, a ballerina with the Ballet Russe.

PROSTITUTE, another character played by the same actress as Karsvina.

NEGRI, a Swiss peasant dressmaker, played by the same actress as Karsvina.

SOLDIER, a Hungarian soldier of WWI played by the same actor as Kostrovsky.

OFFICIAL, played by same actor as Diaghilev.

KAHN, played by the same actor as Diaghilev.

NAJA, Emma's maid.

GYORGY, Emma's gardener.

AUCTIONEER, played by the same actor as Gyorgy.

MOTHER, Nijinsky's mother, played by the same actress as Naja.

CHORUS: To be composed of the ensemble except for Nijinsky.

TIME: January, 1919.

SETTING: Act I & II...Dressing Room, St. Moritz.

Act III.....The stage, St. Moritz.



My little girl is singing:  
'Ah ah ah ah.'  
I do not understand its meaning  
but I feel what she wants to say.  
She wants to say that everything  
...is not horror, but joy.

Vaslav Nijinsky  
St. Moritz-Dorf  
Villa Guardamont  
January, 1919

## THE FINAL PERFORMANCE OF VASLAV NIJINSKY,

Saint Moritz-Dorf, 1919

## ACT I

(NIJINSKY, sits on a stool, facing the audience. In front of him is a small table, on which rests a double-surfaced, oval make-up mirror. He does not move until ROMOLA, enters.)

ROM: Vaslav? Dreaming? (She kisses him.) Are you almost ready?

NIJ: Don't rush me, please.

ROM: I didn't mean to...

NIJ: The make-up is very important...to create the illusion for...

ROM: I know Vaslav. Are you well? Do you feel up to it?

NIJ: Wonderful...I'm going to dance again.

ROM: Yes! Vaslav, what pieces? I have to tell..

NIJ: No pieces. I will dance what I feel.

ROM: But what shall I tell Madame Asseo? She needs music to play. Will you dance without music?

NIJ: Don't tell her anything. She must follow.

ROM: She must have an idea...

NIJ: No, she is a great artist, that is why I chose her to accompany me. She will understand...when I dance... She will know what pieces to play.

ROM: She asked me...

NIJ: Tell her that

ROM: Very well, but don't expect miracles of her.

NIJ: Miracle? For that you need a saint. A man in the hands of God. They expect a miracle of me. They think artists are touched by God. We are artists, we are touched by God. He is with us.

Femmka, don't worry, don't think. Feel! It will be all right. Trust in God.

ROM: Don't be upset with me Vaslav. But there are people out there. They expect so much. Our friends, mother, sister. Your friends, the Prince, Countess Ripon...

NIJ: What do they expect? What must I prove to my friends? That I am still Nijinsky? That I'm not a madman? Well, I am. I am a madman. My madness is the love I have for those people.

ROM: All right. Don't be upset.

NIJ: I'm not. You shouldn't bother me like this before a performance.

ROM: I'll go.

NIJ: Just a moment. Who else is here?

ROM: Only those we invited.

NIJ: No critics?

ROM: None were invited. You saw the list.

NIJ: Diaghilev? No, he wouldn't come. I sent him the invitation. Posted it myself. I wrote it.

I spelled his name wrong...on purpose...so he would know how I felt.

ROM: He won't be here, Vaslav. He's with the touring company in America.

NIJ: America? Making money...  
Sergei Pavlovitch, what will you say to my success?  
I will be a success again.

ROM: Of course, Vaslav but...

NIJ: "Dead to art", he said. I'll make more money than he's ever imagined and I'll show him what art is. He doesn't know still..

ROM: Vaslav, we must hurry...

NIJ: Don't rush me anymore...I'll be there as soon as I'm ready.

ROM: Good...  
(She kisses him and exits.)

NIJ: I don't have a little alarm clock in my head, set to ring when someone arrives to see me dance.  
I WILL DANCE WHEN I'M READY!  
I'm only a man. A MAN!

CHORUS: Not a man.

NIJ: Not a man?

CHORUS: Not a man, a horse.

NIJ: A horse?

CHORUS: Horse!

NIJ: I used to be a man?

CHORUS: Horse!

NIJ: I could have sworn...

CHORUS: HORSE!

NIJ: You'd think a man...

CHORUS: Not! Horse!

NIJ: Thank God...

CHORUS: Horse!

NIJ: Kafka's insect...

CHORUS: HORSE!

NIJ: Perhaps I didn't wake up, the bell never rang?

CHORUS: HORSE!

NIJ: I'm a horse? Horse! HORSE!

CHORUS: ( chanting )

Run. Run. Run.  
Run horse, run.  
Run. Run. Run.  
Run horse, run.  
run run run  
run-run, run-run, run-run...

( extended )

NIJ: You were invited! Invited! I invited you to see me dance. I  
will dance...a new work...

CHORUS: Run-run, run-run, run-run...

NIJ: I can't...will not...not perform till I'm ready...you don't un-  
derstand...you must...

CHORUS: Horses run.

NIJ: I will run.

CHORUS: Horses jump.

NIJ: I will jump.

CHORUS: Horses go when they're told.

NIJ: I will go.

CHORUS: When the gate opens.

NIJ: I don't open the gate.

CHORUS: Ten.

NIJ: Dance.

CHORUS: Nine.

NIJ: A new work.

CHORUS: Eight.

NIJ: I can only do...

CHORUS: Seven.

NIJ: I am Nijinsky, Le Dieu de la danse...

CHORUS: Six.

NIJ: Nineteen-nineteen...

CHORUS: FIVE!

NIJ: St. Moritz, I'm resting...

CHORUS: Four.

NIJ: The war...

CHORUS: Three.

NIJ: Take me back to Russia...

CHORUS: Two.

NIJ: I don't want to dance anymore...

CHORUS: God! God! Hold my hand.  
God you know me. Hold my hand,  
my hand is warm.

( THE AUCTIONEER, enters. He takes NIJINSKY by the chin and leads him down center stage as the rest of the CHORUS enter as buyers. )

AUCTIONEER:

Order! Order, ladies and gentlemen, please. Item number twenty, number twenty for your inspection.

( As the AUCTIONEER begins his next speech, THE CHORUS, enters the audience and confront individual members of the audience with offers of NIJINSKY'S love, the various parts of his body and soul. )

AUCTIONEER:

Number twenty, Vaslav Nijinsky; born on February twenty-eight, eighteen ninety in Kiev, Russia. Second colt of Eleanore Bereda, one time prancer of the Polish court. Sired by Thomas Nijinsky, freelance racer in the Russian Hinterland. Birth registered in Poland to avoid service with the Russian armed forces. Two siblings: a brother currently registered in the St. Petersburg catalogue of the mentally disturbed, a defect due entirely to accident and not a genetic deficiency we assure you. A sister currently on display at the Imperial School in St. Petersburg.

( The CHORUS continue to circulate their offers amongst the audience as Nijinsky's MOTHER enters and takes him from the AUCTIONEER; she pulls his pants down and smacks his bottom. )

MOTHER: You cannot continue. The school is the best place for you to be.

NIJ: I know that mama.

MOTHER: Well if you know, why do you persist in these antics. They'll make you leave, Vaslav, they'll send you home and we can't afford you here.

NIJ: I can work, I can...

MOTHER: No Vaslav. You must stay at the school. You must. One day you will be a great dancer. You will dance for the Czar, a member of the Marinsky...your father always wanted that himself.

NIJ: My father is a great dancer...

MOTHER: Yes, a great one, but not a Russian.

NIJ: I won't go back. I will stay here and take care of you and Bronislava.

MOTHER: You'll go back and there'll be no more talk about it.

NIJ: I don't like it there...

MOTHER: Be quiet, you're not a snivelling little boy anymore Vaslav, you're very nearly a man and you should see without my telling you, what you should do. There'll be no more sling shots into professor's eyes, no more bad marks and if there are no more of these, there will be no more punishments, do you understand?

NIJ: Yes but who will look after you and...

MOTHER: God will see for us, don't you worry. Just study very hard. Do you promise?

NIJ: Yes, mama. I promise.

MOTHER: Good, now, don't look so unhappy. We do what we think is right and we do it because we love you. Do you understand that?

NIJ: I think so and I love you, so I will work hard, and then I'll look after you.

MOTHER: Yes, then you'll look after us. Now, go along, it's time you went back.

