

THE PLAYS

*From LEO TOLSTOY concerning
the translation of his works by
LOUISE and AYLMER MAUDE:—*

*“Better translators, both for
knowledge of the two languages
and for penetration into the very
meaning of the matter translated,
could not be invented.”*



From the portrait by Repin, 1887.

Art Repro Co.

Leo Tolstoy,

LEO TOLSTOY

P L A Y S

Translated by

LOUISE AND AYLMER MAUDE

COMPLETE EDITION
INCLUDING THE POSTHUMOUS
PLAYS

NEW YORK
FUNK & WAGNALLS COMPANY
1914

Printed by BALLANTYNE, HANSON & Co
at the Ballantyne Press, Edinburgh

CONTENTS

	PAGE
PREFACE	ix

Plays published during Tolstoy's life

THE POWER OF DARKNESS (1886)	3
THE FIRST DISTILLER (1886)	97
FRUITS OF CULTURE (1889)	125

Posthumous Plays

THE LIVE CORPSE	229
THE CAUSE OF IT ALL	303
THE LIGHT SHINES IN DARKNESS	321

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

LEO TOLSTOY (Photogravure Portrait)	. <i>Frontispiece</i>	
MATRYÓNA GIVES ANÍSVA THE POWDERS	<i>Facing page</i>	12
I'M NOT ASHAMED OF MY PARENT . . .	„ „	51
HER BOX IS FULL AS IT IS . . .	„ „	53
YOU TELL ME NOT TO FEAR MEN? . . .	„ „	91
WELL, DEAR, AND WHAT PROGRESSION IS OUR BUSINESS MAKING? . . .	„ „	174
THERE, YOU SEE! YOU ARE BEING MADE A FOOL OF . . .	„ „	223

PREFACE

The Power of Darkness, Tolstoy's first and greatest play, was ~~not written until he was fifty-eight years of age, and it was not allowed to be performed in Russia till some years later.~~ Both there and elsewhere abroad it was highly successful on the stage, as was also the comedy, *Fruits of Culture*, which he wrote three years later, to be performed by his own family and their friends.

The only other play published during his lifetime, *The First Distiller*, is a very slight piece of no particular dramatic importance. It was written in the cause of temperance.

Besides these, he left three other plays finished, or nearly finished, when he died.

The Live Corpse (which in English has also been called *The Man who was Dead*) is the one best adapted for the stage. *The Cause of it All* is, like *The First Distiller*, a short and unimportant piece dealing with the effects of drink. The most interesting, not dramatically but psychologically, of the three is *The Light Shines in Darkness*, which was left in an unfinished state. In it Tolstoy presents his own case, and deals with the contradiction that existed and has so often been commented on, between practice and theory in his own life and teaching.

For the purpose of the play he greatly simplified his own highly complex personality, and, though many of the details and characters are drawn from life with extraordinary exactitude, the picture presented is not one which all the people concerned are disposed to regard as quite fair to themselves.

The play presents the terrible clash which resulted from the calls Tolstoy made on himself and on others to abandon all customary ways of life and to start afresh in a new direction. In his own case he was never allowed to test the effects of a life of extreme poverty and manual labour, such as he advocated ; nor did those of his followers who adopted such a life achieve much success therein. Tolstoy's artistic sincerity is indeed shown by the fact that, despite his spiritual fervour and his profound conviction that he had really found the road to salvation for mankind, he has not, in this play, minimised the failure of his efforts to carry convictions to those about him, or to achieve any other success than that of obtaining an inward assurance that he was fulfilling the will of God. This assurance would, no doubt, have been more fully indicated in the last act, had he lived to complete it.

Tolstoy was well aware of the advantages a play possesses over a novel as a means of propaganda, and but for the existence of the Censorship he would have written more for the stage. When asked, in 1892, whether he would write any more plays, he replied: "I would do so with great pleasure, and I even feel a special need to express myself in that way ; but I feel certain the Censor would not pass my plays. You would not believe how, from the very commencement of my activity, that horrible Censor question has tormented me ! I wanted to write what I felt ; but at the same time I felt that what I wrote would not be permitted ; and involuntarily I abandoned the work. I abandoned, and went on abandoning, and meanwhile the years passed away."

There is one other matter of some importance on which I must here say a word.

No accepted standard of transliteration for Russian names into English has hitherto existed. Each writer has been a law unto himself. Now, at last, the Liverpool

School of Russian Studies has prepared and privately circulated a scheme, which deserves to be, and is likely to be, generally adopted. It differs in some particulars from the plan I have followed heretofore; but the advantage to Anglo-Russian literature of the general adoption of a uniform and authoritative rule will be so great that I hasten to put myself in accord with the Liverpool scheme, without even waiting for it to be publicly promulgated.

The result of so doing however is that in the three earlier plays now reprinted from stereotyped plates the transliteration does not quite coincide with the plan adopted in the three freshly translated plays. For this discrepancy I must ask the readers' kind indulgence.

THE POWER OF DARKNESS

OR

IF A CLAW IS CAUGHT THE BIRD IS LOST

A DRAMA IN FIVE ACTS

(1886)

CHARACTERS

| PETER IGNÁTITCH. *A well-to-do peasant, 42 years old, married for the second time, and sickly.*

• ANÍSYA. *His wife, 32 years old, fond of dress.*

• AKOULÍNA. *Peter's daughter by his first marriage, 16 years old, hard of hearing, mentally undeveloped.*

NAN (ANNA PETRÓVNA). *His daughter by his second marriage, 10 years old.*

• NIKÍTA. *Their labourer, 25 years old, fond of dress.*

• AKÍM. *Nikíta's father, 50 years old, a plain-looking, God-fearing peasant.*

• MATRYÓNA. *His wife and Nikíta's mother, 50 years old.*

MARÍNA. *An orphan girl, 22 years old.*

MARTHA. *Peter's sister.*

• MÍTRITCH. *An old labourer, ex-soldier.*

SIMON. *Marína's husband.*

BRIDEGROOM. *Engaged to Akoulína.*

IVÁN. *His father.*

A NEIGHBOUR.

FIRST GIRL.

SECOND GIRL.

POLICE OFFICER.

DRIVER.

BEST-MAN.

MATCHMAKER.

VILLAGE ELDER.

VISITORS, WOMEN, GIRLS, AND PEOPLE *come to see the wedding.*

N.B.—The 'oven' mentioned is the usual large, brick, Russian baking-oven. The top of it outside is flat, so that more than one person can lie on it.

THE POWER OF DARKNESS

ACT I

The Act takes place in autumn in a large village. The Scene represents Peter's roomy hut. Peter is sitting on a wooden bench, mending a horse-collar. Anísya and Akoulína are spinning, and singing a part-song.

PETER [*looking out of the window*] The horses have got loose again. If we don't look out they'll be killing the colt. Nikíta! Hey, Nikíta! Is the fellow deaf? [*Listens. To the women*] Shut up, one can't hear anything.

NIKÍTA [*from outside*] What?

PETER. Drive the horses in.

NIKÍTA. We'll drive 'em in. All in good time.

PETER [*shaking his head*] Ah, these labourers! If I were well, I'd not keep one on no account. There's nothing but bother with 'em. [*Rises and sits down again*] Nikíta! . . . It's no good shouting. One of you'd better go. Go, Akoúl, drive 'em in.

AKOULÍNA. What? The horses?

PETER. What else?

AKOULÍNA. All right. [*Exit*].

PETER. Ah, but he's a loafer, that lad . . . no good at all. Won't stir a finger if he can help it.

ANÍSYA. You're so mighty brisk yourself. When you're not sprawling on the top of the oven you're squatting on the bench. To goad others to work is all you're fit for.

PETER. If one weren't to goad you on a bit, one'd

The Power of Darkness

have no roof left over one's head before the year's out.
Oh what people!

ANÍSYA. You go shoving a dozen jobs on to one's shoulders, and then do nothing but scold. It's easy to lie on the oven and give orders.

PETER [*sighing*] Oh, if 'twere not for this sickness that's got hold of me, I'd not keep him on another day.

AKOULÍNA [*off the scene*] Gee up, gee, woo. [*A colt neighs, the stamping of horses' feet and the creaking of the gate are heard*].

PETER. Bragging, that's what he's good at. I'd like to sack him, I would indeed.

ANÍSYA [*mimicking him*] "Like to sack him." You buckle to yourself, and then talk.

AKOULÍNA [*enters*] It's all I could do to drive 'em in. That piebald always will . . .

PETER. And where's Nikíta?

AKOULÍNA. Where's Nikíta? Why, standing out there in the street.

PETER. What's he standing there for?

AKOULÍNA. What's he standing there for? He stands there jabbering.

PETER. One can't get any sense out of her! Who's he jabbering with?

AKOULÍNA [*does not hear*] Eb, what?

Peter waves her off. She sits down to her spinning.

NAN [*running in to her mother*] Nikíta's father and mother have come. They're going to take him away. It's true!

ANÍSYA. Nonsense!

NAN. Yes. Blest if they're not! [*Laughing*] I was just going by, and Nikíta, he says, "Good-bye, Anna Petróvna," he says, "you must come and dance at my wedding. I'm leaving you," he says, and laughs.

ANÍSYA [*to her husband*] There now. Much he cares. You see, he wants to leave of himself. "Sack him" indeed!

PETER. Well, let him go. Just as if I couldn't find somebody else.

ANÍSIA. And what about the money he's had in advance?

Nan stands listening at the door for awhile, and then exit.

PETER [*frowning*] The money? Well, he can work it off in summer, anyhow.

ANÍSIA. Well, of course you'll be glad if he goes and you've not got to feed him. It's only me as'll have to work like a horse all the winter. That lass of yours isn't over fond of work either. And you'll be lying up on the oven. I know you.

PETER. What's the good of wearing out one's tongue before one has the hang of the matter?

ANÍSIA. The yard's full of cattle. You've not sold the cow, and have kept all the sheep for the winter: feeding and watering 'em alone takes all one's time, and you want to sack the labourer. But I tell you straight, I'm not going to do a nian's work! I'll go and lie on the top of the oven same as you, and let everything go to pot! You may do what you like.

PETER [*to Akoulína*] Go and see about the feeding, will you? it's time.

AKOULÍNA. The feeding? All right. [*Puts on a coat and takes a rope*].

ANÍSIA. I'm not going to work for you. You go and work yourself. I've had enough of it, so there!

PETER. That'll do. What are you raving about? Like a sheep with the staggers!

ANÍSIA. You're a crazy cur, you are! One gets neither work nor pleasure from you. Eating your fill, that's all you do, you palsied cur, you!

