

# LAIKA THE SPACEDOG

Libretto  
Revised 2019

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## Characters:

Laika	Puppeteer
Sofiya	Soprano
Nikolai	Baritone
Mikhail Klavdievich (their son)	Tenor
Mosovite	Mezzo
Mosovite	Tenor
Mosovite	Baritone
Postman	Mezzo
Khrushchev	Tenor
Countdown voice	Puppeteer
TV announcer	Mezzo
KGB officer 1 (non-speaking)	Puppeteer
KGB officer 2	Soprano
Sergei Korolev	Baritone
Yelena Dubrovksy	Soprano
Valentina Koslov	Mezzo
Neil Armstrong (offstage)	Tenor

SCENE 1	URALSKAYA STREET, BUILDING 6, APARTMENT 94
SCENE 2	ON THE WAY TO GORKY PARK
SCENE 3	URALSKAYA STREET, BUILDING 6, APARTMENT 94
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SCENE 5	GORKY PARK
SCENE 6	MOSCOW TV CENTRE
SCENE 7	THE KREMLIN
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SCENE 9	GORKY PARK
SCENE 10	BAIKONUR COSMODROME SCIENCE 2 (HEALTH)
SCENE 11	LAIKA'S DREAM
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SCENE 13	BAIKONUR COSMODROME: FINAL LAUNCH PREPARATIONS
SCENE 14	LAUNCH SITE
SCENE 15	LAIKA IN SPACE
SCENE 16	MIKHAEL GOES HOME
SCENE 17	URALSKAYA STREET, BUILDING 6, APARTMENT 94
SCENE 18	12 YEARS LATER: THE MOON

**PRELUDE**

*2 actors unfurl a Russian banner/flag which reads  
**LAIKA THE SPACEDOG COSMONAUT OF THE USSR***

**SCENE 1**

**URALSKAYA STREET, BUILDING 6, APARTMENT 94**

*They leave revealing a man - Nikolai (Sofiya's husband) -  
 asleep on a table. A bottle in his hand.*

*Sofiya is busy – she rushes backwards and forwards as if to  
 and from the kitchen. Each time she appears she seems to be  
 tempting an animal with something to eat.*

*Mikhael is their son. He is busy with some scientific problem  
 that he's trying to solve.*

*Sofiya disappears just as a puppy appears – climbs on the  
 man's chest. Nikolai sleeps on. Puppy jumps on man's head.  
 He wakes up and shouts just as Sofiya appears.*

- Nikolai      **Kids to feed and clothes to buy  
 And now you bring me a puppy:  
 We can barely keep ourselves warm.  
 Get rid of it, don't tell me where:  
 You can kill it,  
 You can sell it,  
 Or dump it far away  
 So it never ever, never ever, ever comes back:  
 So it never ever comes back.**
- Sofiya        **So it's puppies now is it?  
 You want to hurt everyone and everything don't you?  
 Don't you?**
- Mikhael      **Dad, give Mum a break.  
 She bought the dog for you.  
 You always said how you wanted one.**
- Nikolai      *(in a rage)*  
**I wanted a proper dog – an Alsation or a bulldog,  
 Not a pathetic mongrel like that.**

**And you Mikael Alexandrevich.  
 You keep your mouth shut!  
 You're wasting your time on science, on science.  
 What's science got to do with anything?  
*Puppy jumps on him again*  
 You can kill it.  
 You can sell it.  
 Or dump it far away,  
 So it never ever, never ever ever comes back!**

*He storms out.*

Mikhael **How we put up with him I'll never know.  
 Now what do we do with the dog?**

Nikolai *Offstage and shouting.* **Get rid of it!**

Mikhael **She's so little, with that funny mark under her chin.**

Sofiya **There's a place in the park where all the dogs go.  
 She'll be fine for a bit and the weather's ok.  
 We'll take her food every day.  
 We'll find a way to bring her back.**

Mikhael **Goodbye little one, don't be scared!  
*Puppy barks.*  
 That's good! Laika, Laika, that's what we'll call you.  
 Laika, Laika, that's what we'll call you.  
 Laika, that's what we'll call you.**

Sofiya **So Laika Laika, we're off to Gorky Park  
 Just for a few days.  
 Imagine what fun that will be!  
 Imagine, imagine, imagine what fun that will be!**