( She exits. )

AUCTIONEER:

Gentlemen, an offer, do I hear an offer?

( NIJINSKY sits at the mirror and begins to put on the make-up of Petrushka, the clown doll. )

Gentlemen, an offer?

CHORUS: Ten copeks.

AUC: Gentlemen, gentlemen...a graduate of the Imperial school of St. Petersburg...

CHORUS: A hundred.

AUC: Star of the Marinsky...

CHORUS: Two hundred.

AUC: Two hundred for the partner of Pavlova?

CHORUS: Three hundred.

NIJ: Even a horse isn't worth this much.

AUC: Creator of Petrushka, clown doll with a living soul..

CHORUS: Four hundred.

NIJ: What is worth this much?

AUC: The faun, only half man, half animal...

CHORUS: Five hundred.

NIJ: I don't understand.

AUC: Such a fine animal...

CHORUS: Six hundred.

NIJ: I'm not a horse!

AUC: ~~Seven?~~ Seven?



CHORUS: Seven hundred.

NIJ: I won't race anymore!

CHORUS: Eight hundred.

NIJ: I don't belong to anybody!

CHORUS: Nine hundred.

AUC: Higher!

CHORUS: One thousand!

NIJ: I'm a man!

AUC: One thousand.

NIJ: I'm not different from...

AUC: One thousand going once

NIJ: From you...

AUC: One thousand going twice.

NIJ: Or you...

AUC: ( Bangs his gavel. )

Sold for one thousand gold rubles.

NIJ: An immortal cog in the machine.

( The CHORUS exit, there is a knock on a door, KARSVINA enters with KOSTROVSKY. )

KAR: Vaslav?

NIJ: Hello!

KAR: I've brought someone to see you.

NIJ: How do you do?

KAR: Not him, silly, he's waiting outside. This is Kostrovsky, he's joining us as a technician and I'm just showing him around. The person I brought to meet you is outside. He didn't want to come in right away, in case you were dressing or something. I didn't really understand why.

NIJ: Nevertheless, I am happy to meet you too.

KOS: The pleasure is mine Mr. Nijinsky.

NIJ: I hope you will like it here.

KOS: I'm sure I will. We must get together and talk sometime.

NIJ: Yes, I'm sure we will. It's almost inevitable in these places.. theatres.

KOS: Yes, it is.

KAR: Shall I send him in?

NIJ: Who?

KAR: Prince Ivor asked me to introduce you personally but he wouldn't come and all he gave me was this card. Sergei Pavlovitch Diaghilev. I think he's an entrepreneur of some kind. Do you want to meet him?

NIJ: I should, if Prince Ivor sent him.

KAR: Yes you should.

KOS: Why should he? Just because he was sent by a prince? You should find out what it is he wants first.

KAR: Well, he won't tell us, so there's only one way for Vaslav to find out, isn't there?

KOS: I suppose so, yes.

KAR: You boys are so stupid sometimes.

KOS: It's the peasant in us.

NIJ: Yes, it is. It makes us stupid.

KAR: Now, now let's not quarrel on our first meeting. Let's go. I'll send him in, Vaslav.

( They exit. NIJINSKY, sits and continues his make-up process, until DIAGHILEV enters. NIJINSKY, takes note of his arrival, but does not stop his make-up. )

( He, DIAGHILEV, stands looking at NIJINSKY, for a length of time, until KARSVINA sticks her head in once again. )

KAR: Vaslav Nijinsky, this is Sergei Pavlovitch Diaghilev. More than that I can't tell either of you. Except that you have a mutual acquaintance. Good-bye.

DIA: There isn't anything quite as striking as a Russian intellectual. Karstvina?

NIJ: Yes, she is striking.

DIA: I meant the intellectual. Don't you agree?

NIJ: That she is an intellectual?

DIA: It's obvious that she's striking. What other question can there be?

NIJ: I don't understand.

DIA: The Russian intellectual, an elite group, much as Nietzsche might have seen it. Do you know him?

NIJ: No, we haven't met.

DIA: I meant his work. Personally, he's been dead for some time. Some rather virulent strain of venereal disease, contracted, no doubt, from one of his equally intellectual feminine contemporaries. Turned him into a blubbering fool at a relatively early stage of his career. A shame. Now, Socrates, there was a philosopher. And a man. He knew what was what, who was who; women were for bearing children and love was left to men...and boys.

We will waste no more time. Prince Ivor told me about you. He tells me you can dance, that you may be the best. I like watching the best. And I know the best when I see it.

NIJ: Prince Ivor might exaggerate, he is my friend.

DIA: One's friends are usually one's strongest critics.

I didn't come to see you without reason. What I have in mine, may cause some trouble at court in the beginning. But I'm sure that in the long run, they will see that my idea has great objectives, not only for me and those who come with me, but for Russia as well.

NIJ: What is your idea, Mr. Diaghilev?

DIA: I plan on creating a company, Vaslav. A great ballet company which will carry the greatest works of our culture to the rest of Europe. Ninety percent of the world are ignorant of art which is created in Russia, not because it isn't worthy of their attention but because we have not allowed them opportunity to note its true value. In the past we have waited for them to come to us, my plan is to take us to them.

The ballet of Russia, Vaslav, should belong to everybody, the world, not just the elite circle of Russian royalty and...intellectuals.

I understand you have had some trouble. With the managers of the Marinsky. Leave them, Vaslav, leave the Marinsky. Join my company, come to Paris.

NIJ: I cannot leave the Marinsky, my training...

DIA: How much do they pay you, Vaslav. A meagre sixty-five roubles per month. How can a man, an artist, a great artist such as yourself survive on sixty-five roubles. And I understand that you support your family too. I will pay you more, much more. Think about it, you don't have to answer right away.

NIJ: I will consider it.

DIA: We could do great things young man, great things for Russia, for ourselves, for art. We should be friends, you and I. Friends can accomplish so much more, together.

NIJ: Yes, let's be friends at least.

DIA: Better friends than anybody else.

NIJ: We can help each other, love each other, I've wanted a friend for so long. Someone who could understand what the ballet means to me and I can already see that you understand.

DIA: Yes, I can understand. We are artists, you and I. We must share with each other that talent which we have. If you can dance...

NIJ: I love to dance. When I dance I feel that I don't belong to any company, to anybody, that I am free, that I love.

DIA: The only great art is love.

NIJ: I will go with you, to Paris. But you must pay me. I have my mother and sister to look after.

DIA: I will pay you, don't worry. And so...we are to be friends, eh Vaslav?

NIJ: Yes, friends.

DIA: Together we will make love to the world?

We will rape them? We will take their love and mould it as one would clay to create the Venus de Milo or paint the Mona Lisa and we will create their art.

NIJ: It must give love.

DIA: That's what I said...we will love them. Enough! Would you like a drink?

( He takes a silver flask from his pocket and offers it to NIJ-INSKY. )

To celebrate our union?

NIJ: I don't drink vodka. It makes me dizzy.

DIA: Don't drink?

NIJ: Wine, occasionally.

DIA: Well then, let's get some wine. (pause) It's good you don't drink.

NIJ: It isn't good for the body.

DIA: Exactly, you must look after yourself. Take good care of your body. It's your fortune.

NIJ: My life, without it I couldn't dance.

DIA: May I kiss you.

NIJ: Why?

DIA: To show my love.

NIJ: If you feel...

DIA: What I feel, is that if we are to be friends, we must have no secrets, share no lies or illusions. I'm a man, you're a man, so I shouldn't kiss you but I want to. Do you think I'm wrong?

NIJ: Not if you must show your love to me this way, instead of another.

DIA: You understand?

NIJ: I understand love.

DIA: But not this love, not my love?

NIJ: I understand. I understand because it was Prince Ivor who sent you and he loves me.

DIA: I love you more or perhaps differently than Ivor.

NIJ: Why? You don't know me?

DIA: I watched you dance this evening.

(DIAGHILEV, moves to kiss NIJINSKY, but instead of kissing him, he pries open his mouth with his fingers and inspects his teeth.)

BLACKOUT

## ACT I - scene 2

( Lights reveal NIJINSKY, again before the make-up mirror, finishing the make-up for Petrushka. Enter DIAGHILEV. )

DIA: Vaslav, how are you feeling today?

NIJ: I feel well.

DIA: The fever has gone?

NIJ: Yes, all gone.

DIA: I trust this has taught you to stay away from Parisian water.