PETER [*spits and puts on coat*] Faugh! The Lord have mercy! I'd better go myself and see what's up. [*Exit*].

ANÍSIA [*after him*] Scurvy long-nosed devil!

AKOULÍNA. What are you swearing at dad for?

ANÍSYA. Hold your noise, you idiot!

AKOULÍNA [*going to the door*] I know why you're swearing at him. You're an idiot yourself, you bitch. I'm not afraid of you.

ANÍSYA. What do you mean? [*Jumps up and looks round for something to hit her with*] Mind, or I'll give you one with the poker.

AKOULÍNA [*opening the door*] Bitch! devil! that's what you are! Devil! bitch! bitch! devil! [*Runs off*].

ANÍSYA [*ponders*] "Come and dance at my wedding!" What new plan is this? Marry? Mind, Nikita, if that's your intention, I'll go and . . . No, I can't live without him. I won't let him go.

NIKÍTA [*enters, looks round, and seeing Anísya alone approaches quickly. In a low tone*] Here's a go; I'm in a regular fix! That governor of mine wants to take me away,—tells me I'm to come home. Says quite straight I'm to marry and live at home.

ANÍSYA. Well, go and marry! What's that to me?

NIKÍTA. Is that it? Why, here am I reckoning how best to consider matters, and just hear her! She tells me to go and marry. Why's that? [*Winking*] Has she forgotten?

~~ANÍSYA.~~ Yes, go and marry! What do I care?

NIKÍTA. What are you spitting for? Just see, she won't even let me stroke her. . . . What's the matter?

ANÍSYA. This! That you want to play me false. . . . If you do,—why, I don't want you either. So now you know!

NIKÍTA. That'll do, Anísya. Do you think I'll forget you? Never while I live! I'll not play you false, that's flat. I've been thinking that supposing they do go and make me marry, I'd still come back to you. If only he don't make me live at home.

ANÍSYA. Much need I'll have of you, once you're married.

NIKÍTA. There's a go now. How is it possible to go against one's father's will?

ANÍSYA. Yes, I daresay, shove it all on your father. You know it's your own doing. You've long been plotting with that slut of yours, Marína. It's she has put you up to it. She didn't come here for nothing t'other day.

NIKÍTA. Marína? What's she to me? Much I care about her! . . . Plenty of them buzzing around.

ANÍSYA. Then what has made your father come here? It's you have told him to. You've gone and deceived me. [*Cries*].

NIKÍTA. Anísya, do you believe in a God or not? I never so much as dreamt of it. I know nothing at all about it. I never even dreamt of it—that's flat! My old dad has got it all out of his own pate.

ANÍSYA. If you don't wish it yourself who can force you? He can't drive you like an ass.

NIKÍTA. Well, I reckon it's not possible to go against one's parent. But it's not by my wish.

ANÍSYA. Don't you budge, that's all about it!

NIKÍTA. There was a fellow wouldn't budge, and the village elder gave him such a hiding. . . . That's what it might come to! I've no great wish for that sort of thing. They say it touches one up. . . .

ANÍSYA. Shut up with your nonsense. Nikíta, listen to me: if you marry that Marína I don't know what I won't do to myself. . . . I shall lay hands on myself! I have sinned, I have gone against the law, but I can't go back now. If you go away I'll . . .

NIKÍTA. Why should I go? Had I wanted to go—I should have gone long ago. There was Iván Sem-yónitch t'other day—offered me a place as his coachman. . . . Only fancy what a life that would have been! But I did not go. Because, I reckon, I am good enough for any one. Now if you did not love me it would be a different matter.

ANÍSYA. Yes, and that's what you should remember. My old man will die one of these fine days, I'm thinking;

then we could cover our sin, make it all right and lawful, and then you'll be master here.

NIKÍTA. Where's the good of making plans? What do I care? I work as hard as if I were doing it for myself. My master loves me, and his missus loves me. And if the wenches run after me, it's not my fault, that's flat.

ANÍSIA. And you'll love me?

NIKÍTA [*embracing her*] There, as you have ever been in my heart . . .

MATRYÓNA [*enters, and crosses herself a long time before the icon. Nikíta and Anísia step apart*] What I saw I didn't perceive, what I heard I didn't hearken to. Playing with the lass, eh? Well,—even a calf will play. Why shouldn't one have some fun when one's young? But your master is out in the yard a-calling you, sonnie.

NIKÍTA. I only came to get the axe.

MATRYÓNA. I know, sonnie, I know; them sort of axes are mostly to be found where the women are.

NIKÍTA [*stooping to pick up axe*] I say, mother, is it true you want me to marry? As I reckon, that's quite unnecessary. Besides, I've got no wish that way.

MATRYÓNA. Eh, honey! why should you marry? Go on as you are. It's all the old man. You'd better go, sonnie, we can talk these matters over without you.

NIKÍTA. It's a queer go! One moment I'm to be married, the next, not. I can't make head or tail of it. [*Exit*].

ANÍSIA. What's it all about then? Do you really wish him to get married?

MATRYÓNA. Eh, why should he marry, my jewel? It's all nonsense, all my old man's drivel. "Marry, marry." But he's reckoning without his host. You know the saying, "From oats and hay, why should horses stray?" When you've enough and to spare, why look elsewhere? And so in this case. [*Winks*] Don't I see which way the wind blows?

ANÍSIA. Where's the good of my pretending to you,

Mother Matryóna? You know all about it.— I have sinned. I love your son.

MATRYÓNA. Dear me, here's news! D'you think Mother Matryóna didn't know? Eh, lassie,—Mother Matryóna's been ground, and ground again, ground fine! This much I can tell you, my jewel: Mother Matryóna can see through a brick wall three feet thick. I know it all, my jewel! I know what young wives need sleeping draughts for, so I've brought some along. [*Unties a knot in her handkerchief and brings out paper-packets*] As much as is wanted, I see, and what's not wanted I neither see nor perceive! There! Mother Matryóna has also been young. I had to know a thing or two to live with my old fool. I know seventy-and-seven dodges. But I see your old man's quite seedy, quite seedy! How's one to live with such as him? Why, if you pricked him with a hay-fork it wouldn't fetch blood. See if you don't bury him before the spring. Then you'll need some one in the house. Well, what's wrong with my son? He'll do as well as another. Then where's the advantage of my taking him away from a good place? Am I my child's enemy?

ANÍSYA. Oh, if only he does not go away.

MATRYÓNA. He won't go away, birdie. It's all nonsense. You know my old man. His wits are always wool-gathering; yet sometimes he takes a thing into his pate, and it's as if it were wedged in, you can't knock it out with a hammer.

ANÍSYA. And what started this business?

MATRYÓNA. Well, you see, my jewel, you yourself know what a fellow with women the lad is,—and he's handsome too, though I say it as shouldn't. Well, you know, he was living at the railway, and they had an orphan wench there to cook for them. Well, that same wench took to running after him.

ANÍSYA. Marína?

MATRYÓNA. Yes, the plague seize her! Whether any-

thing happened or not, anyhow something got to my old man's ears. Maybe he heard from the neighbours, maybe she's been and blabbed . . .

ANÍSYA. Well, she is a bold hussy!

MATRYÓNA. So my old man—the old blockhead—off he goes: “Marry, marry,” he says, “he must marry her and cover the sin,” he says. “We must take the lad home,” he says; “and he shall marry,” he says. Well, I did my best to make him change his mind, but, dear me, no. So, all right, thinks I,—I’ll try another dodge. One always has to entice them fools in this way, just pretend to be of their mind, and when it comes to the point one goes and turns it all one’s own way. You know, a woman has time to think seventy-and-seven thoughts while falling off the oven, so how’s such as he to see through it? “Well, yes,” says I, “it would be a good job,—only we must consider well beforehand. Why not go and see our son, and talk it over with Peter Ignátitch and hear what he has to say?” So here we are.

ANÍSYA. Oh dear, ~~oh dear, how will it all end?~~ Supposing his father just orders him to marry her?

MATRYÓNA. Orders, indeed. Chuck his orders to the dogs! Don’t you worry; that affair will never come off. I’ll go to your old man myself, and sift and strain this matter clear—there will be none of it left. I have come here only for the look of the thing. A very likely thing! Here’s my son living in happiness and expecting happiness, and I’ll go and match him with a slut! No fear, I’m not a fool!

ANÍSYA. And she—this Marína—came dangling after him here! Mother, would you believe, when they said he was going to marry, it was as if a knife had gone right through my heart. I thought he cared for her.

MATRYÓNA. Oh, my jewel! Why, you don’t think him such a fool, that he should go and care for a homeless baggage like that? Nikíta is a sensible fellow, you see. He

knows whom to love. So don't you go and fret, my jewel. We'll not take him away, and we won't marry him. No, we'll let him stay on, if you'll only oblige us with a little money.

ANÍSYA. All I know is, that I could not live if Nikita went away.

MATRYÓNA. Naturally, when one's young it's no easy matter! You, a wench in full bloom, to be living with the dregs of a man like that husband of yours.

ANÍSYA. Mother Matryóna, would you believe it? I'm that sick of him, that sick of this long-nosed cur of mine, I can hardly bear to look at him.

MATRYÓNA. Yes, I see, it's one of them cases. Just look here, [*looks round and whispers*] I've been to see that old man, you know—he's given me simples of two kinds. This, you see, is a sleeping draught. "Just give him one of these powders," he says, "and he'll sleep so sound you might jump on him!" And this here, "This is that kind of simple," he says, "that if you give one some of it to drink it has no smell whatever, but its strength is very great. There are seven doses here, a pinch at a time. Give him seven pinches," he says, "and she won't have far to look for freedom," he says.

ANÍSYA. O-o-oh! What's that?

MATRYÓNA. "No sign whatever," he says. He's taken a rouble for it. "Can't sell it for less," he says. Because it's no easy matter to get 'em, you know. I paid him, dearie, out of my own money. If she takes them, thinks I, it's all right; if she don't, I can let old Michael's daughter have them.

ANÍSYA. O-o-oh! But mayn't some evil come of them? I'm frightened!

MATRYÓNA. What evil, my jewel? If your old man was hale and hearty, 'twould be a different matter, but he's neither alive nor dead as it is. He's not for this world. Such things often happen.

The Power of Darkness

ANÍSYA. O-o-oh, my poor head! I'm afeared, Mother Matryóna, lest some evil come of them. No. That won't do.

MATRYÓNA. Just as you like. I might even return them to him.

ANÍSYA. And are they to be used in the same way as the others? Mixed in water?

MATRYÓNA. Better in tea, he says. "You can't notice anything," he says, "no smell nor nothing." He's a cute old fellow too.

