LAIKA IN THE STARS

SINGER:
I made an opera.
Do my play!

1. DECISION

NARRATOR (Soviet Dragnet):
Act 1. Decision. October, 1957. Soviet Union is home to 209 million humans and 31 million dogs. Many of each are starving to death. The space program is in full swing. The office of Soviet General. He is talking on phone. He is pounding his desk. He speak with strong accent.

GENERAL:
PUT
PUT SOMETHING
ANYTHING
PUT
IT
INTO SPACE
DO YOU HAVE CANARY?

ASSISTANT:
UM, NO SIR, NO CANARY

HOW ABOUT A MONKEY?

THEY ALL ESCAPED THE ZOO

GET A CRIPPLE OR OLD LADY

HOW ABOUT A DOG, SIR?

OKAY
PUT THAT DOG
INTO SPACE
2. A Girl's Best Friend

NARRATOR:
Act Two. A Girl’s Best Friend. We move forward in time. Later that day. This is true story. The streets of Moscow. It is winter. A Girl (GIRL appears) and her Dog (LAIKA appears).

GIRL:
YOU NEED A FRIEND
TO MAKE IT IN THIS WORLD

AND IT'S SO IMMENSE
THE LOVE OF A LITTLE GIRL

SO EVERY TIME THE MOON CHANGES
LAIKA LAIKA
AND EVERY TIME MY HOPE WANES
LAIKA LAIKA

ONCE IN A WHILE
WE RUN OUT OF BREAD
ONCE IN A WHILE
WE HUDDLE FOR WARMTH

ONCE IN A WHILE
THERE IS TOTAL ECLIPSE
ONCE IN A WHILE
OUR DISHES ARE GONE

AND EVERY MORNING
IT'S SO COLD
MAYBE SOMEDAY
I'LL LOSE THE WAY

SINGER
Laika. You want to know secret? I love you. Yes, is no secret.

GIRL
but every time the moon changes
LAIKA LAIKA
and every time my hope wanes
LAIKA LAIKA

NARRATOR
The dog loves the girl; the girl loves the dog!
It is story as old as time!

But every time my shoe breaks
And every time my heart sighs
you need a friend
to make it in this world

[Laika is taken]

3. Dog Catcher

Act Three. Dog Catcher. Who was that man who caught that dog?

Dmitri Lovetsobak. Best dogcatcher in immediate area near government building. Now, this name Lovetsobak literally means, in Russian, dog catcher. This name is what we might call destiny. And a curse. Because Dmitri is not a bad guy in his heart. It hurts him to catch the dogs. But he must follow fate. Even if it eats his stomach lining like hunger. This man’s tortured inner life is now represented for you, in song.

THE ART OF CATCHING DOGS TAKES ITS TOLL

IT’S EASY TO DO BUT WEARS ON THE SOUL

I SCRATCH EACH PUPPY ON HIS HEAD

AND TRY NOT THINK HOW HE END UP DEAD

“HERE PUPPY” “HERE REX”
“SPOT” “FIDO” I HOLLER
I MAKE UP THEIR NAMES
IF THEY DON’T HAVE A COLLAR

THE LIFE OF DOG CATCHER
IS ONE BEST SPENT ALONE

FOR YOU HARDEN YOUR HEART
OR IT HARDENS ON ITS OWN

“HERE BORIS” “HERE LIV”
“ANATOLY” I HOLLER
I HATE TO GET TO KNOW HIM
BUT HIS NAME IS ON THE COLLAR

THE LIFE OF DOG CATCHER
IS ONE BEST SPENT ALONE

(Irina: “Hey Ivan…” Ivan: “No! Irina. My life is my work!”)

FOR YOU HARDEN YOUR HEART
OR IT HARDENS ON ITS OWN

[bridge]

MY GREAT GREAT GREAT GREAT GREAT GREAT GREAT GREAT GRANDFATHER ASCHER
WAS A VERY VERY VERY VERY VERY VERY VERY UNRELIABLE DOGCATCHER

BUT EVERY SINCE HIM WE
HAVE IMPROVED SIGNIFICANTLY
TO A TRAGIC DEGREE
FOR EACH DOG AND EACH FLEA
TAKES A PIECE OUT OF ME

THE ART OF CATCHING DOGS
TAKES ITS TOLL

IT’S EASY TO DO BUT WEARS
ON THE SOUL

I SCRATCH EACH PUPPY
ON HER HEAD

AND I TRY NOT TO THINK HOW SHE
END UP

TRY NOT TO THINK HOW SHE
END UP

TRY NOT TO THINK

AND THEN I DRINK

4. LULLABY

NARRATOR
Act Four. Lullaby. (serious/severe) This is sentimental scene! Inside of cold apartment belonging to little girl from previous chapter!

GIRL
Mama. I can’t sleep without Laika at the foot of the bed. My toes are cold.

MOM
Shhh shhh. Let me hold you my little one.
Maybe tomorrow she will come back.

GIRL
I hope so.
Mama.
Where is Laika sleeping tonight?