NIJ: From now on I'll only drink mineral water, from the bottle.

DIA: Excellent. Let's go for a walk.

( They begin to walk in circles around the stage area. )

DIA: Paris is so beautiful in the spring, eh Vaslav.

NIJ: Very beautiful.

DIA: Do you like it here?

NIJ: Yes, very much.

DIA: That settles it then. We will stay here for the off-season and prepare for the next. I've made arrangements for a charming villa on the...

NIJ: We can't stay here Sergei. We should go home. I would like to see my mother and sister.

DIA: You just said you liked it here, now you want to leave. You're very difficult to deal with...

NIJ: I must go back.

DIA: I wish you wouldn't interrupt me while I'm trying to explain the situation to you Vaslav.

NIJ: I'm sorry Sergei but I should go home to see my family.

DIA: The truth of the matter, Vaslav, is that I don't have the money to send the company back to Russia for the summer.

NIJ: Why not? The season was good, the critics gave us reviews, the people came.

DIA: Not enough people came. It was probably all that bad publicity over "Faun", that made them stay away. Controversy doesn't make money Vaslav.

NIJ: I'm sorry Sergei. "Faun" was perhaps a mistake and the fault is mine.

DIA: No, no Vaslav, it wasn't your fault.

NIJ: I created it, it was mine. They didn't understand what I was trying to do.

DIA: No, they didn't, so there's no need to go on about it. We didn't make any money but we made a name, eh? Of course we did, so let's forget it and get on with next season.

NIJ: Perhaps, if you paid me back some of the forty thousand francs I lent you, I could go back for a little while.

DIA: I don't have it.

NIJ: Not a little?

DIA: Don't whine. I told you when I borrowed it that there was some risk involved. We needed it to stage "Faun" and it didn't succeed. There isn't any money.

NIJ: I must go back somehow.

DIA: I have an idea. A summer tour. To make some money, for next season.

NIJ: But everybody is tired, Sergei.

DIA: Tired! They're not tired, just lazy. Artists! They don't know what they are. They have no discipline and discipline is what they must have if they want to be artists. You know that.

NIJ: But they need rest too.

DIA: No, they need to work. Work, work and more work, that's what we thrive on. South America! A tour of South America, to restore our saggy spirits and...purses eh?



NIJ: If you think it best.

DIA: Of course it's best. And then a triumphal return to Europe, eh? It'll be a first, Vaslav. Come on, let's go back to the hotel. I want to start making the arrangements, as soon as possible.

NIJ: You go on, I would like to walk a little longer.

DIA: Alright but not too long now. We have work to do.

( DIAGHILEV. exits. NIJINSKY continues walking until he meets the PROSTITUTE. )

( NIJINSKY. walks past her then stops and turns around to look at her. She approaches him with one hand held over her left breast. When she is in front of him, she removes her hand, her breast is bare. )

PROS: Monsieur desire?

NIJ: No, nothing.

PROS: No, no, no. Everybody says no but everybody does. You do, it will be exciting.

( She takes his hand in hers. )

NIJ: Your hand is moist.

PROS: ( Dropping his hand. )

I sweat a lot. Do you or don't you?

NIJ: Your face is painted, like a caricature in the newspaper.

PROS: If it's my face you want...it can be arranged.

NIJ: I sweat when I dance or practise. It's good to sweat, it cools the body.

PROS: I don't have all day to stand here and discuss it with you. Do you or don't you?

NIJ: I don't know.

PROS: You do. It will be exciting...

NIJ: I don't like excitement.

PROS: Don't be afraid. Have you never been with a woman before? I'll teach you, it'll be fun and you can go back and tell your friends how a woman of the streets of Paris taught you what you know about love.

NIJ: I ate meat today.

PROS: So?

NIJ: It makes you excitable.

PROS: All the better, a little animal now and again.

NIJ: I'm not an animal, I'm a man.

PROS: You're saying that I'm an animal?

NIJ: You do this.

PROS: What? This? This is life, this is breath, making love.

NIJ: Why do you do this?

PROS: Because I'll starve if I don't.

NIJ: Lust is the death of life.

PROS: You're a very mixed up little boy, go home.

NIJ: I can't go home, I don't have the money.

PROS: No money?

NIJ: Not enough.

PROS: Good-bye.

NIJ: Not enough to get home to Russia.

PROS: But enough for me?

NIJ: How much do you want?

PROS: Ten francs for a moment or fifty for the night.

NIJ: I have enough for several nights.

PROS: Better! You can learn more. Come...

( She leads NIJINSKY, upstage and begins to undress him. )

PROS: I promise you'll like it. Never before?

NIJ: What?

PROS: With a woman.

NIJ: No but I have seen a lot of women. At the ballet, in the dressing rooms.

PROS: You're familiar then?

NIJ: Yes.

PROS: I don't have to tell you what's what?

( She laughs and begins to undress herself. )

( NIJINSKY, watches her. )

NIJ: Why do you do this?

PROS: I told you, I'd starve if I didn't.

NIJ: There must be other work you could do?

PROS: It wouldn't pay as much and besides, it isn't too bad. My feet get tired on the street, that's about all.

NIJ: Do you like it?

PROS: What?

NIJ: Do you like your work?

PROS: Sometimes...if the man is very good looking, or if I'm...inspired or something.

NIJ: I wouldn't work unless I loved what I was doing.

PROS: You must be a rich man.

NIJ: No, my family is poor.

PROS: Then you're crazy.

NIJ: I dance.

PROS: You're crazy. Let's go.

NIJ: I want to understand why?

PROS: I'm very good at it!

NIJ: You're proud of it?

PROS: Why don't you find out.

NIJ: You should be an artist.

PROS: Alright...I've had enough...you keep it, it's yours. Virgins. Look, I'm clean, I have a license, I'm twenty-four years old and I enjoy my work, so little boys like you I don't need. Run along back to mama but tell her to smack your bottom because you've been bad. Don't bother me anymore.

NIJ: Here.

PROS: What for?

NIJ: Take it. I don't need it.

PROS: I haven't earned it.

NIJ: Take it. I loved you for a few moments.

PROS: Thanks. ( She exits. ) You should have tried it, you might have liked it.

( NIJINSKY, returns to the make-up mirror. The CHORUS enter upstage and begin a series of ballet exercises using a ballet bar, DIAGHILEV, enters. )

DIA: Vaslav, are you ready?

NIJ: Yes.

DIA: Good. You'll go to the boat with Karsavina. She'll look after all the details for you.

NIJ: Aren't you coming with us?

DIA: No, sea voyages do not agree with me. My health won't allow me to go with you, much as I would like. Don't worry Vaslav. Everything is arranged. I'll meet you in Spain when you return. Don't look so morose, it's a great adventure you're beginning, enjoy it.

NIJ: I'll miss you, Sergei.

DIA: I too, but we mustn't let our personal lives interfere with our work. They expect to see you dance in Buenos Aires, not me. I can do more here, setting up next season. Good-bye Vaslav, take care of yourself.

One thing Vaslav. I have noticed that a certain female member of the company has been paying particular attention to you here.

NIJ: Who?

DIA: That Hungarian girl we took on in Vienna. She only wants to make a name for herself, watch her Vaslav.

NIJ: Why?

DIA: She's after you.

NIJ: Is there something wrong with that?

DIA: Don't let her catch you.

NIJ: Why not?

DIA: Just keep what I say in your mind.

NIJ: Alright Sergei, as you say.

DIA: That's my boy. Off you go. Write to me.

NIJ: I will Sergei.

( DIAGHILEV, exits. ROMOLA enters, walks past NIJINSKY and joins the others at the bar. )

( NIJINSKY, begins his own exercises down center. )

ROM: Why doesn't he exercise with us?

KAR: I don't speak Hungarian. Do you speak French?

ROM: Oh yes, I'm sorry. I spoke subconsciously.

KAR: That's alright. What was it you asked?

ROM: I was just wondering why he didn't take exercise with us.

KAR: He doesn't think we work hard enough. He prefers to concentrate on his own. An idea that our friend Diaghilev put into his head. Work, work, work, that's all he ever does or thinks about I imagine.

ROM: Doesn't he have any friends?

KAR: Just us. Another one of Sergei's ideas. Keeps him pure for his art...and Sergei's pleasure.

ROM: I understand...he must be lonely.

KAR: Vaslav? He has his work.

ROM: I'd like to be his friend.