ANÍSYA [*taking the powder*] O-oh, my poor head! Could I have ever thought of such a thing if my life were not a very hell?

MATRYÓNA. You'll not forget that rouble? I promised to take it to the old man. He's had some trouble, too.

ANÍSYA. Of course? [*Goes to her box and hides the powders*].

MATRYÓNA. And now, my jewel, keep it as close as you can, so that no one should find it out. Heaven defend that it should happen, but *if* any one notices it, tell 'em it's for the black-beetles. [*Takes the rouble*] It's also used for beetles. [*Stops short*].

Enter Akím, who crosses himself in front of the icon, and then Peter, who sits down.

PETER. Well then, how's it to be, Daddy Akím?

AKÍM. As it's best, Peter Ignátitch, as it's best . . . I mean—as it's best. 'Cos why? I'm afeared of what d'you call 'ems, some tomfoolery, you know. I'd like to, what d'you call it . . . to start, you know, start the lad honest, I mean. But supposing you'd rather, what d'you call it, we might, I mean, what's name? As it's best . . .

PETER. All right. All right. Sit down and let's talk it over. [*Akím sits down*] Well then, what's it all about? You want him to marry?

MATRYÓNA. As to marrying, he might bide a while,



Peter Ignátitch. You know our poverty, Peter Ignátitch. What's he to marry on? We've hardly enough to eat ourselves. ~~How can he marry then?~~ . . .

PETER. You must consider what will be best.

MATRYÓNA. Where's the hurry for him to get married? Marriage is not that sort of thing, it's not like ripe raspberries that drop off if not picked in time.

PETER. If he were to get married, 'twould be a good thing in a way.

AKÍM. We'd like to . . . what d'you call it? 'Cos why, you see. I've what d'you call it . . . a job. I mean, I've found a paying job in town, you know.

MATRYÓNA. And a fine job too—cleaning out cesspools. The other day when he came home, I could do nothing but spew and spew. Faugh!

AKÍM. It's true, at first it does seem what d'you call it . . . knocks one clean over, you know,—the smell, I mean. But one gets used to it, and then it's nothing, no worse than malt grain, and then it's, what d'you call it, . . . pays, pays, I mean. And as to the smell being, what d'you call it, it's not for the likes of us to complain. And one changes one's clothes. So we'd like to take what's his name . . . Nikíta I mean, home. Let him manage things at home while I, what d'you call it,—earn something in town.

PETER. You want to keep your son at home? Yes, that would be well: but how about the money he has had in advance?

AKÍM. That's it, that's it! It's just as you say, Ignátitch, it's just what d'you call it. 'Cos why? If you go into service, it's as good as if you had sold yourself, they say. That will be all right. I mean he may stay and serve his time, only he must, what d'you call it, get married. I mean—so: you let him off for a little while, that he may, what d'you call it?

PETER. Yes, we could manage that.

MATRYÓNA. Ah, but it's not yet settled between ourselves, Peter Ignátitch. I'll speak to you as I would before God, and you may judge between my old man and me. He goes on harping on that marriage. But just ask—who it is he wants him to marry. If it were a girl of the right sort now— I am not my child's enemy, but the wench is not honest.

AKÍM. No, that's wrong! Wrong, I say. 'Cos why? She, that same girl—it's my son as has offended, offended the girl I mean.

PETER. How offended?

AKÍM. That's how. She's what d'you call it, with him, with my son, Nikíta. With Nikíta, what d'you call it, I mean.

MATRYÓNA. You wait a bit, my tongue runs smoother—let me tell it. You know, this lad of ours lived at the railway before he came to you. There was a girl there as kept dangling after him. A girl of no account, you know, her name's Marína. She used to cook for the men. So now this same girl accuses our son, Nikíta, that he, so to say, deceived her.

PETER. Well, there's nothing good in that.

MATRYÓNA. But she's no honest girl herself; she runs after the fellows like a common slut.

AKÍM. There you are again, old woman, and it's not at all what d'you call it, it's all not what d'you call it, I mean . . .

MATRYÓNA. There now, that's all the sense one gets from my old owl—"what d'you call it, what d'you call it," and he doesn't know himself what he means. Peter Ignátitch, don't listen to me, but go yourself and ask any one you like about the girl, everybody will say the same. She's just a homeless good-for-nothing.

PETER. You know, Daddy Akím, if that's how things are, there's no reason for him to marry her. A daughter-in-law's not like a shoe, you can't kick her off.

AKÍM [*excitedly*] It's false, old woman, it's what d'you call it, false ; I mean, about the girl ; false ! 'Cos why ? The lass is a good lass, ~~a very good lass, you know.~~ I'm sorry, sorry for the lassie, I mean.

MATRYÓNA. It's an old saying : "For the wide world old Miriam grieves, and at home without bread her children she leaves." He's sorry for the girl, but not sorry for his own son ! Sling her round your neck and carry her ~~about with you !~~ That's enough of such empty cackle !

AKÍM. No, it's not empty.

MATRYÓNA. There, don't interrupt, let me have my say.

AKÍM [*interrupts*] No, not empty ! I mean, you twist things your own way, about the lass or about yourself. Twist them, I mean, to make it ~~better for yourself ; but God, what d'you call it,~~ turns them His way. That's how it is.

MATRYÓNA. Eh ! One only wears out one's tongue with you.

AKÍM. The lass is hard-working and spruce, and keeps everything round herself . . . what d'you call it. And in our pover y, you know, it's a pair of hands, I mean ; and the wedding needn't cost much. But the chief thing's ~~the offence, the offence to the lass, and she's a what~~ d'you call it, an orphan, you know ; that's what she is, and there's the offence.

MATRYÓNA. Eh ! they'll all tell you a tale of that sor . . .

ANÍSIA. Daddy Akím, you'd better listen to us women ; we can tell you a thing or two.

AKÍM. And God, how about God ? Isn't she a human being, the lass ? A what d'you call it,—also a human being I mean, before God. And how do you look at it ?

MATRYÓNA. Eh ! . . . started off again ? . . .

PETER. Wait a bit, Daddy Akím. One can't believe all these girls say, either. The lad's alive, and not far away ; send for him, and find out straight from him if it's true.

He won't wish to lose his soul. Go and call the fellow, [*Anisya rises*] and tell him his father wants him. [*Exit Anisya*].

MATRYÓNA. That's right, dear friend; you've cleared the way clean, as with water. Yes, let the lad speak for himself. Nowadays, you know, they'll not let you force a son to marry; one must ~~first of all ask the lad~~. He'll never consent to marry her and disgrace himself, not for all the world. To my thinking, it's best he should go on living with you and serving you as his master. And we need not take him home for the summer either; we can hire a help. If you would only give us ten roubles now, we'll let him stay on.

PETER. All in good time. First let us settle one thing before we start another.

AKÍM. You see, Peter Ignátitch, I speak. 'Cos why? you know how it happens. We try to fix things up as seems best for ourselves, you know; and as to God, we what d'you call it, we forget Him. We think it's best so, turn it our own way, and lo! we've got into a fix, you know. We think it will be best, I mean; and lo! it turns out much worse—without God, I mean.

PETER. Of ~~course one must not forget God~~.

AKÍM. It turns out worse! But when it's the right way—God's way—it what d'you call it, it gives one joy; seems pleasant, I mean. So I reckon, you see, get him, the lad, I mean, get him to ~~marry her, to keep him from~~ sin, I mean, and let him what d'you call it ~~at home~~, as it's lawful, I mean, while I ~~go and get the job in town~~. The work is of the right sort—it's payin', I mean. And in God's sight it's what d'you call it—it's best, I mean. Ain't she an orphan? Here, for example, a year ago some fellows went and took timber from the steward,—thought they'd do the steward, you know. Yes, they did the steward, but they couldn't what d'you call it—do God, I mean. Well, and so . . .

Enter Nikita and Nan.

NIKITA. You called me? [*Sits down and takes out his tobacco-pouch.*]

PETER [*in a low, reproachful voice*] What are you thinking about—have you no manners? Your father is going to speak to you, and you sit down and fool about with tobacco. Come, get up!

Nikita rises, leans carelessly with his elbow on the table, and smiles.

AKIM. It seems there's a complaint, you know, about you, Nikita—a complaint, I mean, a complaint.

NIKITA. Who's been complaining?

AKIM. Complaining? It's a maid, an orphan maid, complaining, I mean. It's her, you know—a complaint against you, from Marina, I mean.

~~NIKITA~~ [*laughs*] Well, that's a good one. What's the complaint? And who's told you—she herself?

AKIM. It's I am asking you, and you must now, what d'you call it, give me an answer. Have you got mixed up with the lass, I mean—mixed up, you know?

NIKITA. I don't know what you mean. What's up?

AKIM. Foolin', I mean, what d'you call it? foolin'. Have you been foolin' with her, I mean?

NIKITA. Never mind what's been! Of course one does have some fun with a cook now and then to while away the time. One plays the concertina and gets her to dance. What of that?

PETER. Don't shuffle, Nikita, but answer your father straight out.

AKIM [*solemnly*] You can hide it from men but not from God, Nikita. You, what d'you call it—think, I mean, and don't tell lies. She's an orphan; so, you see, any one is free to insult her. An orphan, you see. So you should say what's rightest.

NIKITA. But what if I have nothing to say? I have told you everything—because there isn't anything to tell,

that's flat! [*Getting excited*] She can go and say anything about me, same as if she was speaking of one as-is-dead. Why don't she say anything about Fédka Mikishin? Besides, how's this, that one mayn't even have a bit of fun nowadays? And as for her, well, she's free to say anything she likes.

AKÍM. Ah, Nikíta, mind! A lie will out. Did anything happen?

NIKÍTA [*aside*] How he sticks to it; it's too bad. [*To Akím*] I tell you, I know nothing more. There's been nothing between us. [*Angrily*] By God! and may I never leave this spot [*crosses himself*] if I know anything about it. [*Silence. Then still more excitedly*] Why! have you been thinking of getting me to marry her? What do you mean by it?—it's a confounded shame. Besides, nowadays you've got no such rights as to force a fellow to marry. That's plain enough. Besides, haven't I sworn I know nothing about it?

MATRYÓNA [*to her husband*] There now, that's just like your silly pate, to believe all they tell you. He's gone and put the lad to shame all for nothing. The best thing is to let him live as he is living, with his master. His master will help us in our present need, and give us ten roubles, and when the time comes . . .

PETER. Well, Daddy Akím, how's it to be?

AKÍM [*looks at his son, clicking his tongue disapprovingly*] Mind, Nikíta, the tears of one that's been wronged never, what d'you call it—never fall beside the mark but always on, what's name—the head of the man as did the wrong. So mind, don't what d'you call it.