*Laika barks again.*

*Sofiya puts the puppy inside her coat and leaves the apartment.*

## SCENE 2 ON THE WAY TO GORKY PARK

*A Moscow cityscape moves behind Sofiya and Laika as they travel.*

Moscovites **Moscow, Moscow, Moscow in the USSR**

**Moscow, Moscow  
 City of modern day tsars  
 A million Russians surround you  
 But it's the loneliest place on Earth  
 You travel alone on the metro  
 A dog in the fold of your coat  
 On the way to the park on the metro  
 A stifled sob in your throat  
 A stifled sob  
 A stifled sob  
 In your throat**

Sofiya **When you're frightened  
 Look at the dog-star  
 When you're cold  
 Curl up tight**

**When you're hungry  
 Lift up your paw  
 When you're tired  
 Lie down and dream**

**Wherever you are  
 I am with you  
 Whether on Earth  
 Or up in the sky**

**I will hold you close  
 Though the world  
 Will pass you by**

**Little Laika  
 My little Laika  
 Little Laika  
 My little Laika**

*Sofiya releases the dog in the park.*

**SCENE 3  
 URALSKAYA STREET, BUILDING 6, APARTMENT 94**

*Mikhael at home reading a science book, or playing with a scientific game/puzzle. Sofiya is busy. Nikolai is asleep.*

*They are interrupted by the postman.*

Postman *Spoken. **Post!** (or Posle! in Russian)*

*Mikhael looks at the letter, sees the postmark...*

Mikhael **It's postmarked Baikonur, Kazakhstan,  
It's from the Cosmosdrome, home of my dreams!**

*He opens the letter.*

**Mum, Dad! I've been accepted!  
Assistant to Chief Designer Korelev  
At the Baikonur Cosmodrome,  
Home of the Russian Space Programme.**

**Rockets  
Spaceships  
Sputniks**

**Baikonur, Baikonur,  
The engines roar at Baikonur!  
Can you hear the Sputnik's drone  
As it's launched from the Cosmodrome?**

**The rocket breaks the cloud,  
Its boosters roaring loud,  
It floats on the edge of space,  
Baikonur, Baikonur,  
The engines roar at Baikonur!**

Sofiya **Baikonur? That's 2,000 miles away in Kazakhstan.**

Mikhael **There are trains Mum.  
It only takes a few days!  
I will be with the greatest brains in Russia.  
I will be with the greatest brains in Russia.**

*Grabs train timetable and searches for train times*

Sofiya **Nikolai, wake up! Wake up Nikolai.  
Listen to the news:  
Our boy will be famous.  
He's going to the Cosmodrome.  
He's joining the Space Programme**

Nikolai **Space – who cares about Space?  
What's that to do with the human race?  
Go on, get out just like the rest.  
You're worse than that horrible pest  
Of a dog, and I'll tell you for free,  
You don't care what happens to me!**

Mikhael **I have to be there by October the 1<sup>st</sup> –**

**That's in two days' time!  
Bye Mum. Bye Dad.**

*Mikhael rapidly packs his bag and gives Sofiya a hug.  
He leaves, singing the Rockets song.*

**Rockets  
Spaceships  
Sputniks**

**Baikonur, Baikonur,  
The engines roar at Baikonur!  
Can you hear the sputnik's drone  
As it's launched from the Cosmodrome?**

**The rocket breaks the cloud,  
Its boosters roaring loud,  
It floats on the edge of space,  
Baikonur, Baikonur,  
The engines roar at Baikonur**

**SCENE 4  
BAIKONUR COSMODROME  
SCIENCE 1 (PLANETS)**

*The scientist Valentina is on her own, working on the satellite  
Sputnik.*

*Mikhael enters.*

Mikhael	<b>Excuse me?</b>
Valentina	<b>Shhh!</b>
Mikhael	<b>But I've come all the way from...</b>
Valentina	<b>Shhh. Be quiet!</b>
Mikhael	<b>Moscow...</b>
Valentina	<b>So what?</b>
Mikhael	<b>I've come all the way from Moscow to work...</b>
Valentina	<b>For who?</b>
Mikhael	<b>For the designer in chief!</b>

Valentina      **The designer in chief?  
But we all work for him, you idiot!**

**This is Sputnik.  
Don't touch it!**

**You see this ball of fun:  
It's to measure the rays of the sun,  
And it sends the information  
To our radios back here at base.**

