

The battlefield of Lutsk: the edge of a vast, marshy forest. Machine guns are spraying the air with long bursts, interrupted by dull thuds of exploding shells. Curls of smoke are hanging in the air. Oskar Kokoschka is lying badly wounded on the ground, among other dying or dead soldiers. The air is filled with hundreds of voices murmuring names of beloved girls, calling mothers and fathers, moaning, swearing, sighing with pain, crying.

KOKOSCHKA Alma! Alma! Where are you? What are you doing now? Are you thinking about me? Think of me, Alma! Hold me up! Don't let me fall! Hold me! Don't let go of me! Don't let me slip away! Support me! Hold on to me! Tie me to you! Don't let me sink into unconsciousness! Alma! Don't let me go into the dark! Alma! Why didn't you keep an eye on me? Why didn't you warn me? I trusted in you. I was sure you were looking out for me. Why did you let my patrol fall into that ambush? Why did you send me into this hell? Do you know what hand-to-hand fighting is? No, you don't. Hand-to-hand fighting. I'm sure this is my final hour! Alma! Can you hear me? Yes! I can hear you! Raise your voice, Alma! Now I can hear you better. I'm so happy I can talk to you! I'm so happy!... I'm... My horse was killed out from under me... I was shot in the head... I can't hear you very well... I've been shot through the ear... There's a hole in my head... from ear to ear...What do you mean that can't be true... I can hear the wind howling through the tunnel the bullet hollowed out in my skull... I can hear your voice on the wind blowing through my brain... It makes me happy... I don't know... I've lost track of time... I don't know how long I've been lying here in the mud, maybe days, maybe weeks ... It got dark a few times, then the sun shone a few times... I don't know... maybe I just lost consciousness a few times... maybe it's been only a few hours that I've been lying here...

The voice of a man is heard approaching, singing a sweet, sad Russian song.

KOKOSCHKA No, it's not me singing... It's a Russian soldier. A Cossack... he is killing the badly wounded... No, he's not shooting them... he's doing it with his long bayonet... No, he's not a bad guy... He's right in doing it—there's no point in moving the badly injured... they'll die anyway of gangrene... It would just be much ado about nothing...

Screaming voices are heard from nearby against the background of the uninterrupted sweet Russian song of lyrical effusiveness.

KOKOSCHKA No, it's not me screaming. Those are some of my wounded comrades... The Cossack is dispatching them to the other side ...

The Cossack appears carrying his gun equipped with a long, bloody bayonet.

KOKOSCHKA Now it's my turn.

Kokoschka draws his revolver, and hides it ready to shoot at his side.

KOKOSCHKA Don't be afraid, my love. I have my revolver ready... Aimed at his chest...There's a bullet in the chamber...

The Cossack approaches Kokoschka. He keeps singing his beautiful song, as he starts to stab Kokoschka in his chest.

KOKOSCHKA I think his bayonet is entering my jacket... It's only the jacket... Don't worry... He's fumbling around there with his damned bayonet... apparantly looking for my flesh... Yes... Of course I could shoot him... and save myself... But my mind isn'tt yet deranged enough to permit me to murder a man who is just doing his job ... carrying out an order... Ah ha, now I feel his weapon very slowly penetrating my skin... now it's gliding through the fat on my ribs... Oh!- Now it's going into the ribs... Alma!... The pain is terrible... Truly not to be endured... Do you love me? ... Alma- Say you love me and I'll shoot him... Why don't you say something ... You want me to die... Alma!... Please!... all right then... Just a second more... I can take it ... Oh! The pain is gone!... The blade is in my lung... There's no pain any more... My head feels light... I'm happy... I'm happier than I've ever been before ... I'm floating on air... Blood is flowing from my nose... my ears... my mouth... it's blinding my eyes... Dying is so simple, so easy... Ha ha ha ha ha!...

Kokoschka is laughing like mad. The Cossack stops singing and looks at him in bewilderment. He backs up, leaving the weapon sticking in Kokoschka's body. Kokoschka's laughter grows louder and wilder. The Cossack turns and runs away screaming:

COSSACK Mama!!! Boggo Moy! Mama!!!

Kokoschka gets up on his knees. He pulls the bayonet out of his wound. He leans on the gun, stands up on his legs, turns the gun upside down, and using it as a crutch he limps over the corpses and walks away from the deserted and silent battlefield, humming to himself the melody of the sweet Russian song.