NIKÍTA [*sits down*] What's there to mind? mind yourself.

NAN [*aside*] I must run and tell mother. [*Exit*].

MATRYÓNA [*to Peter*] That's always the way with this old mumblor of mine, Peter Ignátitch. Once he's got anything wedged in his pate there's no knocking it out.

We've gone and troubled you all for nothing. The lad can go on living as he has been. Keep him; he's your servant.

PETER. Well, Daddy Akím, what do you say?

AKÍM. Why, the lad's his own master, if only he what d'you call it. . . . I only wish that, what d'you call it, I mean.

MATRYÓNA. You don't know yourself what you're jawing about. The lad himself has no wish to leave. Besides, what do we want with him at home? We can manage without him.

PETER. Only one thing, Daddy Akím—if you are thinking of taking him back in summer, I don't want him here for the winter. If he is to stay at all, it must be for the whole year.

MATRYÓNA. And it's for a year he'll bind himself. If we want help when the press of work comes, we can hire help, and the lad shall remain with you. Only give us ten roubles now. . . .

PETER. Well then, is it to be for another year?

AKÍM [*sighing*] Yes, it seems, it what d'you call it . . . if it's so, I mean, it seems that it must be what d'you call it.

MATRYÓNA. For a year, counting from St. Dimítry's day. We know you'll pay him fair wages. But give us ten roubles now. Help us out of our difficulties. [*Gets up and bows to Peter*].

Enter Nan and Anísya. The latter sits down at one side.

PETER. Well, if that's settled we might step across to the inn and have a drink. Come, Daddy Akím, what do you say to a glass of vodka?

AKÍM. No, I never drink that sort of thing.

PETER. Well, you'll have some tea?

AKÍM. Ah, tea! yes, I do sin that way. Yes, tea's the thing.

PETER. And the women will also have some tea. Come.

And you, Nikíta, go and drive the sheep in and clear away the straw.

NIKÍTA. All right. [*Exeunt all but Nikíta. Nikíta lights a cigarette. It grows darker*] Just see how they bother one. Want a fellow to tell 'em how he larks about with the wenches! It would take long to tell 'em all those stories—"Marry her," he says. Marry them all! One would have a good lot of wives!—And what need have I to marry? Am as good as married now! There's many a chap as envies me. Yet how strange it felt when I crossed myself before the icon. It was just as if some one shoved me. The whole web fell to pieces at once. ~~They say~~ it's frightening to swear what's not true. That's all humbug. It's all talk, that is. It's simple enough.

AKOULÍNA [*enters with a rope, which she puts down. She takes off her outdoor things and goes into closet*] You might at least have got a light.

NIKÍTA. What, to look at you? I can see you well enough without.

AKOULÍNA. Oh, bother you!

Nan enters and whispers to Nikíta.

NAN. Nikíta, there's a person wants you. There is!

NIKÍTA. What person?

NAN. Marína from the railway; she's out there, round the corner.

NIKÍTA. Nonsense!

NAN. Blest if she isn't!

NIKÍTA. What does she want?

NAN. She wants you to come out. She says, "I only want to say a word to Nikíta." I began asking, but she won't tell, but only says, "Is it true he's leaving you?" And I say, "No, only his father wanted to take him away and get him to marry, but he won't, and is going to stay with us another year." And she says, "For goodness' sake send him out to me. I must see him," she says, "I

must say a word to him somehow." She's been waiting a long time. Why don't you go?

NIKÍTA. Bother her! What should I go for?

NAN. She says, "If he don't come, I'll go into the hut to him." Blest if she didn't say she'd come in!

NIKÍTA. Not likely. She'll wait a bit and then go away.

NAN. "Or is it," she says, "~~that they want him to marry Akoulína?~~"

Re-enter Akoulína, passing near Nikíta to take her distaff.

AKOULÍNA. Marry whom to Akoulína?

NAN. Why, Nikíta.

AKOULÍNA. A likely thing! Who says it?

NIKÍTA [*looks at her and laughs*] It seems people do say it. Would you marry me, Akoulína?

AKOULÍNA. Who, you? Perhaps I might have afore, but I won't now.

NIKÍTA. And why not now?

AKOULÍNA. 'Cos you wouldn't love me.

NIKÍTA. Why not?

AKOULÍNA. 'Cos you'd be forbidden to. [*Laughs*].

NIKÍTA. Who'd forbid it?

AKOULÍNA. Who? My step-mother. She does nothing but grumble, and is always staring at you.

NIKÍTA [*laughing*] Just hear her! Ain't she cute?

AKOULÍNA. Who? Me? What's there to be cute about? Am I blind? She's been rowing and rowing at dad all day. The fat-muzzled witch! [*Goes into closet*].

NAN [*looking out of the window*] Look, Nikíta, she's coming! I'm blest if she isn't! I'll go away. [*Exit*].

MARÍNA [*enters*] What are you doing with me?

NIKÍTA. Doing? I'm not doing anything.

MARÍNA. You mean to desert me.

NIKÍTA [*gets up angrily*] What does this look like, your coming here?

MARÍNA. Oh, Nikíta!

NIKÍTA. Well, you are strange ! What have you come for?

MARÍNA. Nikíta !

NIKÍTA. That's my name. What do you want with Nikíta ? Well, what next ? Go away, I tell you !

MARÍNA. I see, you do want to throw me over.

NIKÍTA. Well, and what's there to remember ? You yourself don't know. When you stood out there round the corner and sent Nan for me, and I didn't come, wasn't it plain enough that you're not wanted ? It seems pretty simple. So there—go !

MARÍNA. Not wanted ! So now I'm not wanted ! I believed you when you said you would love me. And now that you've ruined me, I'm not wanted.

NIKÍTA. Where's the good of talking ? This is quite improper. You've been telling tales to father. Now, do go away, will you ?

MARÍNA. You know yourself I never loved any one but you. Whether you married me or not, I'd not have been angry. I've done you no wrong, then why have you left off caring for me ? Why ?

NIKÍTA. Where's the use of baying at the moon ? You go away. Goodness me ! what a duffer !

MARÍNA. It's not that you deceived me when you promised to marry me that hurts, but that you've left off loving. No, it's not that you've stopped loving me either, but that you've changed me for another, that's what hurts. I know who it is !

NIKÍTA [*comes up to her viciously*] Eh ! what's the good of talking to the likes of you, that won't listen to reason ? Be off, or you'll drive me to do something you'll be sorry for.

MARÍNA. What, will you strike me, then ? Well then, strike me ! What are you turning away for ? Ah, Nikíta !

NIKÍTA. Supposing some one came in. Of course, it's quite improper. And what's the good of talking ?

MARÍNA. So this is the end of it! What has been has flown. You want me to forget it? Well then, Nikíta, listen. I kept my maiden honour as the apple of my eye. You have ruined me for nothing, you have deceived me. ~~You have no pity on a fatherless and motherless girl!~~ [Weeping] You have deserted, you have killed me, but I bear you no malice. God forgive you! If you find a better one you'll forget me, if a worse one you'll remember me. Yes, you will remember, Nikíta! Good-bye, then, if it is to be. Oh, how I loved you! Good-bye for the last time. [Takes his head in her hands and tries to kiss him].

NIKÍTA [tossing his head back] I'm not going to talk with the likes of you. If you won't go away I will, and you may stay here by yourself.

MARÍNA [screams] You are a brute. [In the doorway] God ~~will~~ give you no joy. [Exit, crying].

AKOULÍNA [comes out of closet] You're a dog, Nikíta!

NIKÍTA. What's up?

AKOULÍNA. What a cry she gave! [Cries].

NIKÍTA. What's up with you?

AKOULÍNA. What's up? You've hurt her so. That's the way you'll ~~hurt me also.~~ You're a dog. [Exit into closet].

Silence.

NIKÍTA. Here's a fine muddle. I'm as sweet as honey on the lasses, but when a fellow's sinned with 'em it's a bad look-out!

Curtain.

ACT II

The scene represents the village street. To the left the outside of Peter's hut, built of logs, with a porch in the middle, to the right of the hut the gates and a corner of the yard buildings. Anisya is beating hemp in the street near the corner of the yard. Six months have elapsed since the First Act.

ANISYA [*stops and listens*] Mumbling something again. He's probably got off the stove.

Akoulina enters, carrying two pails on a yoke.

ANISYA. He's calling. You go and see what he wants, kicking up such a row.

AKOULINA. Why don't you go?

ANISYA. Go, I tell you! [*Exit Akoulina into hut*] He's bothering me to death. Won't let out where the money is, and that's all about it. He was out in the passage the other day. He must have been hiding it there. Now, I don't know myself where it is. Thank goodness he's afraid of parting with it, so that at least it will stay in the house. If only I could manage to find it. He hadn't it on him yesterday. Now I don't know where it can be. He has quite worn the life out of me.

Enter Akoulina, tying her kerchief over her head.

ANISYA. Where are you off to?

AKOULINA. Where? Why, he's told me to go for Aunt Martha. "Fetch my sister," he says. "I am going to die," he says. ~~"I have a word to say to her."~~

ANISYA [*aside*] Asking for his sister? ~~Oh my poor head!~~

Sure ~~he wants to give it her.~~ What shall I do? Oh!
[*To Akoulina*] Don't go! Where are you off to?

AKOULÍNA. To call Aunt.

ANÍSIA. Don't go I tell you, I'll go myself. You go and take the clothes to the river to rinse. Else you'll not have finished by the evening.

AKOULÍNA. But he told me to go.

ANÍSIA. You go and do as you're bid. I tell you I'll fetch ~~Martha myself.~~ Take the shirts off the fence.

AKOULÍNA. The shirts? But maybe you'll not go. He's given the order.

ANÍSIA. Didn't I say I'd go? Where's Nan?

AKOULÍNA. Nan? Minding the calves.

ANÍSIA. Send her here. I dare say they'll not run away.
[*Akoulina collects the clothes, and exit*].

ANÍSIA. If one doesn't go he'll scold. If one goes he'll give the money to his sister. All my trouble will be wasted. I don't myself know what I'm to do. My poor head's splitting. [*Continues to work*].

Enter Matryóna, with a stick and a bundle, in outdoor clothes.

MATRYÓNA. May the Lord help you, honey.

ANÍSIA [*looks round, stops working, and claps her hands with joy*] Well, I never expected this! Mother Matryóna, God has sent the right guest at the right time.

MATRYÓNA. Well, how are things?

ANÍSIA. Ah, I'm driven well-nigh crazy. It's awful!

MATRYÓNA. Well, still alive, I hear?

