

Red God

(Красный Бог)

a play by Kevin Bushek and Bronne Bruzgo

(Lights up on a single man onstage.)

CLICK!

CLICK!

BOOM!

... That one had a ring on his finger. Oh well, one more widow in the world. ... What? Is not *my* fault that he wandered away from his platoon... *and* right into my sights, but that is another matter.

You look at me as though I am mad!
Don't worry, don't worry, rest assured.
I am.

Allow me to introduce myself, I am sniper for the Glorious Red Army, Nikolai Trashev, and I am a machine. Now, I was not always the embodiment of the reaper you see before you, when I was sent into battle with nothing but my mosin-nagant and 10 shells, I was harmless. I can still remember my first time though...

(Flashback, the environment is a snow-covered forest. Nikolai shivers as he stands, rifle aimed at a German across a deep ravine.)

I crouched in the bushes, my makeshift snow camouflage doing nothing to shield me from the Russian Winter. My sights were locked on a German manning an MG-42 across the chasm. He hadn't seen me, but I just couldn't do it. This was a man whose people had invaded our country, burned our cities and killed helpless people, but he was still a man, just like me. With my mind off my target for a mere moment, I happened to shift my weight and snap a branch. In an instant I knew I was about to die, for my rifle shot one bullet at a time, and the German shot 30 rounds every *second*. I quickly raised my scope to see him spring to life across the chasm

CLICK

It was him or me

CLICK

And it certainly wasn't going to be me
BOOM!

(Freeze position, he sounds very distressed, on the verge of panic and tears)

I had done it
I had taken life
I had played God
And it felt *GREAT*.

I held in my hands the power to destroy. From that second on, I never thought twice or hesitated to pull that trigger. Day after day, shot after shot, one by one the Germans fell at my hand. Slowly, the man in my crosshairs became less and less of a man, and more of a nameless target. Just as slowly, the man on this end of the scope became less of a man, and more of a monster. I became almost excited when I saw the German uniform colors walking between the trees. Soon, I couldn't go a day **WITHOUT** taking life, it was a drug. The click, click, boom of the rifle could lull me to sleep, this great God of death.

My squadron and I moved like ghosts through the snow, we always joked that we were so good that we didn't even leave footprint in the snow. We would all huddle around the fire when the night would fall and make fun of the Germans and their ridiculous-looking leader. My spotter, Innokentiy (*ee-nah-KYEN-teeey*), and I would constantly ridicule those silly Germans by pretending to be Hitler, like this:

(Nikolai rearranges his rifle strap across his chest and strikes an overly exaggerated stiff German stance. He then brings up his pinky to his lip to imitate the famous Hitler moustache. During his entire German tirade, Nikolai attempts to remain as stiff as possible, with all movements being rigid and robotic.)

Oh, look at me, I am such a fancy German! Somebody stole my moustache and my hair is made of shiny plastic! My name is Adolf Hitler, ya?! Oooh, ya! I can stomp around in my big German boots and not move my knees at all. Deutschland, Deutschland. Allow me to try and be a swastika! Tell me, what is it doing?

(Attempt to contort into swastika using bent arms and legs.)

It is *running*, ya!

(Nikolai fixes his rifle strap about his shoulder and breaks away from the German impersonation)

Ah, those were great times. Stalin, now *THAT* is a leader, he can move his knees when he walks **AND**, most importantly, he's got a full moustache. Oh yes. Fear the moustache. Regardless of facial hair, Innokentiy and I were like brothers, the ghost brothers. I would shoot, he would confirm, we were bound never to leave each other's side, we were a team. My squad consisted of about 6 or so of these teams. One day, I wanted to move to the Eastern Pass because I thought that the Germans would foresee our sniper ambush in the gully below, but no, those stupid Krauts would undoubtedly walk right into our sights. Days passed, and not a single German went through that valley, I found out later that those "stupid Germans" anticipated us brilliant Russians and

moved through the Eastern Pass, exterminating several Russian squadrons before they were stopped?