*Mikhael is about to touch it as Korolev enters*

Korolev      **Don't touch that! What do you think you're doing?  
Why are you not wearing gloves?**

Mikhael      *Not recognising Korolev.*  
**I've been assigned to Chief Designer Korolev.  
Have you seen him?  
He's old and ugly,  
Spent years in prison,  
Bad tempered most of the time:  
Have you seen him?**

Korolev      **You say he's old?  
You say he's ugly?**

Mikhael      **That's what they say!**

Korolev      **Bad tempered most of the time?**

Mikhael      **Night and day! So have you seen him?**

Korolev      **And you are?**

Mikhael      **Mikhael Alexandrovich, his new assistant.**

Korolev      **Well, lucky Comrade Korolev.  
I can see he'll be really impressed with you.**

*Yelena appears – she is Korolev's favourite and Valentina hates her for it.*

Yelena      **Comrade everything is ready.  
Telemetry, cosmology, meteorology:  
All good.**

Korolev      **Thank you Yelena.  
Valentina? Data? Radio frequencies?**

Valentina *Spoken.* **The satellite will transmit on 20.005 megahertz Comrade Korolev**

Yelena **And also on 40.002 megahertz Comrade Korolev.**

Mikhael **Comrade Korolev?!**

Yelena *Sung.* **Allow me to introduce Chief Designer Korolev.**

Korolev **So what is the speed of light?**

Mikhael **1,080 million kilometres an hour.**

Korolev **And the biggest of our planets?**

*Spoken. To the audience. Anyone?*

*Allowing time for an answer...*

Audience **Jupiter!**

Mikhael *Sung.* **Easy! Jupiter, the giant gas planet.**

Korolev *Spoken.* **Correct.**

*Sung.* **And the smallest?**

*Spoken. To the audience. Anyone?*

*Allowing time for an answer.*

Audience **Pluto or Mercury etc.**

Mikhael *Sung.* **Pluto. But it's not really a planet, so we will have to stick with Mercury.**

Korolev *Spoken.* **Correct.**

*Sung.* **And the names of all of them in terms of distance from the sun? Did they teach you that in Moscow?**

Mikhael **Moscow's very expensive metro just seems useless now.**

Korolev *Spoken.* **I beg your pardon?**

Mikhael  
Valentina  
Yelena *Sung.* **Moscow's very expensive metro just seems useless**



- Mikhael *Spoken. It's a mnemonic!*
- Mercury, Venus, Earth and Mars,  
Jupiter, Saturn,  
Uranus, Neptune.**
- All **MOSCOW'S VERY EXPENSIVE METRO  
JUST SEEMS USELESS NOW**
- Balls as planets could be handed out to volunteers in the correct order.*
- Mercury, Venus, Earth and Mars  
Jupiter and Saturn  
Uranus and Neptune**
- Korolev *Spoken. And how many kilometres are there from the Earth into space? To the audience. Can anyone tell me?*
- Mikhael *Illustrates with the help of bookmarks which have been handed out to the audience before the show.*
- That's another trick question.  
50 kilometres to the stratosphere,  
100 to the Karman line,  
690 to the exosphere.**
- Korolev **And to outer Space?**
- Mikhael **10,000 kilometres!**
- Korolev **Good. The job is yours.**
- Everyone congratulates Mikhael.*
- Sung.*
- Comrades, it's time for our rockets to launch.  
We'll tell the world that we are the best.  
The nations will look up and wonder  
How the Russians triumphed over the West!**
- Everyone **We will conquer the moon  
We'll send men to Mars.  
Our space ships fine-tuned  
To conquer the stars.**
- We will conquer the moon  
We'll send men to Mars.**

**Our space ships fine-tuned  
To conquer the stars.**

Korolev *Spoken. Get ready. To the launch positions!*

*Film of Sputnik on the launchpad ready to blast off.*

**Countdown commences!**

<b>Dyes-yat</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Dyev-yat</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Vo-syem</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Syem</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Shest</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Pyat</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Chye-tir-ye</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Tree</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Dva</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>A-deen</b>	<b>1</b>

**Blast off!!**

*The scientists follow the rocket with their eyes as it climbs and flies off into space.*