ANÍSIA. Oh, don't talk about it. He doesn't live and doesn't die!

MATRYÓNA. But the money—has he given it to anybody?

ANÍSIA. He's just sending for his sister Martha—probably about the money.

MATRYÓNA. Well, naturally! But hasn't he given it to any one else?

ANÍSIA. To no one. I watch like a hawk.

MATRYÓNA. And where is it?

ANÍSYA. He doesn't let out. And I can't find out in any way. He hides it now here, now there, and I can't do anything because of Akoulína. Idiot though she is, she keeps watch, and is always about. Oh my poor head! I'm bothered to death.

MATRYÓNA. Oh, my jewel, if he gives the money to any one but you, you'll never cease regretting it as long as you live! They'll turn you out of house and home without anything. You've been worriting, and worriting all your life with one you don't love, and will have to go a-begging when you are a widow.

ANÍSYA. No need to tell me, mother. My heart's that weary, and I don't know what to do. No one to get a bit of advice from. I told Nikíta, but he's frightened of the job. The only thing he did was to tell me yesterday it was hidden under the floor.

MATRYÓNA. Well, and did you look there?

ANÍSYA. I couldn't. The old man himself was in the room. I notice that sometimes he carries it about on him, and sometimes he hides it.

MATRYÓNA. But you, my lass, must remember that if once he gives you the slip there's no getting it right again! [*Whispering*] Well, and did you give him the strong tea?

ANÍSYA. Oh! oh! . . . [*About to answer, but sees neighbour and stops*].

The neighbour (a woman) passes the hut, and listens to a call from within.

NEIGHBOUR [*to Anísya*] I say, Anísya! Eh, Anísya! There's your old man calling, I think.

ANÍSYA. That's the way he always coughs,—just as if he were screaming. He's getting very bad.

NEIGHBOUR [*approaches Matryóna*] How do you do, granny? Have you come far?

MATRYÓNA. Straight from home, dear. Come to see my

son. Brought him some shirts—can't help thinking of these things, you see, when it's one's own child.

NEIGHBOUR. Yes, that's always so. [*To Anísya*] And I was thinking of beginning to bleach the linen, but it is a bit early, no one has begun yet.

ANÍSYA. Where's the hurry?

MATRYÓNA. Well, and has he had communion?

ANÍSYA. Oh dear yes, the priest was here yesterday.

NEIGHBOUR. I had a look at him yesterday. Dearie me! one wonders his body and soul keep together. And, O Lord, the other day he seemed just at his last gasp, so that they laid him under the holy icóns.¹ They started lamenting and got ready to lay him out.

ANÍSYA. He came to, and creeps about again.

MATRYÓNA. Well, and is he to have extreme unction?

ANÍSYA. The neighbours advise it. If he lives till to-morrow we'll send for the priest.

NEIGHBOUR. Oh, Anísya dear, I should think your heart must be heavy. As the saying goes, "Not he is sick that's ill in bed, but he that sits and waits in dread."

ANÍSYA. Yes, if it were only over one way or other!

NEIGHBOUR. Yes, that's true, ~~dying for a year~~, it's no joke. You're bound hand and foot like that.

MATRYÓNA. Ah, but a widow's lot is also bitter. It's all right as long as one's young, but who'll care for you when you're old? Oh yes, old age is not pleasure. Just look at me. I've not walked very far, and yet am so footsore I don't know how to stand. Where's my son?

ANÍSYA. Ploughing. But you come in and we'll get the samovár ready; the tea'll set you up again.

MATRYÓNA [*sitting down*] Yes, it's true, I'm quite done up, my dears. As to extreme unction, that's absolutely necessary. Besides, they say it's good for the soul.

ANÍSYA. Yes, we'll send to-morrow.

¹ It is customary to place a dying person under the icón. One or more icóns hang in the hut of each Orthodox peasant.

MATRYÓNA. Yes, you had better. And we've had a wedding down in our parts.

NEIGHBOUR. What, in spring? ¹

MATRYÓNA. Ah, now if it were a poor man, then, as the saying is, it's always unseasonable for a poor man to marry. But it's Simon Matvéyitch, he's married that Marina.

ANÍSYA. What luck for her!

NEIGHBOUR. He's a widower. I suppose there are children?

MATRYÓNA. Four of 'em. What decent girl would have him! Well, so he's taken her, and she's glad. — You see, the vessel was not sound, so the wine trickled out.

NEIGHBOUR. Oh my! And what do people say to it? And he, a rich peasant!

MATRYÓNA. They are living well enough so far.

NEIGHBOUR. Yes, it's true enough. Who wants to marry where there are children? There now, there's our Michael. He's such a fellow, dear me . . .

PEASANT'S VOICE. Hullo, Mávra. Where the devil are you? Go and drive the cow in.

Exit Neighbour.

MATRYÓNA [*while the Neighbour is within hearing speaks in her ordinary voice*] Yes, lass, thank goodness, she's married. At any rate my old fool won't go bothering about Nikita. Now [*suddenly changing her tone*], she's gone! [*Whispers*] I say, did you give him the tea?

ANÍSYA. Don't speak about it. He'd better die of himself. It's no use—he doesn't die, and I have only taken a sin on my soul. O-oh, my head, my head! Oh, why did you give me those powders?

MATRYÓNA. What of the powders? The sleeping powders, lass,—why not give them? No evil can come of them.

ANÍSYA. I am not talking of the sleeping ones, but the others, the white ones.

¹ Peasant weddings are usually in autumn. They are forbidden in Lent, and soon after Easter the peasants become too busy to marry till harvest is over.

MATRYÓNA. Well, ~~honey, those powders are medicinal.~~

ANÍSYA [*sighs*] I know, yet it's frightening. Though he's worried me to death.

MATRYÓNA. Well, and did you use many?

ANÍSYA. I gave two doses.

MATRYÓNA. Was anything noticeable?

ANÍSYA. I had a taste of the tea myself—just a little bitter. And he drank them with the tea and says, “Even tea disgusts me,” and I say, “Everything tastes bitter when one's sick.” But I felt that scared, mother.

MATRYÓNA. ~~Don't go thinking about it.~~ The more one thinks the worse it is.

ANÍSYA. I wish ~~you'd never given them to me~~ and led me into sin. When I think of it something seems to tear my heart. Oh dear, why did you give them to me?

MATRYÓNA. What do you mean, honey? Lord help you! ~~Why are you turning it on to me?~~ Mind, lass, don't go twisting matters from the sick on to the healthy. If anything were to happen, I stand aside! I know nothing! I'm aware of nothing! I'll kiss the cross on it; I never gave you any kind of powders, never saw any, never heard of any, and never knew there were such powders. You think about yourself, lass. Why, we were talking about you the other day. “Poor thing, what torture she endures. The step-daughter an idiot; the old man rotten, sucking her life-blood. What wouldn't one be ready to do in such a case!”

ANÍSYA. I'm not going to deny it. A life such as mine could make one do worse than that. It could make you hang yourself or throttle him. Is this a life?

MATRYÓNA. That's just it. There's no time to stand gaping; the money must be found one way or other, and then he must have his tea.

ANÍSYA. O-oh, my head, my head! I can't think what to do. I am so frightened; he'd better die of himself. I don't want to have it on my soul.

MATRYÓNA [*viciously*] And why doesn't he show the money? Does he mean to take it along with him? Is no one to have it? Is that right? God forbid such a sum should be lost all for nothing. Isn't that a sin? What's he doing? Is he worth considering?

ANÍSYA. I don't know anything. He's worried me to death.

MATRYÓNA. What is it you don't know? The business is clear. If you make a slip now, you'll repent it all your life. He'll give the money to his sister and you'll be left without.

ANÍSYA. O-oh dear! Yes, and he did send for her—I must go.

MATRYÓNA. You wait a bit and light the samovár first. We'll give him some tea and search him together—we'll find it, no fear.

ANÍSYA. Oh dear, oh dear; supposing something were to happen.

MATRYÓNA. What now? What's the good of waiting? Do you want the money to slip from your hand when it's just in sight? You go and do as I say.

ANÍSYA. Well, I'll go and light the samovár.

MATRYÓNA. Go, honey, do the business so as not to regret it afterwards. That's right! [*Anísya turns to go. Matryóna calls her back*].

MATRYÓNA. Just a word. Don't tell Nikíta about the business. He's silly. God forbid he should find out about the powders. The Lord only knows what he would do. He's so tender-hearted. D'you know, he usen't to be able to kill a chicken. Don't tell him. 'Twould be a fine go, he wouldn't understand things. [*Stops horror-struck as Peter appears in the doorway*].

PETER [*holding on to the wall, creeps out into the porch and calls with a faint voice*] How's it one can't make you hear? Oh, oh, Anísya! Who's there? [*Drops on the bench*].

ANÍSYA [*steps from behind the corner*] Why have you come out? You should have stayed where you were lying.

PETER. Has the girl gone for Martha? It's very hard. . . . Oh, if only death would come quicker!

ANÍSYA. She had no time. I sent her to the river. Wait a bit, I'll go myself when I'm ready.

PETER. Send Nan. Where's she? Oh, I'm that bad! Oh, death's at hand!

ANÍSYA. I've sent for her already.

PETER. Oh dear! Then where is she?

ANÍSYA. Where's she got to, the plague seize her!

PETER. Oh, dear! I can't bear it. All my inside's on fire. It's as if a gimlet were boring me. Why have you left me as if I were a dog? . . . no one to give me a drink. . . . Oh . . . send Nan to me.

ANÍSYA. Here she is. Nan, go to father.

Nan runs in. Anísya goes behind the corner of the house.

PETER. Go you. Oh . . . to Aunt Martha, tell her father wants her; say she's to come, I want her.

NAN. All right.

PETER. Wait a bit. Tell her she's to come quick. Tell her I'm dying. O-oh!

NAN. I'll just get my shawl and be off. [*Runs off*].

MATRYÓNA [*winking*] Now then, mind and look sharp, lass. Go into the hut, hunt about everywhere, like a dog that's hunting for fleas: look under everything, and I'll search him.

ANÍSYA [*to Matryóna*] I feel a bit bolder, somehow, now you're here. [*Goes up to porch. To Peter*] Hadn't I better light the samovár? Here's Mother Matryóna come to see her son; you'll have a cup of tea with her?

PETER. Well then, light it. [*Anísya goes into the house. Matryóna comes up to the porch*].

PETER. How do you do?

MATRYÓNA [*bowing*] How d'you do, my benefactor; how d'you do, my precious . . . still ill, I see. And my

old man, he's that sorry! "Go," says he, "see how he's getting on." He sends his respects to you. [*Bows again*].