I could have stopped them. Myself. Well, Innokentiy and I... no. Just me. I could have done it without him even. But this squadron is untrusting of me. They see my power. They're *jealous*. They KNOW that I am the most skilled *behind the trigger* and they are trying to hold me back. They don't want the higher command to realize that I am the only thing keeping these monstrous foreign invaders from progressing into the great motherland. If I were my own commander, I bet that I could exterminate the entire German race, a genocide. No, a *Germanicide* at my hands. I proposed it to the squadron commander, Yuri, the next day.

Nikolai: Yuri, Nikolai Trashev, I respectfully request for Innokentiy and myself to be released from this squadron.

Yuri: Why?

Nikolai: So that we may further pursue the German threat uninhibited by others.

Yuri: Those "*others*" keep you alive out there.

Nikolai: Those *others* keep me restrained. Chained up like a *dog*!

Yuri: You do not know your *place*, soldier!

Nikolai: With all due *respect*, sir, my place is out there killing Germans, NOT sitting around here!

Yuri: Your request is denied, Nikolai, return to the squadron!

I could see that requesting was getting me nowhere, time to start demanding. No longer would I be held back.

(Nikolai brings his hand up to his neck and mimics a slitting of the throat as he says the following line.)

Night fell, and I cut myself free from my bonds. I left only Innokentiy and myself alive.

Nikolai: Innokentiy wake up! A German assassin killed our comrades! GET UP! We need to go find him!

Inno: *(Waking up, still groggy.)* What? The comrades, where is the assassin?

Nikolai: He ran when he saw me with my rifle, come on, we've got to collect what we can from the dead and move, there's a killer out there. Quickly, *move*!

It was true, there *was* a killer out there, Innokentiy just didn't know he was right in front of him. I only did what was necessary, and now we were free. We left and got far away from there, and it was like I had just killed for the first time. We were free, no orders, just lots of bullets and lots of Germans out there, just waiting to be killed.

We traversed for days, living off of rations that our comrades so readily gave up to us in death, and then...

Nikolai: Look at all these footprints, there must be a whole regiment moving through here. Come, let's hurry and we can intercept them.

Inno: I don't know Nikolai. This looks like at *least* 50 men went through here. Even if we did intercept them, your first shot would give our position away to 49 other Germans with automatic weapons.

Nikolai: Come now, where is your *spirit*?

Inno: Right next to my common sense and will to survive, Nik, that is suicide.

Nikolai: That's a shame that you think that, Inno. Why do you hold me back so?

CLICK

Inno: I'm not holding you back at all, Nik, I am your best friend, your *only* friend out here.

CLICK

Nikolai: Friends are for peace, not war.

BOOM.

What...? He held me back, and I was a ghost that needed to be absolutely free. The last shred of the shackle that bound me was now splattered all over the snow in a brilliant display of red. It was like a message written in the language of life and death, my language. The language of *God*.

... that's right. *God*.

Blasphemy, you say? *Poslisha Tai, Mudak!*

You go out there and tell me that your religion will save you? NIET!

There is only ONE religion in that wasteland, MINE.

My church is the war zone, my prayers are the gunshots, so I hear people praying all day long to God – *Me*. Because I tell you that THIS god is not on the battlefield

CLICK

I am God on the battlefield!

CLICK!

I choose who lives, and who dies! I see life

BOOM!

And I *Take it*.

But look at the great reaper of life now, useless. Berlin has been taken, the Germans are gone, and I am without a target. Peace is hell. A God of the battlefield in a world devoid of battles. I have no purpose in this land any longer, my purpose is to destroy, and I was not good at it.

I was God at it.

(Nikolai takes a pistol out of the back of his belt, a German luger)

I miss the war zone church,

Click

I miss the gunshot prayers.

Click

But at least I can hear my prayer one last time.

(He holds the pistol to his chin, looks skyward, closes his eyes, and pulls the trigger.)

Boom.