## **SCENE 5 GORKY PARK**

*Sofiya returns to feed the dog*

Sofiya **Laika, Laika,  
My little Laika!**

**Laika, Laika,  
My little Laika!**

**When you're frightened,  
Look at the dog-star  
When you're cold curl up tight...**

*We hear Sputnik's beeps.*

**Wherever you are I am with you  
Whether on Earth or up in the sky.**

*Sofiya and Laika look up and sees Sputnik overhead.*

**SCENE 6  
MOSCOW TV CENTRE**

*A jingle announces the news.*

*The Russian TV presenter grooms herself and gets ready to read the news, accompanied by a cartoon film clip of Sputnik.*

TV presenter **Good evening. This is the news.**

**For the first time in history a satellite has been launched into space. The first signals were heard from Sputnik One this morning.**

**Our glorious leader President Krushchev has hailed the flight as the greatest scientific achievement in the history of the USSR.**

**The satellite has now orbited the earth eight times, and its signals have been heard around the world, including in the USA.**

**Comrade Krushchev will meet and congratulate the scientists responsible for Sputnik this evening.**

**SCENE 7  
THE KREMLIN**

*There's a huge poster of Lenin.*

*Korolev waits nervously, as if he's been waiting a long time..  
A sinister KGB agent watches.*

Korolev *Spoken.* **What time will Comrade Krushchev arrive?  
KGB man doesn't respond or acknowledge the question.  
I said, what time will ... KGB man ignores again.  
Oh never mind!**

*Khrushchev appears.  
ALL SING the Russian national anthem.*

All **Soyuz neryshimi respublik svobodnykh,  
Splotila naveki velikaya Rus!**

Khrushchev *Spoken.*  
**Comrade Korolev the Russian people salute you.  
A toast to Sputnik!**

*They drink*

Khrushchev **A toast to you, your team, and to the USSR**

*They drink*

Khrushchev *To the audience.* **And a toast to all these good people!**

*They drink*

Khrushchev *Looking at a man/woman/boy/girl the audience.*  
**And to that man/woman/boy/girl over there!**

*They drink*

**To business. Maps!**

*A map is produced with USSR and America clearly visible,  
plus pictures of American and Soviet rockets*

KGB Soprano *Sung.*

**The Americans are preparing for a launch.  
They want an animal in Space.  
If they succeed that's an end to the fight  
For Russia to put the first man in Space.**

Khrushchev *Spoken.* **President Eisenhower of the USA:**

**A fool if ever there was one...**

*Sung....***Thinks he won the Second World War on his own.  
So we'll beat him and crush him before it's too late.**

*Spoken.* **So hear this. A Russian animal must go into orbit.  
Within one month!**

*All laugh hysterically, including Korolev, who assumes this is a  
joke.*

Korolev **A month? Impossible. A satellite is one thing, but we don't  
have the systems yet to keep animals alive in space.  
We are not ready!**

Khrushchev **Not ready? Not ready?  
Can I remind you Comrade of the time you were in prison?  
Six years in the camps? What was your crime?  
Files!**

*KGB Soprano has a book full of files which she takes into the  
audience. She shows the audience member where to read, and  
stays strict and in character.*

*Each crime is read by a member of the audience first and then sung by the soprano.*

Audience member

**One. That you wore a spacesuit without permission.**

KGB Soprano **One. That you wore a spacesuit without permission.**

Audience member

**Two. That you said our leader was stupid!**

KGB Soprano **Two. That you said our leader was stupid!**

Audience member

**Three. You don't always wear your badge.**

KGB Soprano **Three. You don't always wear your badge.**

Audience member

**Four. You did didn't send our leader a birthday card.**

KGB Soprano **Four. You did didn't send our leader a birthday card.**

*KGB Soprano closes the book and returns to the stage.*

Khrushchev *Spoken.*

**And you say you are not ready?**

**Oh I think you are... ONE MONTH!**

*He leaves with KGB Soprano.*

Korolev *Asking KGB man.*

**What kind of animal?**

*KGB man shrugs. He has a book of animals. He shows both Korolev and the audience six or seven pictures of different (preposterous) animals, and finally a Laika-looking dog.*

*The book is thrust into Korolev's hands as the KGB man leaves. Korolev follows.*

**SCENE 8  
GORKY PARK  
Laika Interlude**

*Laika is in the park, and looks out at the passing world.*

*She goes into the audience and greets people.*

**SCENE 9  
GORKY PARK**

*Valentina is already looking for a dog, and Korolev joins her to see if she has found one. He has a dog-catching net.*