PETER. I'm dying.

MATRYÓNA. Ah yes, Peter Ignátitch, now I look at you I see, as the saying has it, "Sickness lives where men live." You've shrivelled, shrivelled, all to nothing, poor dear, now I come to look at you. Seems illness does not add to good looks.

PETER. My last hour has come.

MATRYÓNA. Oh well, Peter Ignátitch, it's God's will you know, you've had communion, and you'll have unction, God willing. Your missus is a wise woman, the Lord be thanked; she'll give you a good burial, and have prayers said for your soul, all most respectable! And my son, he'll look after things meanwhile.

PETER. There'll be no one to manage things! She's not steady. Has her head full of folly—why, I know all about it, I know. And my girl is silly and young. I've got the homestead together, and there's no one to attend to things. One can't help feeling it. [*Whimpers*].

MATRYÓNA. Why, if it's money, or something, you can leave orders.

PETER [*to Anísya inside the house*] Has Nan gone?

MATRYÓNA [*aside*] There now, he's remembered!

ANÍSya [*from inside*] She went then and there. Come inside, won't you? I'll help you in.

PETER. Let me sit here a bit for the last time. The air's so stuffy inside. Oh, how bad I feel! Oh, my heart's burning. . . . Oh, if death would only come.

MATRYÓNA. If God don't ~~take a soul~~, the soul can't go out. Death and life are in God's will, Peter Ignátitch. You can't be sure of death either. Maybe you'll recover yet. There was a man in our village just like that, at the very point of death . . .

PETER. No, I feel I shall die to-day, I feel it. [*Leans back and shuts his eyes*].

ANÍSYA [*enters*] Well now, are you coming in or not? You do keep one waiting. Peter! eh, Peter!

MATRYÓNA [*steps aside and beckons to Anísya with her finger*] Well?

ANÍSYA [*comes down the porch steps*] Not there.

MATRYÓNA. But have you searched everywhere? Under the floor?

ANÍSYA. No, it's not there either. In the shed perhaps; he was rummaging there yesterday.

MATRYÓNA. Go, search, search for all you're worth. Go all over everywhere, as if you licked with your tongue! But I see he'll die this very day, his nails are turning blue and his face looks earthy. Is the samovár ready?

ANÍSYA. Just on the boil.

NIKÍTA [*comes from the other side, if possible on horseback, up to the gate, and does not see Peter. To Matryóna*] How d'you do, mother, is all well at home?

MATRYÓNA. The Lord be thanked, we're all alive and have a crust to bite.

NIKÍTA. Well, and how's master?

MATRYÓNA. Hush, there he sits. [*Points to porch*].

NIKÍTA. Well, let him sit. What's it to me?

PETER [*opens his eyes*] Nikita, I say, Nikíta, come here! [*Nikíta approaches. Anísya and Matryóna whisper together*].

PETER. Why have you come back so early?

NIKÍTA. I've finished ploughing.

PETER. Have you done the strip beyond the bridge?

NIKÍTA. It's too far to go there.

PETER. Too far? From here it's still farther. You'll have to go on purpose now. You might have made one job of it. [*Anísya, without showing herself, stands and listens*].

MATRYÓNA [*approaches*] Oh, sonnie, why don't you take more pains for your master? Your master is ill and depends on you; you should serve him as you would your own father, straining every muscle just as I always tell you to.

The Power of Darkness

PETER. Well then—o-oh! . . . Get out the seed potatoes, and the women will go and sort them.

ANÍSYA [*aside*] No fear, I'm not going. He's again sending every one away; he must have the money on him now, and wants to hide it somewhere.

PETER. Else . . . o-oh! when the time comes for planting, they'll all be rotten. Oh, I can't stand it! [*Rises*].

MATRYÓNA [*runs up into the porch and holds Peter up*] Shall I help you into the hut?

PETER. Help me in. [*Stops*] Nikíta!

NIKÍTA [*angrily*] What now?

PETER. I shan't see you again . . . I'll die to-day. . . . Forgive me,¹ for Christ's sake, forgive me if I have ever sinned against you. . . . If I have sinned in word or deed . . . There's been all sorts of things. Forgive me!

NIKÍTA. What's there to forgive? I'm a sinner myself.

MATRYÓNA. Ah, sonnie, have some feeling.

PETER. Forgive me, for Christ's sake. [*Weeps*].

NIKÍTA [*snivels*] God will forgive you, Daddy Peter. I have no cause to complain of you. You've never done me any wrong. You forgive me; maybe I've sinned worse against you. [*Weeps*].

Peter goes in whimpering, Matryóna supporting him.

ANÍSYA. Oh, my poor head! It's not without some reason he's hit on that. [*Approaches Nikíta*] Why did you say the money was under the floor? It's not there.

NIKÍTA [*does not answer, but cries*] I have never had anything bad from him, nothing but good, and what have I gone and done!

ANÍSYA. Enough now! Where's the money?

NIKÍTA [*angrily*] How should I know? Go and look for it yourself!

¹ A formal request for forgiveness is customary among Russians, but it is often no mere formality. Nikíta's first reply is evasive; his second reply, "God will forgive you," is the correct one sanctioned by custom.

ANÍSYA. What's made you so tender ?

NIKÍTA. ~~I am sorry for him,—that sorry~~ ~~How he cried!~~
Oh dear !

ANÍSYA. Look at him,—seized with pity ! He has found someone to pity too ! He's been treating you like a dog, and even just now was giving orders to have you turned out of the house. ~~You'd better show me some pity !~~

NIKÍTA. What are you to be pitied for ?

ANÍSYA. If he dies, and the money's been hidden away . . .

NIKÍTA. No fear, he'll not hide it . . .

ANÍSYA. Oh, Nikíta darling ! he's sent for his sister, and wants to give it to her. It will be a bad lookout for us. How are we going to live, if he gives her the money ? They'll turn me out of the house ! You try and manage somehow ! You said he went to the shed last night.

NIKÍTA. I saw him coming from there, but where he's shoved it to, who can tell ?

ANÍSYA. Oh, my poor head ! I'll go and have a look there. [*Nikíta steps aside*].

MATRYÓNA [*comes out of the hut and down the steps of the porch to Anísya and Nikíta*] Don't go anywhere. He's got the money on him. I felt it on a string round his neck.

ANÍSYA. Oh my head, my head !

MATRYÓNA. If you don't keep wide awake now, then you may whistle for it. If his sister comes—then good-bye to it !

ANÍSYA. That's true. She'll come and he'll give it her, What's to be done ? Oh my poor head !

MATRYÓNA. What is to be done ? Why, look here : the samovár is boiling, go and make the tea and pour him out a cup, and then [*whispers*] put in all that's left in the paper. When he's drunk the cup, then just take it. He'll not tell, no fear.

ANÍSYA. Oh ! I'm afeared !

MATRYÓNA. Don't be talking now, but look alive, and I'll keep his sister off if need be. Mind, don't make a blunder! Get hold of the money and bring it here, and Nikíta will hide it.

ANÍSVA. ~~Oh my head, my head! I don't know how I'm going to . . .~~

MATRYÓNA. Don't talk about it I tell you, do as I bid you. Nikíta!

NIKÍTA. What is it?

MATRYÓNA. You stay here—sit down—in case something is wanted.

NIKÍTA [*waves his hand*] Oh these women, what won't they be up to? Muddle one up completely. Bother them! I'll really go and fetch out the potatoes.

MATRYÓNA [*catches him by the arm*] Stay here, I tell you.

Nan enters.

ANÍSVA. Well?

NAN. She was down in her daughter's vegetable plot—she's coming.

ANÍSVA. Coming! What shall we do?

MATRYÓNA. There's plenty of time if you do as I tell you.

ANÍSVA. I don't know what to do; I know nothing, my brain's all in a whirl. Nan! Go, daughter, and see to the calves, they'll have run away, I'm afraid. . . . Oh dear, I haven't the courage.

MATRYÓNA. Go on! I should think the samovár's boiling over.

ANÍSVA. Oh my head, my poor head! [*Exit*].

MATRYÓNA [*approaches Nikíta*] Now then, sonnie. [*Sits down beside him*] Your affairs must also be thought about, and not left anyhow.

NIKÍTA. What affairs?

MATRYÓNA. Why, this affair—how you're to live your life.

NIKÍTA. How to live my life? Others live, and I shall live!

MATRYÓNA. The old man will probably die to-day.

NIKÍTA. Well, if he dies, God give him rest! What's that to me?

MATRYÓNA [*keeps looking towards the porch while she speaks*] Eh, sonnie! Those that are alive have to think about living. One needs plenty of sense in these matters, honey. What do you think? I've tramped all over the place after your affairs, I've got quite footsore bothering about matters. And you must not forget me when the time comes.

NIKÍTA. And what's it you've been bothering about?

MATRYÓNA. About your affairs, about your future. If you don't take trouble in good time you'll get nothing. You know Iván Moséitch? Well, I've been to him too. I went there the other day. I had something else to settle, you know. Well, so I sat and chatted awhile and then came to the point. "Tell me, Iván Moséitch," says I, "how's one to manage an affair of this kind? Supposing," says I, "a peasant as is a widower married a second wife, and supposing all the children he has is a daughter by the first wife, and a daughter by the second. Then," says I, "when that peasant dies, could an outsider get hold of the homestead by marrying the widow? Could he," says I, "give both the daughters in marriage and remain master of the house himself?" "Yes, he could," says he, "but," says he, "it would mean a deal of trouble; still the thing could be managed by means of money, but if there's no money it's no good trying."

NIKÍTA [*laughs*] That goes without saying, only fork out the money. Who does not want money?

MATRYÓNA. Well then, honey, so I spoke out plainly about the affair. And he says, "First and foremost, your son will have to get himself on the register of that village—that will cost something. The elders will have to be

treated. And they, you see, they'll sign. Everything," says he, "must be done sensibly." Look, [*unwraps her kerchief and takes out a paper*] he's written out this paper; just read it, you're a scholar, you know. [*Nikita reads*].

NIKITA. This paper's only a decision for the elders to sign. There's no great wisdom needed for that.

MATRYÓNA. But you just hear what Iván Moséitch bids us do. "Above all," he says, "mind and don't let the money slip away, dame. If she don't get hold of the money," he says, "they'll not let her do it. Money's the great thing!" So look out, sonnie, things are coming to a head.

NIKITA. What's that to me? The money's hers—so let her look out.

MATRYÓNA. Ah, sonnie, how you look at it! How can a woman manage such affairs? Even if she does get the money, is she capable of arranging it all? One knows what a woman is! You're a man anyhow. You can hide it, and all that. You see, you've after all got more sense, in case of anything happening.