NARRATOR
And then this mother told a comforting lie, as mothers sometimes do.

MOM
She’s in a warm place. A cozy place. She found her mama too. They are holding each other so tight. Now it’s time to sleep.

MOTHER
BAI, BAI, BAI, BAI,
BAYU, LAIKUSKU MAYU!

RUN IN FIELDS OF FLOWERS
SALIVATE FOR HOURS

RUN IN FIELDS OF FLOWERS
YOU ALWAYS WILL BE OURS
(All performers sing. It becomes an eerie round, the words overlapping and indistinguishable)

BAI, BAI, BAI, BAI,
BAYU, LAIKUSKU MAYU!

REST BENEATH THE BOWERS
CHEW YOUR BONE FOR HOURS

REST BENEATH THE BOWERS
YOU ALWAYS WILL BE OURS

(Suddenly in unison and quiet/whispery:)

CHEW YOUR BONE
YOU'RE NOT ALONE
SALIVATE
OH DROOLING MUTT
I'LL LOVE YOU
NO MATTER WHAT

5. TRAINING

NARRATOR:
Act Five. Training. Soviet dog kennel, experimental science division. Only five days to prepare. One pilot must be found among the dirty strays.

1.

NARRATOR:
Day One. Cold. Dark. She surrounded by scientist. One short and sweating. One tall. One is woman.
They all nervous. Into tiny shivering dog they put their hope.

SINGER:
YES... FEARLESSNESS
IS RAREST ISOTOPE

2.

NARRATOR:
Day Two—Strength Training. Can she match Olympic weightlift team in
muscle capacity?

SINGER:
YES... LAIKA’S HEART IS STRONG
STRONG AS TOLSTOY NOVEL LONG

3.

NARRATOR:
Day Three—Floating practice. Scientists still skeptical. Will dog’s head not explode under pressure?

SINGER:
NO... HER BRAIN IS GREAT MACHINE
HUM LIKE RUSSIAN SUBMARINE

CHORUS:
(SUBMARINE!)

4.

NARRATOR:
Day Four—Strength training. Can she lift very heavy things?

LAÏKA
YES SHE NEVER SHOW DEFEAT
STRONG AS FIELD OF SOVIET WHEAT

CHORUS:
(YES SHE NEVER SHOW DEFEAT)

5.

NARRATOR:
Day Five—Photo opportunity. Only one question remain. Does she look cute inside of spaceship?

SINGER:
YES
YES!

LAÏKA PASS EVERY TEST
OF ALL DOGS SHE IS THE BEST

(with CHORUS)
SHE FINEST DOG THAT WE HAVE GOT
SHE IS PERFECT COSMONAUT

5.5 PROPAGANDA

Narrator:
Act Five Point Five. Propaganda. Even before historic voyage, Soviet Union designed a massive propaganda campaign to unify the people through Laika branding.

OLD MAN 1:
YES SHE IS THE NATIONAL DOG

OLD MAN 2:
LAIIKA VODKA TASTES LIKE VICTORY

ALL SCHOOLCHILDREN KNOW HER NAME

LAIIKA CIGARETTES SMOOTH AND TASTY

MUTT IS PUT ON POSTAGE STAMP

LAIIKA CHOCOLATES NEVER MELT

ALL NEWSPAPER SHOW HER FACE

LAIIKA DISH SOAP LEAVES NO TRACE

TOGETHER:
ALL CHILDREN KNOW HER NAME
MUTT PUT ON POSTAGE STAMP
LAIIKA CHOCOLATES NEVER MELT
LAIIKA CIGARETTES SMOOTH AND TASTY

POSTAGE STAMP
KNOW HER NAME
VICTORY
LEAVES NO TRACE

6. ORBIT

Narrator:
Act Six. Orbit. There was never a question about Laika’s fate.
She orbited for only four hours before succumbing to heat and exhaustion.
[The moon awakes from a million years of sleep. The rocket, with LAIKA inside, travels slowly on its trajectory. The MOON sings:]

MOON:
FULL DISH EMPTY HEART
REVOLVE AND ORBIT
THE DISHWASHER’S
TAKEN YOUR HEART
REPLACED IT WITH SPOONS

DON’T BE AFRAID
DELICATE DOG

ONCE IN A WHILE
WE WAX FULL OF LIGHT

EMPTY DISH AND FULL HEART
STEEL AND CADMIUM
MEASURE YOUR PULSES
IN MAGNETS AND MOONBEAM

STOP YOUR WHINING, LISTEN TO ME

BAI, BAI, BAI, BAI,
BAYU, LAIKUSKU MAYU!

BAI, BAI, BAI, BAI,
BAYU, LAIKUSKU MAYU!

CHORUS/MOON:
I HAVE SEEN WHAT NO ONE HAS SEEN
I HAVE SEEN WHAT NO ONE HAS SEEN
I HAVE SEEN WHAT NO ONE HAS SEEN
I HAVE SEEN WHAT NO ONE HAS SEEN
I HAVE SEEN […]

[they continue, inaudible now as they travel round the earth]