Korolev      **Valentina, the dog: have you found one yet?**

Valentina    **Tell me what kind of dog do we need?**

Korolev      **A young dog, a small dog,  
With lots of personality:  
A terrier if you can get one,  
One that can bark but not bite.**

*Korolev gives her the dog-catching net and leaves.*

Valentina    **Dogs! Dogs! Dogs!  
I hate dogs.  
I have to catch 'em, snatch 'em!  
Whatever the colour, whatever the breed:  
There are geyhounds and wolfhounds,  
And bulldogs and sheepdogs  
And collies and corgis, and poodles!  
Dogs! Dogs! Dogs! Dogs! Dogs! Dogs!**

Everyone     *Offstage.*  
**She hate dogs. She hate dogs.  
Whatever the colour, whatever the breed:  
There are geyhounds and wolfhounds,  
And bulldogs and sheepdogs  
And collies and corgis, and poodles!  
She hates dogs. She hates dogs.**

Valentina    **Dogs! Dogs! Dogs! Dogs! Dogs! Dogs!  
But! There's money in mongrels,  
And roubles in poodles,  
And roubles in huskies...  
*Spoken.* And even in puppies!  
*Sung.* Whatever the colour, whatever the breed:  
There are geyhounds and wolfhounds,  
And bulldogs and sheepdogs  
And collies and corgis, and poodles!  
Dogs! Dogs! Dogs! Dogs! Dogs! Dogs!**

Everyone     *Offstage.*

**She hate dogs. She hate dogs.  
 Whatever the colour, whatever the breed:  
 There are geyhounds and wolfhounds,  
 And bulldogs and sheepdogs  
 And collies and corgis, and poodles!  
 She hates dogs. She hates dogs.**

Valentina **Dogs! Dogs! Dogs! Dogs! Dogs! Dogs!**

**Look... A puppy.... A mongrel...  
 And she barks but doesn't bite!  
 A young dog, a small dog,  
 With lots of personality.  
 A terrier if you can get one,  
 One that can bark but not bite.**

*Valentina snatches Laika, and leaves just as Sofiya appears calling for Laika. Sofiya is desperate.*

#### SCENE 9 CODA

Sofiya **Laika! Little Laika!  
 Come look at the moon,  
 See how its light casts a glow,  
 Makes a path for you home – come home!  
 Laika come and look at the stars,  
 See how the stars are a map,  
 Shows you the path back home.  
 Come home, back home!**

*But there's no sign of her.*

#### SCENE 10 BAIKONUR COSMODROME SCIENCE 2 (HEALTH)

*Korolev is working as Mikhael enters*

Korolev and all

**The thing about science is this:  
 It can open your eyes in surprise  
 At the mysteries under your nose.  
 Why did it all begin?  
 Where did we all come from?  
 How big was the bang  
 From which it all sprang?  
 What makes the smell of a rose?**

**The thing about science is this:  
It can fill your brain with wonder  
At the mysteries under your skin:  
What makes your blood red?  
Why does your heart go boom?  
Can you try and count  
Such an enormous amount  
Of atoms on the head of a pin?**

**The thing about science is this:  
It can open your ears in amazement  
At the sounds that are outside your head:  
How loud is the grate  
That a grasshopper makes?  
What makes the rain splash?  
Or the thunder crash?  
What can you hear from your bed?**

*Silence*

Mikhael *Spoken.* **You know what that sound is? Silence!  
The silence of science!**

Korolev **Science? Silent? Nonsense!**  
*A huge bang or explosion.*  
**It's the noisiest thing in the world!**

*Laika is brought in. She sits on a table watching.*

Valentina *Sung.* **Well dog, want to play, you want some treats?  
Do as I say, then you can eat.  
Before you can rest it's time for a test...**  
*Spoken.* **You little pest!**

Yelena **Go easy with her – she's just arrived.**

Valentina **She's a dog that's all.** *Laika barks.*  
**But what a bark she has!**  
*Valentina pulls hard at her collar*

Yelena **Stop that at once!  
Laika, barker, Laika, barker,  
That's what we'll call you.  
Laika, Laika, that's what we'll call you.**

Valentina *Imitating Yelena horribly.*  
**Laika, Laika, that's what we'll call you.**