KAR: Be careful girl. Sergei doesn't approve of Vaslav having women friends. You're too new with us. Wait awhile, you'll see.

ROM: Could you introduce me to him?

KAR: I suppose so. Vaslav! This is Romola, she joined us when we were in Vienna, remember.

NIJ: Of course I remember. How do you do?

ROM: What did he say?

KAR: Speak to her in French Vaslav, she doesn't understand Russian.

NIJ: I don't want to speak to her in French. I don't understand it well enough.

KAR: He won't speak to you in French because he's embarrassed by his accent but he is happy to make your acquaintance.

ROM: Tell him that I am very pleased to meet him too, I've heard so much about him and admired his art for so long.

( NIJINSKY waves KARSAVINA away, takes ROMOLA'S hand in his and kisses it. )

FADEOUT.

## ACT I - scene 3

( Light reveals NIJINSKY standing alone down center. The CHORUS in the background sing the following song as ROMOLA enters and the scene follows. )

CHORUS: "You were meant for me  
I was meant for you  
Nature fashioned you  
And when she was done  
You were all the sweet things  
Rolled into one

You're like a plaintive melody  
That never sets me free."  
La la lala la etc.

( They continue to hum throughout the scene. )

ROMOLA: Good evening Mr. Nijinsky. It's a lovely evening. Can you understand my French?

NIJ: I understand your French but I will speak to you in Russian because I am Russian.

ROM: I'm sorry I don't understand you. I wish we could talk together.

NIJ: I'm very happy that you are interested in me. Sergei was wrong when he described you to me.

ROM: Sergei? You must be talking about Monsieur Diaghilev, a great man.

NIJ: A very petty man!

ROM: I didn't mean to upset you, perhaps I should go.

NIJ: No, stay. I will go instead. Talking to you has made me very happy.

ROM: Good-bye, Monsieur Nijinsky.

( NIJINSKY moves upstage, writes a note and gives it to KOSTROVSKY who goes down to ROMOLA and gives it to her. )

ROM: Good evening, Monsieur Kostrovsky.

KOS: Good evening Mademoiselle. Monsieur Nijinsky asked me to deliver this note to you.

ROM: Oh, but it's in Russian. Could you translate it for me Monsieur Kostrovsky.

KOS: Delighted.

Dear Mademoiselle,

You would do me the greatest honour, if you would consent to become my wife.

Sincerely,

Vaslav Nijinsky.

ROM: Oh my God.

( ROMOLA, breaks down, begins to cry and clutches a crucifix which she wears round her neck. KOSTROVSKY backs away and goes to NIJINSKY upstage. NIJINSKY approaches ROMOLA and knocks at the door. )

( Knock, Knock. )

ROM: Just a minute. Oh!

NIJ: ( Stuttering. )

Madame...I would...be...you...you and me...I would me you...my language...

ROM: Oh yes, yes, yes, I'll marry you.

( The CHORUS rush forward and perform a brief wedding ceremony and exit singing the previous song, which fades away. )

( ROMOLA and NIJINSKY, separate. ROMOLA turns her back to NIJINSKY and begins to undress. )



NIJ: Femmka, I...

ROM: ( Turning. )

"Femmka"...how lovely, you must promise to call me that always.

NIJ: I will...I...

ROM: Won't you try to speak French now...we're married, there's no need to be embarrassed about your accent, I'll understand.

NIJ: No, I won't speak French. I'm Russian, I can't...

ROM: I don't understand you. A few, just a few words of French...je t'aime, je t'aime...je...t...aime..

NIJ: Je t'aime.

( ROMOLA laughs, then continues to undo her dress. )

ROM: Help me Vaslav.

(Offering him her back.)

I can't reach the last few.

( NIJINSKY, undoes a few of the buttons and then begins to do them up again. )

What are you doing?

NIJ: Femmka..I..don't believe...it isn't necessary right away...pas vite...

ROM: Not so quickly?

NIJ: Goodnight...bon nuit.

( He exits, FADEOUT. )

## ACT II - scene 1

( Light reveals NIJINSKY, seated again at the make-up mirror. )

NIJ: I'm standing on a precipice, over which I could fall and be killed but I'm not afraid. God does not want me to fall, only you do.

( Enter DIAGHILEV. )

DIA: Hello, Vaslav. How was the journey. The ocean wasn't too rough, I take it.

NIJ: Sergei...

DIA: Vaslav, don't explain. You married her or rather she caught you. You aren't my friend anymore? Eh Vaslav?

NIJ: I am always your friend Sergei, I love you...

DIA: No, no you couldn't be my friend. My friend, the friend I once had, would have told me first, proudly, that he was going to be married. Perhaps my friend would even have asked my advice or blessing of his union.

NIJ: Four thousand miles, four thousand miles of ocean between us...

DIA: You could have waited! Our plans...great plans that we created together...thrown away...for what...for what Vaslav? A woman...a common street corner variety female.

NIJ: Our plans still exist Sergei...

DIA: No Vaslav...they don't...they're lost...as you are lost. Dead, sucked like so much air into the eye of that female. Floating in a vacuum. Inertia. You move no more.

NIJ: Sergei I...

DIA: No, no more whining..Sergei this..Sergei I want. Sergei wants too...everybody wants but only the great Nijinsky is allowed to whine until he gets it..

I warned you Vaslav, warned you what the costs were. The cost of dreaming. Dreaming Pegasus, the golden horse that flies rings around the sun; running, running forever chased by even Dionysus, liberated from Appollo's rein, no tether on his soul, no master but that of his own body, flying rings around the sun.

Whine, whine that away. You were that soul Vaslav, the horse with golden wings but you flew too close to the sun, you're melting. The little golden icon...into a puddle.

Good-bye Vaslav. You'll never dance again, I'm going to see to it.

( He begins to exit, then turns. )

I'm a petty man Vaslav. Concerned with details, minutae. But I'm a careful man too Vaslav and I take precautions and your contract takes precautions against marriage. Good-bye.

(He exits, NIJINSKY returns to the make-up mirror. )

NIJ: Diaghilev always uses that trick; he thinks that nobody understands him but I...I understand him and therefore challenge him.. to a bull fight. I am the bull, a wounded bull. I am God in the bull. I am Apis. I am an Egyptian. I am an Indian. I am a red Indian. I am a Negro. I am a Chinaman. I am a Japanese. I'm a foreigner, a stranger, a land bird, a sea bird. I am the tree of Tolstoy. Tolstoy is mine, I am his. Once...once I went for a walk...

CHORUS: Run...run...run  
Run...run...run  
Run-run, run-run, run-run  
Run-run, run-run, run-run  
Run-run  
Run-run

NIJ: Once

CHORUS: One!

NIJ: Once I went  
CHORUS: Two!  
NIJ: Went for a walk  
CHORUS: Three four...got ya!  
NIJ: For a walk and...  
CHORUS: Five six pick up sticks.  
NIJ: And it seemed I...  
CHORUS: Seven for God and a gory heaven.  
NIJ: It seemed I saw blood...  
CHORUS: Eight angelic rat bait.  
NIJ: Seemed I saw blood...  
CHORUS: Nine  
NIJ: Nine no rhyme?  
CHORUS: Ten!  
NIJ: I saw blood on the snow!

( Enter ROMOLA, EMMA, NAJA, GYORGY. )

ROM: This is Vaslav everyone. Vaslav, this is my mother...  
EMMA: Call me Emma, I've heard so much about you that I feel we already know one another.  
ROM: And this is Naja, the upstairs maid...  
NAJA: Pleased to make your acquaintance Sir.  
ROM: And Gyorgy the chauffer and gardener.  
GYORGY: Howdy-do!  
EMMA: Gyorgy!  
GYORGY: Sorry Ma'am...

EMMA: It's so hard getting decent help these days.

It's this damned war scare, everyone running off to join this that and the other thing. Patriotism is replacing the family.

NAJA: My boyfriend just joined up.

GYORGY: It's those damned Ruskies that'll start it if anybody does.

EMMA: Gyorgy!

GYORGY: Sorry ma'am...

EMMA: I'm sorry Vaslav, he's so ignorant, just like a peasant almost.

NIJ: I think we should get back to our hotel, Romola.

EMMA: Why don't you stay here? There's lots of room.

ROM: I don't think so Mama. Vaslav's tired, we should go.