NIKITA. Oh, your woman's notions are all so inexpedient!

MATRYÓNA. ~~Why inexpedient? You just collar the money, and the woman's in your hands. And then should she ever turn snappish you'd be able to tighten the reins!~~

NIKITA. Bother you all,—I'm going.

ANÍSYA [*quite pale, runs out of the hut and round the corner to Matryóna*] So it was, it was on him! Here it is! [*Shows that she has something under her apron*].

MATRYÓNA. Give it to Nikita, he'll hide it. Nikita, take it and hide it somewhere.

NIKITA. All right, give here!

ANÍSYA. O-oh, my poor head! No, I'd better do it myself. [*Goes towards the gate*].

MATRYÓNA [*seizing her by the arm*] Where are you going to? You'll be missed. There's the sister coming; give it him; he knows what to do. Eh, you blockhead!

ANÍSIA [*stops irresolutely*] Oh, my head, my head!

NIKÍTA. Well, give it here. I'll shove it away somewhere

ANÍSIA. Where will you shove it to?

NIKÍTA [*laughing*] Why, are you afraid?

Enter Akoulína, carrying clothes from the wash.

ANÍSIA. O-oh, my poor head! [*Gives the money*] Mind, Nikíta.

NIKÍTA. ~~What are you afraid of? I'll hide it so that~~
I'll not be able to find it myself. [*Exit*].

ANÍSIA [*stands in terror*] Oh dear, and supposing he . . .

MATRYÓNA. Well, is he dead?

ANÍSIA. Yes, he seems dead. He did not move when I took it.

MATRYÓNA. Go in, there's Akoulína.

ANÍSIA. Well there, I've done the sin and he has the money. . . .

MATRYÓNA. Have done and go in! There's Martha coming!

ANÍSIA. There now, I've trusted him. What's going to happen now? [*Exit*].

MARTHA [*enters from one side, Akoulína enters from the other. To Akoulína*] I should have come before, but I was at my daughter's. Well, how's the old man? Is he dying?

AKOULÍNA [*puts down the clothes*] Don't know, I've been to the river.

MARTHA [*pointing to Matryóna*] Who's that?

MATRYÓNA. I'm from Zouévo. I'm Nikíta's mother from Zouévo, my dearie. Good afternoon to you. He's withering, withering away, poor dear—your brother, I mean. He came out himself. "Send for my sister," he said, "because," said he . . . Dear me, why, I do believe, he's dead!

ANÍSIA [*runs out screaming. Clings to a post, and begins wailing*]¹ Oh, oh, ah! who-o-o-m have you left me

¹ Loud public wailing of this kind is customary, and considered indispensable, among the peasants.

to, why-y-y have you dese-e-e-rted me—a miserable widow . . . to live my life alone . . . Why have you closed your bright eyes . . .

Enter Neighbour. Matryóna and Neighbour catch hold of Anísya under the arms to support her. Akoulína and Martha go into the hut. A crowd assembles.

A VOICE IN THE CROWD. Send for the old women to lay out the body.

MATRYÓNA [*rolls up her sleeves*] Is there any water in the copper? But I daresay the samovár is still hot. I'll also go and help a bit.

Curtain.

ACT III

The same hut. Winter. Nine months have passed since Act II. Anisya, plainly dressed, sits before a loom weaving. Nan is on the oven.

MÍTRITCH [*an old labourer, enters, and slowly takes off his outdoor things*] Oh Lord, have mercy! Well, hasn't the master come home yet?

ANÍSYA. What?

MÍTRITCH. Nikíta isn't back from town, is he?

ANÍSYA. No.

MÍTRITCH. Must have been on the spree. Oh Lord!

ANÍSYA. Have you finished in the stackyard?

MÍTRITCH. What d'you think? Got it all as it should be, and covered everything with straw! I don't like doing things by halves! Oh Lord! holy Nicholas! [*Picks at the corns on his hands*] But it's time he was back.

ANÍSYA. What need has he to hurry? He's got money. Merry-making with that girl, I daresay . . .

MÍTRITCH. ~~Why shouldn't one make merry if one has the money? And why did Akoulina go to town?~~

ANÍSYA. You'd better ask her. How do I know what the devil took her there!

MÍTRITCH. What! to town? There's all sorts of things to be got in town if one's got the means. Oh Lord!

NAN. Mother, I heard myself. "I'll get you a little shawl," he says, blest if he didn't; "you shall choose it yourself," he says. And she got herself up so fine; she put on her velveteen coat and the French shawl.

ANÍSYA. Really, a girl's modesty reaches only to the door. Step over the threshold and it's forgotten. She is a shameless creature.

MÍTRITCH. Oh my! What's the use of being ashamed? While there's plenty of money make merry. Oh Lord! It is too soon to have supper, eh? [*Anísya does not answer*] I'll go and get warm meanwhile. [*Climbs on the stove*] Oh Lord! Blessed Virgin Mother! holy Nicholas!

NEIGHBOUR [*enters*] Seems your goodman's not back yet?

ANÍSYA. No.

NEIGHBOUR. It's time he was. Hasn't he perhaps stopped at our inn? My sister, Thekla, says there's heaps of sledges standing there as have come from the town.

ANÍSYA. Nan! Nan, I say!

NAN. Yes?

ANÍSYA. You run to the inn and see! Mayhap, being drunk, he's gone there.

NAN [*jumps down from the oven and dresses*] All right.

NEIGHBOUR. And he's taken Akoulína with him?

ANÍSYA. Else he'd not have had any need of going. It's because of her he's unearthed all the business there. "Must go to the bank," he says; "it's time to receive the payments," he says. But it's all her fooling.

NEIGHBOUR [*shakes her head*] It's a bad look-out. [*Silence*].

NAN [*at the door*] And if he's there, what am I to say?

ANÍSYA. You only see if he's there.

NAN. All right. I'll be back in a winking. [*Long silence*].

MÍTRITCH [*roars*] Oh Lord! merciful Nicholas!

NEIGHBOUR [*starting*] Oh, how he scared me? Who is it?

ANÍSYA. Why, Mítritch, our labourer.

NEIGHBOUR. Oh dear, oh dear, what a fright he did give me! I had quite forgotten. But tell me, dear, I've heard someone's been wooing Akoulína?

ANÍSYA [*gets up from the loom and sits down by the table*]
There was some one from Dédlovo; but it seems the affair's got wind there too. They made a start, and then stopped; so the thing fell through. Of course, who'd care to?

NEIGHBOUR. And the Lizounófs from Zoúevo?

ANÍSYA. They made some steps too, but it didn't come off either. They won't even see us.

NEIGHBOUR. Yet it's time she was married.

ANÍSYA. Time and more than time! Ah, my dear, I'm that impatient to get her out of the house; but the matter does not come off. He does not wish it, nor she either. He's not yet had enough of his beauty, you see.

NEIGHBOUR. Eh, eh, eh, what doings! Only think of it. Why, he's her step-father!

ANÍSYA. Ah, friend, they've taken me in completely. They've done me so fine it's beyond saying. I, fool that I was, noticed nothing, suspected nothing, and so I married him. I guessed nothing, but they already understood one another.

NEIGHBOUR. Oh dear, what goings on!

ANÍSYA. So it went on from bad to worse, and I see they begin hiding from me. Ah, friend, I was that sick—that sick of my life! It's not as if I didn't love him.

NEIGHBOUR. That goes without saying.

ANÍSYA. Ah, how hard it is to bear such treatment from him! Oh, how it hurts!

NEIGHBOUR. Yes, and I've heard say he's becoming too free with his fists?

ANÍSYA. And that too! There was a time when he was gentle when he'd had a drop. He used to hit out before, but of me he was always fond! But now when he's in a temper he goes for me and is ready to trample me under his feet. The other day he got both hands entangled in my hair so that I could hardly get away. And the girl's

worse than a serpent; it's a wonder the earth bears such furies.

NEIGHBOUR. Ah, ah, my dear, now I look at you, you are a sufferer! To suffer like that is no joke. To have given shelter to a beggar, and he to lead you such a dance! Why don't you pull in the reins?

ANÍSIA. Ah, but my dear, if it weren't for my heart! Him as is gone was stern enough, still I could twist him about any way I liked; but with this one I can do nothing. As soon as I see him all my anger goes. I haven't a grain of courage before him; I go about like a drowned hen.

NEIGHBOUR. Ah, neighbour, you must be under a spell. I've heard that Matryóna goes in for that sort of thing. It must be her.

ANÍSIA. Yes, dear; I think so myself sometimes. Gracious me, how hurt I feel at times! I'd like to tear him to pieces. But when I set eyes on him, my heart won't go against him.

NEIGHBOUR. It's plain you're bewitched. It don't take long to blight a body. There now, when I look at you, what you have dwindled to!

ANÍSIA. Growing a regular spindle-shanks. And just look at that fool Akoulína. Wasn't the girl a regular untidy slattern, and just look at her now! Where has it all come from? Yes, he has fitted her out. She's grown so smart, so puffed up, just like a bubble that's ready to burst. And, though she's a fool, she's got it into her head, "I'm the mistress," she says; "the house is mine; it's me father wanted him to marry." And she's that vicious! Lord help us, when she gets into a rage she's ready to tear the thatch off the house.

NEIGHBOUR. Oh dear, what a life yours is, now I come to look at you. And yet there's people envying you: "They're rich," they say; but it seems that gold don't keep tears from falling.

ANÍSIA. Much reason for envy indeed! And the riches,

too, will soon be made ducks and drakes of. Dear me, how he squanders money!

NEIGHBOUR. But how's it, dear, you've been so simple to give up the money? It's yours.

ANÍSYA. Ah, if you knew all! The thing is that I've made one little mistake.

NEIGHBOUR. Well, if I were you, I'd go straight and have the law of him. The money's yours; how dare he squander it? There's no such rights.

ANÍSYA. They don't pay heed to that nowadays.

NEIGHBOUR. Ah, my dear, now I come to look at you, you've got that weak.

ANÍSYA. Yes, quite weak, dear, quite weak. He's got me into a regular fix. I don't myself know anything. Oh, my poor head!

NEIGHBOUR [*listening*] There's someone coming, I think. [*The door opens and Akim enters*].

AKÍM [*crosses himself, knocks the snow off his feet, and takes off his coat*] Peace be to this house! How do you do? Are you well, daughter?

ANÍSYA. How d'you do, father? Do you come straight from home?