*Spoken.* **I hate dogs! Especially this one!**  
*Laika growls at her.*



- Korolev *Sung.* **Listen! Comrades! We have made our decision.  
This is the dog we will send into space:  
She's young and strong,  
But first we must get her prepared,  
So please check her vital signs.**
- Yelena **First her heart rate –  
That's the times in a minute  
That the heart pumps blood around the body.  
In a human that means...?  
I need a volunteer, I need a volunteer...**
- Volunteer steps up and the scientists salute him/her.*
- One of the scientists has a stethoscope.*
- The scientist listens to the heartbeat of the volunteer, while  
Valentina (with everyone) counts.*
- Valentina **1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
Shtop!**
- Mikhael *Shouts.* **12!**
- Korolev **12 beats every ten seconds.  
Therefore how many beats in a minute?  
Spoken. 6 times 12 makes?...**
- Waits for the answer from the audience.*
- Audience **72!**
- Korolev *Spoken.* **Yes – 72!**  
*Sung.* **And in a dog? In the case of Laika?**
- Mikhael *Spoken.* **Faster or slower?**
- Mikhael now listens to Laika's heartbeat.*
- Valentina **1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
Shtop!**
- Mikhael *Spoken.* **20! 20 times 6...**
- Korolev **Makes?**
- Yelena *Sung.* **One hundred and twenty beats per minute!**
- Korolev *Spoken.* **Good!**

*Sung.* **And respiration. How many times does she pant in ten seconds?**

*Mikhael puts a mask on Laika's mouth and they observe the measurement.*

Valentina **1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10**  
**Shtop!**

Yelena **Thirty breaths per minute!**

Korolev **And now her temperature. Tell me how warm is her body?**

Valentina **I will measure.**

*Mikhael puts thermometer in Laika's bottom. Laika objects.*

Valentina *Spoken.* **Stop whining!**  
*Sung.* **Thirty-eight degrees centigrade.**

Korolev *Spoken.* **Time to take Laika to the centrifuge.**

*Laika is put into the centrifuge, which gets faster and faster.*

*Korolev has a stopwatch.*

*At the end Laika is taken out of the centrifuge.*

Korolev *Spoken.* **Observation? You see the dog is clearly tired but she has survived.**

*But Laika is clearly exhausted. Yelena looks after her.*

Valenina **She's not tired. She's pretending. Get up. More tests! More training!**

Yelena **Leave her alone, will you?**

## SCENE 11 LAIKA'S DREAM

*Laika is asleep, dreaming she is on the moon, spinning in space.*

**SCENE 12**  
**BAIKONUR COSMODROME**  
**SCIENCE 3 (ROCKETS)**

*We see the rocket in the distance. Mad activity among the scientists, who are making their final calculations.*

All            **24 hours till launch!**  
**24 hours till launch!**

**Rockets**  
**Spaceships**  
**Sputniks**

**Baikonur, Baikonur,**  
**The engines roar at Baikonur!**  
**Can you hear the Sputnik's drone**  
**As it's launched from the Cosmodrome?**

**The rocket breaks the cloud,**  
**Its boosters roaring loud,**  
**It floats on the edge of space,**  
**Baikonur, Baikonur,**  
**The engines roar at Baikonur!**

*Valentina approaches Laika*

Valentina    **Time for work, you dirty, smelly little mut!**  
**What do you think you are here for?**  
**What do you think you are fed for?**

**Do you think this a hotel for dogs off the streets?**  
**To let them lie down, relax, have something to eat?**

**You're only a dog, dog!**  
**And this is your job, dog!**  
**Now get up and work, dog**  
**You must earn your keep, dog!**

**If you wanted to lie on a log, dog**  
**Well first shut your gob, dog!**  
**No place for a snob, dog!**  
**Now get up and slog, dog!**

*She shakes Laika violently*

Yelena        **Stop that.**  
*Valentina shakes Laika violently again*

**I said stop it! What's she done to you?  
Why do you treat her like that?**

Valentina **Because she's a dumb dog!  
She's no worse than you are.  
You know what they call a female dog?  
A dirty...**

*Laika growls at the same time as Korolev enters.*

Korolev *Spoken.* **A bit nervous today aren't you Laika?**

*Sung.* **Listen. Comrades:  
Only one day until the launch.  
The rocket's primed  
And the fuses are timed  
To ignite on November the third.  
As the fuel bursts into flame  
The blast will be heard  
By this little hound  
So let's see how she reacts to explosions.**