OFFICIAL: ( Appearing upstage center. )

Vaslav Nijinsky, number five four three two one. You are a Russian Citizen. Being on Hungarian soil at the commencement of hostilities, you are under the jurisdiction of the Resident Alien's Committee. You are hereby placed under self-imposed house arrest until your case can be brought to the attention of the International Red Cross Organization. You are not to leave your habitat, the house of your wife's mother, Emma. You are not to indulge in any activity outside the realm of personal needs.

EMMA: I suppose you can have the rooms upstairs in the east wing. Dinner is at eight.

NAJA: He's Russian, let him clean up after his self.

GYORGY: Carry em yerself!

EMMA: Naja cannot be expected to clean up after you when her lover is being butchered by your countrymen.

GYORGY: Will you please not dance on the grass. It kills the roots. The weight you know?

EMMA: Naja tells me you dance in the halls. The rosin leaves marks on the floors.

NIJ: Femmka, I must dance...I have to have space.

OFFICIAL: I'm sorry Nijinsky. You're Russian. Space is at premium in Budapest and as an alien you're at the very bottom of the relocation lists.

ROM: Vaslav, I'm pregnant.

NIJ: Femmka?

ROM: A baby.

NIJ: How?

ROM: A son for you.

NAJA: I'm not going to do for any czarist bastard!

EMMA: You'd best hire a nurse. Romola can't go through this alone.

NIJ: Money?

ROM: We'll need a wet nurse Vaslav. I can't do everything myself.

EMMA: Perhaps you think you have all the attributes of a woman? You can't look after yourself, let alone anybody else!

ROM: I'm sure she'll lend us the money if only you would approach her properly.

EMMA: Why don't you work?

OFFICIAL: Impossible, Hungary cannot sponsor Russian culture when she is at war with that culture. Perhaps, a benefit could be arranged, for the casualties, to show your good will?

NAJA: Bullshit, we know where his sympathies are.

ROM: You must ask her again, try not to lose your temper.

EMMA: All right, I'll lend it to you, but only for Romola and the Baby's sake.

NIJ: I loved the child as soon as she was born. I wasn't allowed to see her at first but they told me I had a daughter. I was sorry it wasn't a son. I had prayed to God for a son. I loved my daughter anyway.

EMMA: What shall we call her?

NIJ: Emma.

EMMA: No, no it isn't necessary.

ROM: I'd like to.

EMMA: You don't owe me anything.

NIJ: We'll call her Kyra.

EMMA: How can you stand his dictatorial manner.

NIJ: It's Greek.

ROM: It's Vaslav's decision.

NIJ: I like Greek culture.

EMMA: Leave him, he's no good.

NIJ: I carved a wooden duck, put it on wheels and painted it bright colours; purple and orange. I put it on wheels so that she could pull it behind her as she trotted between the walls of our two rooms.

ROM: He's so good with the baby.

EMMA: He's subverting your authority with the child.

ROM: Vaslav wouldn't think of anything like that.

EMMA: She'll be spoilt.

OFFICIAL: Nijinsky, Vaslav...you are to proceed to Vienna. There you will be informed concerning your repatriation. The train leaves at ten o'clock tonight.

EMMA: You can't take the child to Russia.

ROM: Tonight?

EMMA: The trains are so crowded.

ROM: I hope I'm strong enough.

EMMA: The child can't possibly travel.

NAJA: Good riddance, that's what I say.

GYORGY: Right you are.

EMMA: I won't allow the child to go.

NIJ: A child should be with it's mother.

EMMA: I don't think Romola should go either.

( At the train station. )

ROM: Good-bye Mother, thank you...for everything.

EMMA: Don't go dear.

ROM: He's my husband.

EMMA: I'm your mother.

ROM: I have to go.

EMMA: You and little Kyra can always come home, if things don't work out.

ROM: It will be all right.

EMMA: Come with me. I want to give you some money, but I don't want him to know.

ROM: All right...Vaslav, I'll be back in just a moment.

NIJ: Hurry femmka...

( NIJINSKY, is left alone on the platform; the SOLDIER enters. He has no legs and pushes himself about on a four wheeled dolly, about six inches off the ground. )

SOL: Evening.

NIJ: Good evening.

SOL: Nice night.

NIJ: It is lovely.

SOL: Going to Vienna?



NIJ: Yes.

SOL: Me too. Going to the hospital there. They've got doctors there what are going to give me new legs.

NIJ: New legs?

SOL: Wooden ones, you know. Won't be able to do no dancin' but at least I'll be able to get rid of this thing. My arms are so bloody tired. Pushin' myself about all day. It's tiring.

NIJ: I can imagine.

SOL: Do I note a bit of an accent in your voice? You're not Hungarian are you?

NIJ: No.

SOL: What are you?

NIJ: I'm a dancer.

SOL: No, what country?

NIJ: I'm Russian.

SOL: Russian?

NIJ: But I was born in Poland. At least I'm registered there.

SOL: Polish?

NIJ: Yes.

SOL: It's a good thing you said that.

NIJ: Why?

SOL: I get very disturbed at the thought of Russians.

NIJ: You hate them?

SOL: I kill them don't I?

NIJ: They're just men, like you.

SOL: We're at war. They're the enemy.

NIJ: Your country's enemy, but individually they are just men.

SOL: Hold on a minute. Just where do your sympathies lie my Polish friend?

NIJ: With men.

SOL: Who's men?

NIJ: All men.

SOL: You can't be on both sides.

NIJ: I don't belong to either side.

SOL: You have to, you have to belong to one side or the other.

NIJ: Why? Why do I have to belong to some side?

SOL: Because it's war. War! Do you know what that is? Do you know what it's like? Have you ever been in a battle? Have you?

NIJ: No, I don't...

SOL: Pansified artistes. You're all the same. Spouting some tripe about peace an' all when you've never seen war. Never seen what it can do to men. Men...what you're interested in. Well, I've seen it...

...acres of Roosky cavalry, men an' horses as far as your eye could see on a clear day. Trying to get across the river. Us and the German's, we had em in a crossfire. They got about halfway across an' we hit em. Machine guns, mortars, artillery. A bloody gallery it was.

...at first the bodies caught the current an' floated downstream but soon, soon they caught on a snag in the river and begin to pilin' up. Duck pond in October it was...

...they tried another charge, running on the surface created by the flesh of their own men an' horses. They got a little bit further that time but they eventually had to give up...they couldn't get the horses to go up the hill of corpses an' if they did they'd just slide back down again cause of all the guts there was. A great victory for us. I saw a Roosky Captain get his brains kicked out by his own horse.

NIJ: God, God wouldn't let it happen.

SOL: Of course not, but war ain't the work of God. It's a job that men do, men! The kind of men what you care about. It's their little artistic accomplishment, you know. You dance, they kill, like in a revolution you know?

NIJ: You're insane. I don't believe you.

SOL: All right then, have it your way. You can't face it, but I seen it.

( The SOLDIER exits laughing, NIJINSKY is left alone. )

NIJ: That men should kill...the god that is in them...I don't understand.

OFFICIAL: Five four three two one, you are to proceed to the Italian border, where you will be met by representatives of the Swiss government who will conduct you to the American Consul in Geneva, in whose hands you will remain for the duration of hostilities.

( NIJINSKY sits again at the make-up mirror, still in the persona of Petrushka. )

( There is a knock on the door, enter DIAGHILEV. )

DIA: Hello Vaslav.

NIJ: Sergei.

DIA: Dreadful business this, still...

NIJ: I don't hate you.

DIA: Thank you for that. I've missed you. Nobody has come to take your place. I was sorry to hear of all your misfortunes but still I hear you received a blessing in the form of a child.

NIJ: A little girl, Kyra.

DIA: How nice for you, a girl.

NIJ: She's beautiful.

DIA: Splendid, still, that's not what I came for.

NIJ: To join your company?

DIA: I have no company. There's a war in progress. No, I came about your lawsuit against me. I imagine you heard that the English court has decided in your favour. The judgement was a half million gold francs.

NIJ: A lot of money.

DIA: I don't have it. With the war and all, there is no money for art. There is only money for bodies. Hundreds of thousands of bodies. They're at a premium.

You have such a fine body, Vaslav. An immortal one if I remember correctly. I'm sure that one or another of these warring factions would give you quite a tidy sum for it.

NIJ: I'm not interested in money.

DIA: Good, that solves my problem. If you should change your attitude, you should approach the Americans. They have a lot of money but no "art". I'm thinking of going over myself.

