

ACT III

SONG-PRELUDE

[Winter is being unmasked -- his hidden youth about to be disclosed.]
The rear stage lighted up, disclosing Winter and the Heralds of Spring.

SONG OF THE HERALDS OF SPRING

*How grave he looks, how laughably old,
How solemnly quiet among death preparations!
Come, friends, help him to find himself before he reaches home.
Change his pilgrim's robe into the dress of the singing youth,
Snatch away his bag of dead things
And confound his calculations.*

(Another group sings)

*The time comes when the world shall know
that you're not banished in your own shadows;
Your heart shall burst in torrents
Out of the clasp of the ice;
And your North wind turn its face
Against the haunts of the flitting phantoms.
There sounds the magician's drum,
And the sun waits with laughter in his glance,
To see your grey turn into green.*

(Evening)

[The rear stage is darkened; the light on the main stage dimmed to the greyness of dark.]

Band of Youths. They all cry, "There, there," and when we look for it, we find nothing but the dust and dry leaves.

I thought I had a glimpse of flag on his car through the cloud.

It is difficult to follow his track. Now it seems East; now it seems West.

And we are tired, chasing shadows all day long. And the day has been lost.

I tell you the truth. Fear comes more and more into my mind, as the day passes.

We have made a mistake. The morning light whispered in our ears, "Bravo, march on." And now, the evening light is mocking us for that.

I am afraid we have been deceived. I am beginning to feel greater respect for Dada's quatrains than before. We shall all be soon sitting down on the ground composing quatrains.

And the whole neighbourhood will come, swarming round us. And they will get such immense benefit from our wisdom that they will never leave us.

And we shall settle down like a big boulder, cold and immovable.

And they will cling to us, as we sit there, like a thick fog.

What would our Leader think of us, I wonder, if he could hear us now?

I am sure it is our Leader who has led us astray. He makes us toil for nothing, while he himself idle.

Let us go back and fight with him. We will tell him that we won't move a step further, but sit with our legs tucked under us. These legs are wretched vagabonds. They are always trudging the road.

We will keep our hands fast behind our backs.

There is no mischief in the back; all the trouble is in the front.

Of all our limbs, the back is the most truthful. It says to us, "Lie down."

When we are young, that braggart breast is a great swell; but, in the end, we can rely on our back.

The little stream which flows past our village comes to my mind. That morning we thought that it said to us, "Forward! Forward!" But what it really said is that, "False! False!" The world is all false.

Our Pundit used to tell us that.

We shall go straight to the Pundit, when we get back.

We shall never stir one step out side the limit of the Pundit's Scriptures.

What a mistake we made! We thought that moving itself was some-thing heroic.

But really not to move, that is heroic, because it is defying the whole moving world.

Brave rebels that we are, we shall *not* move. We shall have the audacity to sit still, and never move an inch.

"Life and youth are fleeting," the Scripture says. Let life and youth go to the dogs, we shall not move.

"Our minds and wealth are fleeting," adds the Scripture. "Give them up and sit still," say we.

Let us go back to the point from which we started.

But that would be to move.

What then?

There sit down, where we have come to.

And let us imagine that there we had been before we ever came there.

Yes, yes, that will keep our minds still. If we know that we have come from

somewhere else, then the mind longs for that somewhere else.
That land of somewhere else is a very dangerous place.
There the ground moves, and also the roads. But as for us ----

(They sing)

*We cling to our seats and never stir,
We allow our flowers to fade in peace, and avoid the trouble of bearing fruit.
Let the star-lights blazon their eternal folly,
We quench our flames.
Let the forest rustle and the ocean roar,
We sit mute.
Let the call of the flood-tide come from the sea,
We remain still.*

Do you hear that laughter?

Yes, yes, it is the laughter.

What a relief! We have never heard that sound for an age.

We had been choking for want of the breath of laughter.

This laughter comes to us like the April rain.

Whose is it?

Cannot you guess? It is our Chandra.

What a marvellous gift of laughter he has! It is like a waterfall. It dashes all the black stones out of the path.

It is like sunlight. It cuts mist to pieces with its sword.

Now all danger of quatrain fever is over. Let us get up.

From this moment there will be nothing but work for us. As the Scripture says,
"Everything in this world is fleeting, and he only lives who does his duty
and achieves fame."

Why are you quoting that? Are you still suffering from quatrain fever?

What do mean by fame? Does the river take any heed of its foam? Fame is that
foam on life's stream.

(Enters Chandra with a blind Minstrel)

Well, Chandra, what makes you so glad?

Chandra. I have got the track of the Old Man.

From whom?

Chandra: From this old Minstrel.

He seems to be blind.

Chandra: Yes, that is why he has not got to seek the road.

What do you say? Shall you be able to lead us right?

Minstrel: Yes.

But how?

Minstrel: Because I can hear the footsteps.

We also have ears----

Minstrel: I hear with my whole being.

Chandra: They all started up with fear when I asked about the Old Man. Only this Minstrel seem to have no fear. I suppose because he cannot see, he is not afraid.

Minstrel: Do you know why I have no fear? When the sun of my life set, and I became blind, the dark night revealed all its lights, and, from that day forward, I have been no more afraid of the dark.

Then let us go. The evening star is up.

Minstrel: Let me sing, and walk on as I sing, and you follow me. I cannot find my way if I do not sing.

What do you mean?

Minstrel: My songs precede, I follow.

(He sings)

*Gently, my friend, gently walk to your silent chamber.
I know not the way, I have not the light,
Dark is my life and my world.
I have only the sound of your steps to guide me in this wilderness.*

*Gently, my friend, gently walk along the dark shore.
Let the hint of the way come in whisper,
Through the night, in the April breeze.
I have only the scent of your garland to guide me in this wilderness.*