*A huge explosion. Laika doesn't react.*

**So how much does Laika weigh?  
Can anyone say?**

Mikhael **That depends on the place,  
But nothing in Space.**

Korolev *Spoken.* **Good! –  
*Sung.* But down here on Earth where there's gravity?**

*Mikhael weighs Laika.*

Yelena  
Valentina  
Mikhael **Gravity gives weight to objects with mass:  
To help them fall to the ground!**

Mikhael **Eleven kilos precisely.**

Korolev **And the rocket weigh, what does it weigh  
Can anyone say?**

Mikhael **That depends on the place  
But nothing in Space.**

Yelena  
Valentina  
Mikhael **In space it's too late**

**For objects with mass  
To get themselves back to the ground.**

**For in space there's no weight  
To objects with mass:  
In orbit they spin round and round,  
And round and round and round and round and round!**

Korolev **Yes, but down here on Earth where there's gravity?**

*Mikhael scrabbles among the papers and shows the audience*

Mikhael **503 kilos precisely!**

Korolev **Making in all: the rocket and Laika?**

Mikhael *Spoken and to the audience.* **503 plus 11 equals?**

Audience **514!**

Mikhael **514!**

Korolev **Good!**  
*Sung. And Sputnik in Space? What is its weight?*  
*Spoken. Anyone?*

Audience **Nothing!**

Mikhael *Helps if necessary.* **Nothing!**

*A military snare drum continues under the following.*

Korolev *Spoken.*  
**The launch is set for dawn tomorrow. Take Laika back to her kennel.**

Yelena **Yes, Comrade.**

Valentina **You hear that? Back to your kennel dog.**

*She is about to take her when Yelena intervenes.*

Yelena **I'll do that, leave her with me. I'll feed her and put her to bed.**

Valentina **You're welcome to her.**

*Korolev goes. Valentina and Mikhael are busy with instruments and measurements, while Yelena quietly puts Laika inside her coat, so she can smuggle her out.*

Yelena *Sung quietly.*  
**Shh little one, come home with me, just for one night.  
 We'll play your favourite games  
 We'll feed you some treats.  
 You can feel what it's like to be free.**

*Yelena leaves and tries to smuggle her out.  
 Valentina notices.*

Valentina **Where do you think you're going?**

Yelena *Spoken.* **Comrade Korelev told me to go home and get some rest.**

Valentina **Is that Laika you've got there? Stop! Give her to me!**

*Yelena reluctantly gives Laika to Valentina.*

**SCENE 13  
 BAIKONUR COSMODROME:  
 FINAL LAUNCH PREPARATIONS**

*Laika is prepared for the launch by Mikhael, Yelena and Valentina.*

Valentina **Keep still you stupid dog! Keep still!**

Mikhael **Not long Laika.  
 Not long now till you'll be on the news  
 And then you'll be famous.  
 Your name will be up in lights.  
 You'll have tasty treats and doggy bites!**

Yelena **Mikhael, hold up Laika's nose.**

Mikhael **What's this funny mark under her chin?  
 I don't believe it! You're the puppy we had at home!  
 Everyone take a look. This is the puppy we lost!  
 We called her Laika as well. What a coincidence!**

Korolev *Spoken.* **Coincidences in science are not as rare as you would think. Begin the final preparations.**

*Yelena and Valentina prepare Laika for the operation.*

**This cylinder inserted into the artery in her neck will measure her blood pressure.**

*Korolev carefully performs the operation.*

**Now put her into her spacesuit.**

*They put her into her spacesuit.*

**Put her into the capsule.**

*They put her into her capsule.*

**She's ready. Take her to the launch site.  
Countdown begins in one hour.**

*Korolev and Mikhael go.*

Yelena        **One hour Laika. You'll be back soon!**

Valentina    **What are you talking about?  
We can't bring her back.**

Yelena        **What?**

Valentina    **I said we can't bring her back!**

Mikhael      **How do you know?**

Valentina    **Korolev told me. We don't have the systems yet.**

Yelena        **The systems? That makes us murderers! That makes us  
murderers!**

*Mikhael storms in. He is furious.*

Mikhael      **Look at this! Look at this!  
There is no provision for re-entry.  
The heat-shield wouldn't work anyway.  
Plus there's only enough oxygen for a few hours.  
And the power supply will run out.  
She'll die in space.**