(The CHORUS rush in and capture NIJINSKY in the middle of a square dance during which the following song is sung.)

CHORUS: ONE THOUSAND DOLLARS CASH.

Well-a alaman left  
Your partner  
Swing her dosey doe  
If'n you like money in your pocket  
Come on over here

Hey alaman left  
An a dosey doe  
Throw her in the air  
We don't know nothin' bout dancin  
But you know we really care

So down on your back  
Feet in the air  
Open wide your mind  
We're gonna fuck you  
If we get the chance  
Cause we're quick rich millionaires.

Oh alaman left your partner  
Swing 'im dosey doe  
If'n he's a ballet dancer  
Then stomp on all his toes.

Stomp on all his toes.

( NIJINSKY, left alone as the CHORUS exit, sits again in front of the make-up mirror. )

( Enter, KOSTROVSKY and Otto KAHN. )

NIJ: Yes?

KOS: This is Mr. ...

KAHN: Kahn, that's K..A..H..N. Otto to my friends. I'm the money behind old Coppicus, who you've been dealing with up to now..

NIJ: Mr. Kahn...

KAHN: Now look Nijinsky, I put up a half million bucks for this little social of yours and I didn't do it out of charity or because I like to do a little jig now an' then. I did it because I expected some kind of return on my money. Know what I mean.

I'm a businessman, not a la-de-da gentleman and when I make a deal, I expect the other half to keep up his end. We hired you cause you were supposed to be the best at whatever it is you do and we gave you sufficient means to do it but you haven't done it. Now, how about it?

NIJ: Mr. Kahn I can only say...

KAHN: I believe in giving the other guy his chance Nijinsky. We've given you three weeks to produce a ballet for us an' it ain't ready. We've already sold half the tickets an' we don't want to give the money back. Where's the ballet?

NIJ: I've tried to explain Mr. Kahn...

KAHN: Nijinsky...

KOS: Mr. Kahn? Vaslav has been ill, very ill for the past week. The doctor's orders have been for him to rest...completely. He isn't supposed to work.

KAHN: Who are you?

KOS: Kostrovsky.

KAHN: I heard about you. You're some kind of Bollsheevic aren't you. Crazy too.

NIJ: Kostrovsky is subject to epilepsy Mr. Kahn, he is not "crazy" and I will not stand for you coming in here and insulting the members of my company. Your ballet will go on Mr. Kahn. It will be ready but I will not be held responsible for the quality of the performance.

KAHN: Quality? Just give me a performance, that's all I want. Now, goodnight gentlemen, I'm sure there'll be no need of any further discussion on this point.

NIJ: Good-bye

( Exit KAHN. )

KOS: You can't dance Vaslav.

NIJ: I have to, we need the money too.

KOS: That pompous ass. All he knows is money. Money! That's all any of his kind know because they've never been without it.

NIJ: We too need money Kostrovsky, their money. We're no better than they are.

KOS: Yes, we are. We are better because we have values, ideals that come before money. I want to get out of this country.

NIJ: Where would you go?

KOS: Back to Russia. There...there is more than a belief in dollars.

NIJ: What more?

KOS: There is the land, the peasant, the "moujic" who lives and dies on his own soil. There is Russia, mother of our fathers.

NIJ: It's money there too. That's why I left to make money for my family.

KOS: Not anymore Vaslav. Things are changing in Russia. It's the people now Vaslav. The people are rising against the Czar. Rising for love of Russia.

NIJ: I met him once. The Czar. He gave me a gold watch because he liked the way I danced. I didn't want to take it from him. He said I should because it was worth a lot of money. I sold the watch in New York to buy a birthday present for Romola. I'd like to make a lot of money one day and buy the watch back.

KOS: Trinkets, symbols. That's what they always gave us, while they stole our country from us. But no more, we're going to take it back and give it to the people.

NIJ: Why?

KOS: For love of the people. Tolstoy loves the people, not money. You've read Tolstoy?

NIJ: Yes.

KOS: He said Russia is like a great tree, with roots that plunge deeply into the earth where its life comes from and the people are the leaves of the tree. They take in the sunshine and give food, life to the tree. Russia for the love of the people.

Come with me Vaslav, come back to Russia. All the treasure will belong to all the people. You can dance for them.

NIJ: I don't like war. Men kill each other for reasons I don't understand. I understand and believe in what you say...but to kill the god that is any man...

KOS: You're a coward, Vaslav. We have to fight for what we believe, there's no other way.

NIJ: Love?

KOS: Love? What kind of love is there that will put food in your child's belly, that will let her grow straight and tall when men, other men, beat her to keep her down. When you see her blood on the soil of Russia, then you'll learn to kill.

NIJ: No, no I won't kill.

KOS: Then you'll die.

NIJ: I want to. I want to die, if it will end the killing of other men.

KOS: Then come and die for Russia. Come and save our Mother because they are killing her.

( Enter ROMOLA. )

NIJ: I'll think about what you've said.

KOS: Good, I'll be waiting.

ROM: Kostrovsky.

KOS: Madame Nijinsky.

( KOSTROVSKY exits. )

ROM: What was he telling you?

NIJ: About Russia.

ROM: What about Russia.

NIJ: Femmka, I'm thinking that we should go back to Russia. I don't like America...

ROM: Why? Why go back to Russia, what's there?

NIJ: My mother, my brother.

ROM: You haven't heard from them in two years.

NIJ: More reason...

ROM: The war...

NIJ: You don't understand.

ROM: No. No, you don't understand. You want to stop dancing here, go back to Russia, become a moujik and scratch a living in the dirt. I've heard what Kostrovsky has to say. He's saying it to everyone in the company.

NIJ: Femmka, he's right, I...

ROM: No, he's not right. To earn a life, not live it. To get dirty and go hungry. You want your child to be dirty and starving. To grow up knowing nothing but the land. You want, you want! What about us? What about what we want? Kyra and me?

Already because of your dancing, I've had to be separated from her. To put her with strangers in a hotel. I don't want to lose anymore.

I'm going back to New York, to be with Kyra. If you want us, come to us or if not go and crawl back to your mother, your Russia.



( Exit ROMOLA, NIJINSKY is left alone in front of the make-up mirror. )

NIJ: A horse. I will run. I will run, from gate to post to wire. I will run because running is my life. My wife told me. I cannot give it up. We need money. I must run for money. I have known nothing but running all my life.

( FADEOUT )

CHORUS: Run...run...run  
Run...run...run  
Run-run, run-run, run-run  
Run-run, run-run, run-run  
Run-run  
Run-run

## ACT II - scene 2

( Lights, reveal NIJINSKY, in front of the make-up mirror as ROMOLA enters. )

ROM: Vaslav?

NIJ: Yes, femmka.

ROM: I've been talking to the doctors.

NIJ: Behind my back?

ROM: They said you wouldn't listen.

NIJ: To them? Saying stop dancing. Rest. Rest! They don't see that I must work to be healthy.

ROM: Not forever, Vaslav, just for a little while.

NIJ: We need money, you said that.

ROM: We have enough money for now. Take a vacation. Go somewhere beautiful, just you and me and Kyra.

NIJ: Femmka, my work...

ROM: A little while. To play with our child and maybe...have another one.

NIJ: Another baby?

ROM: A son for you Vaslav.

NIJ: A strong boy like his father.

ROM: Handsome.

NIJ: Beautiful like his mother.

ROM: Then we go?

NIJ: Yes, for awhile.

ROM: I've already found us a lovely villa. It's in St. Moritz-Dorf, just below the mountains and so beautiful.

NIJ: It sounds lovely but...

ROM: But?

NIJ: I don't like the snow.

( FADEOUT )

## ACT II - scene 3

( Light reveals NIJINSKY, standing alone down center. )

NIJ: Sometimes, sometimes while we make love I tell her..."I love the audience as much as I love you now..." ...she moans, says she doesn't understand what I'm saying...that love, love cannot be as indiscriminate as the price of an admission...or else it would not be love. She doesn't understand.

I tell her that God wants us to love every man equally, just because they are men. She says each man does not feel this love equally and therefore is not worthy of the same gifts. That if we were meant to love everybody equally, there would be no families. I cannot make her understand.

( Enter NEGRI, calling for her children. )

NEGRI:Soren! Soren! Where are you? Come home, I've made sugar cookies. Where are you? Excuse me...