*Both look at Laika as Valentina takes her off. They see a fatal calculation on the blackboard – 5 hours. Yelena rushes out in horror.*

**SCENE 14**  
**LAUNCH SITE**

*It's November 3<sup>rd</sup>, the day of the launch.*

*The scientists follow the rocket with their eyes as it climbs and goes off into space.*

**SCENE 15**  
**LAIKA IN SPACE**

*Three of the scientists (apart from Yelena) are monitoring Laika.*

Korolev	<b>Respiration?</b>
Valentina	<b>140 breaths per minute.</b>
Korolev	<b>Blood pressure?</b>
Valentina	<b>220 over 140.</b>
Korolev	<b>Temperature?</b>
Valentina	<b>110 degrees.</b>
Korolev	<b>Heart-rate?</b>
Valentina	<b>112 beats per minute.</b>
Korolev	<b>Temperature?</b>
Valentina	<b>125 degrees.</b>
Korolev	<b>Heart-rate?</b>
Valentina	<b>92 beats per minute.</b>
Korolev	<b>Heart-rate?</b>
Valentina	<b>62 beats per minute.</b>
Korolev	<b>Heart-rate?</b>



Valentina      **42 beats per minute.**

Korelev      **Heart-rate?**

Valentina      **22 beats per minute.**

Korolev      **Heart-rate?**

**Heart-rate?**

*The telephone rings loudly. Valentina answers it.*

Valentina      *Spoken.* **It's the President, Comrade Korelev.**

Korolev      *Sung.* **Yes, thank you.  
Yes, a massive success.  
The mission's accomplished.  
Now you can tell the Americans  
We have successfully managed to launch  
A dog into space.  
*Spoken.* **Yes, a slight problem, but nothing serious.****

## SCENE 16 MIKHAEL GOES HOME

*Mikhael travels back to Moscow.*

Mikhael      **Nobody told me.  
Nobody told me.  
I was part of the team assigned to the launch,  
Part of the team assigned to the launch.  
Nobody told me.  
Nobody told me.  
The plans for Stage Two were kept secret  
From all but a few!  
Nobody told me.  
Maybe, maybe the figures are wrong?  
Korolev would never kill Laika if he could help it.  
Or would he? Or would he?**

**SCENE 17**  
**URALSKAYA STREET, BUILDING 6, APARTMENT 94**

*Mikhael enters quietly, says nothing.*

Nikolai      **You're back. I knew it wouldn't work.  
 You never could stick with anything.  
 Science, rockets, what a waste of time.  
 And I'll tell you for free  
 I'm not going to feed you, you'll see!**

Sofiya        **Stop it, you useless oaf, stop it!  
 Mikhael what happened?**

Mikhael      *Spoken.* **The dog we sent into space Mum, that was Laika!**

*There's a knock at the door. It's the Postman again, this time with a small package, which she hands to Mikhael.*

*He pulls out a medal and a citation, shows parents, who both stand.*

Sofiya        *Sung.*  
**Mikhael Alexandrevich.  
 You have been awarded the Russian Star.  
 The highest award of the USSR:  
 For services to Rockets and Science  
 And for sending the first animal into space.**

*They all look astonished.*

Mikhael      *Spoken and to the audience.* **What do I do – keep it or bin it?**

*We wait for the audience to think for a moment and respond.*

*Sofiya gets Laika's photo.*

Sofiya        **Of course! Laika, this is for you.**

*They put the medal next to Laika's photo.*

Mikhael      *Spoken.* **Laika became famous. In the next twelve years statues sprang up everywhere. There were postage stamps with her picture on them, songs written about her, whole political movements named after her. She was the most famous dog in the world.**

**Then in July 1969 a man called Neil Armstrong stepped onto the moon for the very first time. An American. And**

**something happened that you will never read about in the history books. A secret Armstrong took with him when he died.**

**SCENE 18  
12 YEARS LATER  
THE MOON**

*Animated film of Armstrong and Laika on the moon*

Neil Armstrong

**One small step for man,  
One giant leap for mankind.  
Hey Buzz, you should come and take look at the view.  
Wait a minute...  
It can't be...**

*He hears a bark. He turns round and sees Laika, who rushes towards him.*

*Armstrong turns to see the earth spinning in Space.*

*We see Laika sitting on a crescent moon.*

*Finally we see footage of the real Laika.*

**End**

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