NIJ: Who are you looking for?

NEGRI:For my son Mr. Nijinsky.

NIJ: Are the costumes ready?

NEGRI:Very nearly. They'll be ready in time Sir.

NIJ: It doesn't matter. I didn't mean to alarm you. Startle you? I mean it doesn't matter if they're not ready.

NEGRI:They will be.

NIJ: Good. Your son, I haven't met him before.

NEGRI:He's been away.

NIJ: That's not good. A son shouldn't leave his mother.

NEGRI:He...he didn't leave. He was taken.

NIJ: Who? Who took your son?

NEGRI: It doesn't matter.

NIJ: It does.

NEGRI: No.

NIJ: Where did they take him?

NEGRI: I don't know. They just took him away one day. He was so small. A little boy. Just a few weeks old. Just a little boy.

NIJ: And you let them?

NEGRI: I was ill, I couldn't stop...

NIJ: You stupid woman! To let them take your son. Well, they won't take mine. Yes, I'm going to have a son.

NEGRI: I'm very happy for you. When?

NIJ: Soon. As soon as my wife's doctor says it's all right.

NEGRI: It isn't started yet?

NIJ: He. No, not yet. I am..I'm going to start work again soon also.

NEGRI: I know, I think it's wonderful. It's been some years since you danced.

NIJ: One, just one year but I'll be a sucess again.

NEGRI: I'm sure of it.

NIJ: You must come. No, I insist. You made the costumes, you must come. It will be just a small audience. Friends, I have invited.

NEGRI: I would be honoured...

NIJ: You said you made some cookies. I'm very hungry. I haven't eaten today. Could I have one?

NEGRI: They're not very special, just sugar cookies.

NIJ: Negri, the dressmaker, also makes cookies. You're very wonderful.

( She gives him the cookie, he eats it. )

NEGRI: You must be very hungry to eat so fast.

NIJ: I haven't eaten for...quite some time.

NEGRI: Don't they feed you at hom? Your wife...

NIJ: They eat meat. I won't eat any meat. It isn't good for me. They even feed it to my little daughter.

NEGRI: Kyra?

NIJ: You know her?

NEGRI: She's beautiful.

NIJ: Yes, she's very special. She is a child of God.

NEGRI: So is my son.

NIJ: Your son is dead.

NEGRI: I know.

NIJ: But you call him?

NEGRI: He can hear me.

NIJ: You believe that?

NEGRI: Yes.

NIJ: You're very lovely.

NEGRI: Thank you.

NIJ: I'm very cold; may I come to your home with you?

NEGRI: If you like.

NIJ: Perhaps you could rent me a room? I need somewhere to work. Somewhere that I won't be disturbed.

NEGRI: We have one spare room. I will ask my husband.

NIJ: Good. I'll come tonight.

NEGRI: Very well.

NIJ: You're very wonderful and I love you.

NEGRI: Thank you.

NIJ: You believe me?

NEGRI: Yes...I believe you. You love me, as you love the children, the mountains, the snow, the trees. You are very wonderful, Monsieur Nijinsky. I'll see you this evening.

NIJ: Thank you.

NEGRI: It's nothing.

NIJ: You believe that I love you. It's enough.

NEGRI: Good-bye.

NIJ: Good-bye.

( Exit NEGRI, NIJINSKY turns and moves into the audience. )

NIJ: Where have you been?  
Have you been to the house of our Lord?  
Did you touch the breast of the virgin?  
Have you said a prayer for peace?  
Have you been to church?  
Why don't you go to church?  
Christ died for you?  
Jesus loved you.  
I love you.  
God loves you.  
God loves me.  
I love you.  
I am a horse.  
I have won a lot of races.  
Do you love me?  
God is a race horse.  
Have you been to see Christ?  
Did you talk with God?  
Have you been to church?

( Enter ROMOLA. )

ROM: Come away, Vaslav. Leave those people alone.

NIJ: I'm only asking if they've been to church.

ROM: They don't want you to ask them.

NIJ: They should go.

ROM: Come with me.

NIJ: For a walk?

ROM: Yes, for a walk.

NIJ: No, I can't.

ROM: Why, Vaslav?

NIJ: There's blood on the snow.

ROM: No, there isn't.

NIJ: I sense it. Traces of blood.

ROM: There's nothing there.

NIJ: Someone who is still alive has been killed. We must change direction. More blood. I'm afraid.

ROM: Don't be stupid, Vaslav.

NIJ: I've got to follow. There, there's a cliff.  
It's not blood, only manure.  
Walk in the snow. The mark of skis. They stopped here, beside the blood. Someone's buried a man. Someone's knocked a man down. Someone's killed him.

I'm afraid. I must run, run back. I must go back. God wants to know if I'm afraid. Afraid of him? No, I'm not afraid of God. He is life not death.

Walk toward the precipice. No, I can't. I can't. You...you are the devil, all of you are devils. You tempt me to take my life. You say jump, jump down, only then will we believe you.

ROM: Vaslav, don't...

NIJ: I am afraid. Can't you see that. I'm afraid.

ROM: Yes, Vaslav yes. I see...

NIJ: No, you don't see. How can you? I haven't shown you.



ROM: Shown me what?

NIJ: I am drawn, drawn to the edge. Nearly slip, fall. I am saved, some branches. I am saved.

ROM: Vaslav...

NIJ: I will fall if I let go. God save me I'm insane. Insane. Do you understand.

ROM: Yes, I understand. It's time for the performance. We must go.

NIJ: I have to take off this make-up.

ROM: Why...you spent so long...

NIJ: I don't want it anymore. I don't need it anymore.

( FADEOUT as NIJINSKY removes the Petrushka persona. )

## ACT III

( Lights up. The stage is bare. NIJINSKY, enters. He carries two bolts of cloth, one black, one white. He lays out the cloth in the shape of a cross. Then he goes to the wing and gets a chair, which he places center stage and sits in. )

NIJ: What? What am I doing here?  
Here with you? Why am I here?  
I've been here before, before now.  
I know what to do. I've done all this before, many times before.  
So many times. But I am always here and you, you are always there. An audience.

You are always different, yet always the same. An audience.  
You all know how to be an audience. Why? How do I know that I am always me, here? I have nothing you don't. I don't have a little alarm clock in my mind, set to ring when you arrive. I'm a man, like you. I'm muscle and bone like you. But, I'm always here.

You're like rain running down dry beds in the mountains, each time I walk through you I get wet in a different way.

I'm more interested in you, than you are in me. God. God, whoever, whatever, whyever, even if never, we are both here, you and I. Neither of us any different from the other in our reasons for being here. There is no reason. We are just here. Probably because there is no reason to be elsewhere. Even me, I have no other reason. You could be me. I could be you. You could dance for me, just for tonight. Someone could come, take my place. Someone dance for me? Someone? Dance with me? With me?

I will not dance alone. Not anymore. No more. I'm just like you, a man. Just a man....

This dance is to show that I love. I love you and you and you, each of you. I have danced all my life to show my love. I have tried to touch you. Many I have not reached. There are many of you who don't know how to love. I know many of you.

( Long Pause )

The War. THE WAR!

( CHORUS enters. )

EMMA: Put him away. He's crazy.

ROM: No.

KARS: A pity.

ROM: No.

DIA: It was to be expected.

ROM: Don't say that.

EMMA: Listen to the doctors.

ROM: They're wrong.

DIA: They're scientists.

EMMA: Listen to them dear. They're right. They wouldn't lie to you.

KARS: The strain was too much.

KOS: It could happen to anyone.

DIA: It was fated for him.

ROM: Shut up all of you. Vaslav. I don't want you to go. Even for a little while. But, they say it's the best thing to do. You've said yourself...

NIJ: I say...everybody says many things they don't mean.

ROM: That you love me, that you love Kyra, that you love all of us. You say that too Vaslav, what am I to believe...?

NIJ: Believe what you want. You don't understand. I can't make you understand.

ROM: I want to understand. To be able to speak to you with the words that are soft enough for you to believe that I love you. Everybody loves you, wants to understand you. You have to give us the chance.

NIJ: I have explained and explained until I am tired of feeling anything. You can't understand, because you don't want to.

ROM: Understand what?

NIJ: Why I want to be a vegetarian. I have explained that killing, even if it is to eat...

ROM: Wait, you don't make sense...

NIJ: Even if it is to eat, cannot be sanctioned. We are all creatures of God. He is within us. I cannot eat meat.

ROM: All right, Vaslav. I have tried. I can't try anymore. It's time.

NIJ: Time? For what?

ROM: I don't know. I have to give up. I'm sorry.

NIJ: That I'm insane. Only a trial of God. Him speaking with my tongue. The tongue of God licking...

EMMA: The men are here to take you.

NIJ: What men?

EMMA: The attendants from the clinic. You've got to go with them. Get up, please. Go quietly, we don't need another scene.

NIJ: Does femmka know about this?

EMMA: Yes.

NIJ: She said it was all right?

EMMA: She'll think it best.

NIJ: Will they make me eat meat?

CHORUS: No, meat's expensive since the war. The war used up a lot of it. Wouldn't want to waste it on someone who didn't want it.

NIJ: I won't eat meat.

CHORUS: Horses don't eat meat anyway do they?

NIJ: I'm a horse.

CHORUS: Okay.

NIJ: Horses can run though. I can't anymore. I could once though, I was quite good.

CHORUS: In Vienna, before the war. Those were the days.

EMMA: Please hurry. We want this done before my daughter returns.

NIJ: I won't go.

CHORUS: I'm afraid you have to.

NIJ: Don't upset me...

CHORUS: We think you should go.

NIJ: It's my choice. GOD?

CHORUS: One two out with the old in with the new

NIJ: Do you want me to go?

CHORUS: Three four shut the fuckin' door.

NIJ: If you want me to go...

CHORUS: Five six gonna stir your balls with swizzle sticks

NIJ: I won't survive this God.

CHORUS: Seven eight you're in the gate

NIJ: Take me unto you!

CHORUS: Nine ten we play big...

( The CHORUS have formed an operating table on which they have placed NIJINSKY. DIAGHILEV appears in the role of the DOCTOR. )

DOC: Horsey, horsey tear in his eye,  
So alive he's scared to die.

A rhyme, a joke. These things sometimes help a man in your condition. They relieve the tension which grips your subconscious. A horse in your condition needs stimuli. Things to grasp the subconscious with two hands and shake it. That's what this little needle is. It makes you pay attention. Not a shock or a jolt, as some might recommend but just something to take quiet control and shake it.

DOC: There now. That didn't hurt did it? Now, we just let it take  
(con't) quiet control, one two three four five six...

( He continues to count as the sounds of NIJINSKY'S life sources drain away. )

( Blackout slowly, then in the darkness. )

NIJ: Midnight? Midnight or noon? I would have to open at least one eye to find out. Do horses close their eyes when they sleep? I must find out. I'm supposed to find out. They want me to prove I'm not what I am.

They say I'm a man. Only a man? Nothing is only a man. Men are gods and gods are men. God is with me.

( Lights up. NIJINSKY stands in the center of the cross formed by the cloth. )

The tree has saved me. If I let go of it I will fall. God wants me to stay on this precipice. To try me.

GOD! God, try me no more. You know what is in my heart. I'll give all I have to other men. I will lead other men to you.

Friend. Have you been to church? Have you kissed the breast of the virgin. Tasted of the blood of Jesus? Eaten of God?

He said this is my body, this is my blood. Eat. Eat of me! Take me into your belly! Let me bleed into your womb!

I grow thorns in my mind. To make a man of me. Thorns grow holes in my brains. They crucify me!  
I am convinced of my madness.

I am horse.  
I am man.  
I am God.

EMMA: Maker of judgements.

DIA: Save man from sin?

KARS: Do we know sin?

ROM: Who do you want?

KOS: Give us his blood.

DIA: Give us his flesh.

EMMA: Give us his life.

PROS: I will wash his body.

ROM: Who do you want?

DIA: Give us Petrushka.

KOS: He tries to escape.

EMMA: From God.

NEGRI: Escape his fate?

ROM: Who do you want?

DIA: Give us Nijinsky.

KOS: The god.

EMMA: The man.

NEGRI: The dead.

ROM: He is not guilty, he must die for himself.

DIA: To be immortal, naturally. Surely we all can see that.

ROM: Yes.

NIJ: Take me God. I'm your seed. Flesh of your flesh. You don't want me to fall, not anymore.  
DEATH!

DIA: On the third day he will ascend, don't worry. He's planned it that way.

NIJ: I am the one who dies when he is not loved. Today is my marriage with God. I take him to couch, like a whore. You are all guilty. Petrushka must die.

Have I not shown you how to love? Like children play butterflies on the green lawn. I must tell you stories and teach you how to die for love, the love I have for you.

NIJ: "My little girl is singing:  
(con't) 'Ah ah ah ah'  
I do not understand its meaning  
but I feel what she wants to say.  
She wants to say that everything  
...is not horror, but joy."  
1

I choose to be God.

CHORUS: We don't know where he went but he never came back. He died in  
1950.

CURTAIN



## SAVAGE

Earthy Lazarus,  
 Dies twice for all his knowledge.  
 The spider winds round his leg.

the cosmos spreads wide  
 lazarus lookin' for eggs  
 down on his knees he begs  
 at the union of her legs

shit sucker done went  
down down  
to reunion union  
with nothin'

The words penetrate,  
 Punctures a sticky line  
 Through the fabric.  
 He is webbed and whispers:

"Come now, the silence!  
 I am seed in autumn,  
 Food for the child."

His hand traces  
Obsidian flesh to the grotto.  
Sweaty palm on  
A pane of glass.

bellyrub bellyrub

she gonna come

like jesus did

Deeper than space,  
Lazarus waves to immortality,  
The bloodless weapon  
Limp in his fingers.

His second hour too old,  
Too feeble,  
To hold anything  
But time.

## SEEDS OF THE WATER

he rolls to  
the shore in waves,  
  
visiting the sea  
only at night  
to sleep, to  
water, to his woman  
sleeping in water, to sleep,  
to his woman.

the sea-cracked shell,  
bellyful of sand,  
doting on the will of tides,

while moonshafts penetrate  
the ocean.

## SLEEPER

The foot walks  
from rock to rock  
considering, resting  
upon each one,  
turned only by the sense of direction.

The occasional pool of water  
poses only an imaginary threat  
that it connects with the ocean.

A line, strung taut  
across the nipple of the inlet,  
extends to the figure  
thigh deep in boulders on the opposite point.

The head turns toward him.

A gull rises from the rocks,  
white as a girl on the  
first day of school.

She rises and circles,  
the struggle of the crab  
trapped between her lips.

## SLEEPER (con't)

He smells her breath  
blow across his back, touches the arrival  
before he falls.

Bits of dry and splintered shell  
on top of a barnacled rock.

## DRIFTWOOD

The wave returns  
to the line of  
the previous tide,  
bringing back the fraction  
that survives.

Worms carve  
a child's cathedral,  
spire upon spire;  
Papa, my papa  
Your worm-riddled liver.

Sometimes you forgot to drink  
even water. You, soldier  
transported on oceans, to kill.  
The tiny holes  
in my past, belong to you.

Seas flow by the cycle  
of the moon. You travel  
by night; my blood rush  
racing the course that crumbles,  
gripped by my hand.

## DRIFTWOOD (con't)

Fragment, broken my sea-life;  
turning crab-boulders toward  
the sun; all night circles  
mist the shore; broken sense  
of memory and of sand.

## AN OLDER POEM (For Barbara)

"Spring seems almost  
Here," he said.  
Instant replays are  
Not for real, they've  
Already been here.

Bullets.  
Footballs.  
Spirals.

"Murder-ball  
Is no fun for short  
Guys like me,"

He said,  
Impishly.

Kids today  
Are not as  
Old as we are.



FOOTNOTES

1 Romola Nijinsky, ed., THE DIARY OF VASLAV NIJINSKY, Berkeley, Los Angeles, California, University of California Press, 1971 (copyright 1936 by Simon and Schuster, Inc.) p. 184.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Nijinsky, Romola, ed., The Diary of Vaslav Nijinsky, Berkeley and Los Angeles, California, University of California Press, 1971.

Skelton, Robin ed., Malahat Review University of Victoria, Spring 1971.

Srinivas, Dr. Krishna ed., Poet, Industries Press, T Nagar Madras 17, German Number, July 1970, ed. Andreas P. Shroeder.

Yates, J. Michael, ed. Contemporary Poetry of B.C., Vol. 2, Sono Nis, 1973.