AKÍM. I've been a-thinking, I'll go and see what's name, go to see my son, I mean,—my son. I didn't start early—had my dinner, I mean; I went, and it's so what d'you call it—so snowy, hard walking, and so there I'm what d'you call it—late, I mean. And my son—is he at home? At home? My son, I mean.

ANÍSYA. No; he's gone to the town.

AKÍM [*sits down on a bench*] I've some business with him, d'you see, some business, I mean. I told him t'other day, told him I was in need—told him, I mean, that our horse was done for, our horse, you see. So we must what d'ye call it, get a horse, I mean, some kind of a horse, I mean. So there, I've come, you see.

ANÍSYA. Nikíta told me. When he comes back you'll

have a talk. [*Goes to the oven*] Have some supper now, and he'll soon come. Mítritch, eh Mítritch, come have your supper.

MÍTRITCH. Oh Lord! merciful Nicholas!

ANÍSIA. Come to supper.

NEIGHBOUR. I shall go now. Good-night. [*Exit*].

MÍTRITCH [*gets down from the oven*] I never noticed how I fell asleep. Oh Lord! gracious Nicholas! How d'you do, Daddy Akím?

AKÍM. Ah, Mítritch! What are you, what d'ye call it, I mean? . . .

MÍTRITCH. Why, I'm working for your son, Nikíta.

AKÍM. Dear me! What d'ye call . . . working for my son, I mean. Dear me!

MÍTRITCH. I was living with a tradesman in town, but drank all I had there. Now I've come back to the village. I've no home, so I've gone into service. [*Gapes*] Oh Lord!

AKÍM. But how's that, what d'you call it, or what's name, Nikíta, what does he do? Has he some business, I mean besides, that he should hire a labourer, a labourer I mean, hire a labourer?

ANÍSIA. What business should he have? He used to manage, but now he's other things on his mind, so he's hired a labourer.

MÍTRITCH. Why shouldn't he, seeing he has money?

AKÍM. Now that's what d'you call it, that's wrong, I mean, quite wrong, I mean. That's spoiling oneself.

ANÍSIA. Oh, he has got spoilt, that spoilt, it's just awful.

AKÍM. There now, what d'you call it, one thinks how to make things better, and it gets worse I mean. Riches spoil a man, spoil, I mean.

MÍTRITCH. Fatness makes even a dog go mad; how's one not to get spoilt by fat living? Myself now; how I went on with fat living. I drank for three weeks without being

sober. I drank my last breeches. When I had nothing left, I gave it up. Now I've determined not to. Bother it!

AKÍM. And where's what d'you call, your old woman?

MÍTRITCH. My old woman has found her right place, old fellow. She's hanging about the gin-shops in town. She's a swell too; one eye knocked out, and the other black, and her muzzle twisted to one side. And she's never sober; drat her!

AKÍM. Oh, oh, oh, how's that?

MÍTRITCH. And where's a soldier's wife to go? She has found her right place. [*Silence*].

AKÍM [*to Anísya*] And Nikita,—has he what d'you call it, taken anything up to town? I mean, anything to sell?

ANÍSYA [*laying the table and serving up*] No, he's taken nothing. He's gone to get money from the bank.

AKÍM [*sitting down to supper*] Why? D'you wish to put it to another use, the money I mean?

ANÍSYA. No, we don't touch it. Only some twenty or thirty roubles as have come due; they must be taken.

AKÍM. Must be taken. Why take it, the money I mean? You'll take some to-day I mean, and some to-morrow; and so you'll what d'you call it, take it all, I mean.

ANÍSYA. We get this besides. The money is all safe.

AKÍM. All safe? How's that, safe? You take it, and it what d'you call it, it's all safe. How's that? You put a heap of meal into a bin, or a barn, I mean, and go on taking meal, will it remain there what d'you call it, all safe I mean? That's, what d'you call it, it's cheating. You'd better find out, or else they'll cheat you. Safe indeed! I mean you what d'ye call . . . you take it and it remains all safe there?

ANÍSYA. I know nothing about it. Iván Moséitch advised us at the time. "Put the money in the bank," he

said, "the money will be safe, and you'll get interest," he said.

MÍTRITCH [*having finished his supper*] That's so. I've lived with a tradesman. They all do like that. Put the money in the bank, then lie down on the oven and it will keep coming in.

AKÍM. That's queer talk. How's that—what d'ye call, coming in, how's that coming in, and they, who do they get it from I mean, the money I mean?

ANÍSIA. They take the money out of the bank.

MÍTRITCH. Get along! 'Tain't a thing a woman can understand! You look here, I'll make it all clear to you. Mind and remember. You see, suppose you've got some money, and I, for instance, have spring coming on, my land's idle, I've got no seeds, or I have to pay taxes. So, you see, I go to you. "Akím," I say, "give us a ten-rouble note, and when I've harvested in autumn I'll return it, and till two acres for you besides, for having obliged me!" And you, seeing I've something to fall back on—a horse say, or a cow—you say, "No, give two or three roubles for the obligation," and there's an end of it. I'm stuck in the mud, and can't do without. So I say, "All right!" and take a tenner. In the autumn, when I've made my turnover, I bring it back, and you squeeze the extra three roubles out of me.

AKÍM. Yes, but that's what peasants do when they what d'ye call it, when they forget God. It's not honest, I mean, it's no good, I mean.

MÍTRITCH. You wait. You'll see it comes just to the same thing. Now don't forget how you've skinned me. And Anísya, say, has got some money lying idle. She does not know what to do with it, besides, she's a woman, and does not know how to use it. She comes to you. "Couldn't you make some profit with my money too?" she says. "Why not?" say you, and you wait. Before the summer I come again and say, "Give me

another tenner, and I'll be obliged." Then you find out if my hide isn't all gone, and if I can be skinned again you give me Anísyá's money. But supposing I'm clean shorn,—have nothing to eat,—then you see I can't be fleeced any more, and you say, "Go your way, friend," and you look out for another, and lend him your own and Anísyá's money and skin him. That's what the bank is. So it goes round and round. It's a cute thing, old fellow!

AKÍM [*excitedly*] Gracious me, whatever is that like? It's what d'ye call it, it's filthy! The peasants—what d'ye call it, the peasants do so I mean, and know it's, what d'ye call it, a sin! It's what d'you call, not right, not right, I mean. It's filthy! How can people as have learnt . . . what d'ye call it . . .

MÍTRITCH. That, old fellow, is just what they're fond of! And remember, them that are stupid, or the women folk, as can't put their money into use themselves, they take it to the bank, and they there, deuce take 'em, clutch hold of it, and with this money they fleece the people. It's a cute thing!

AKÍM [*sighing*] Oh dear, I see, what d'ye call it, without money it's bad, and with money it's worse! How's that? God told us to work, but you, what d'ye call . . . I mean you put money into the bank and go to sleep, and the money will what d'ye call it, will feed you while you sleep. It's filthy, that's what I call it; it's not right.

MÍTRITCH. Not right? Eh, old fellow, who cares about that nowadays? And how clean they pluck you, too! That's the fact of the matter.

AKÍM [*sighs*] Ah yes, seems the time's what d'ye call it, the time's growing ripe. There, I've had a look at the closets in town. What they've come to! It's all polished and polished I mean, it's fine, it's what d'ye call it, it's like inside an inn. And what's it all for? What's the good of it? Oh, they've forgotten God. Forgotten, I mean. We've forgotten, forgotten God, God I mean!

Thank you, my dear, I've had enough. I'm quite satisfied. [*Rises. Mitritch climbs on to the oven*].

ANÍSYA [*eats, and collects the dishes*] If his father would only take him to task ! But I'm ashamed to tell him.

AKÍM. What d'you say ?

ANÍSYA. Oh ! it's nothing.

Enter Nan.

AKÍM. Here's a good girl, always busy ! You're cold, I should think ?

NAN. Yes, I am, terribly. How d'you do, grandfather ?

ANÍSYA. Well ? Is he there ?

NAN. No. But Andriyán is there. He's been to town, and he says he saw them at an inn in town. He says Dad's as drunk as drunk can be !

ANÍSYA. Do you want anything to eat ? Here you are.

NAN [*goes to the oven*] Well, it is cold. My hands are quite numb. [*Akím takes off his leg-bands and bast-shoes. Anísya washes up*].

ANÍSYA. Father !

AKÍM. Well, what is it ?

ANÍSYA. And is Marína living well ?

AKÍM. Yes, she's living all right. The little woman is what d'ye call it, clever and steady ; she's living, and what d'ye call it, doing her best. She's all right ; the little woman's of the right sort I mean ; painstaking and what d'ye call it, submissive ; the little woman's all right I mean, all right, you know.

ANÍSYA. And is there no talk in your village that a relative of Marína's husband thinks of marrying our Akoulína ? Have you heard nothing of it ?

AKÍM. Ah ; that's Mirónof. Yes, the women did chatter something. But I didn't pay heed, you know. It don't interest me I mean, I don't know anything. Yes, the old women did say something, but I've a bad memory, bad memory, I mean. But the Mirónofs are



what d'ye call it, they're all right, I mean they're all right.

ANÍSYA. I'm that impatient to get her settled.

AKÍM. And why?

NAN [*listens*] They've come!

ANÍSYA. Well, don't you go bothering them. [*Goes on washing the spoons without turning her head*].

NIKÍTA [*enters*] Anísya! Wife! who has come? [*Anísya looks up and turns away in silence*].

NIKÍTA [*severely*] Who has come? Have you forgotten?

ANÍSYA. Now don't humbug. Come in!

NIKÍTA [*still more severely*] Who's come?

ANÍSYA [*goes up and takes him by the arm*] Well then, husband has come. Now then, come in!

NIKÍTA [*holds back*] Ah, that's it! Husband! And what's husband called? Speak properly.

ANÍSYA. Oh bother you! Nikíta!

NIKÍTA. Where have you learnt manners? The full name.

ANÍSYA. Nikíta Akímitch! Now then!

NIKÍTA [*still in the doorway*] Ah, that's it! But now—the surname?

ANÍSYA [*laughs and pulls him by the arm*] Tchilíkin. Dear me, what airs!

NIKÍTA. Ah, that's it. [*Holds on to the door-post*] No, now say with which foot Tchilíkin steps into this house!

ANÍSYA. That's enough! You're letting the cold in!

NIKÍTA. Say with which foot he steps? You've got to say it,—that's flat.

ANÍSYA [*aside*] He'll go on worrying. [*To Nikíta*] Well then, with the left. Come in!

NIKÍTA. Ah, that's it.

ANÍSYA. You look who's in the hut!

NIKÍTA. Ah, my parent! Well, what of that? I'm not

ashamed of my parent. I can pay my respects to my parent. How d'you do, father? [*Bows and puts out his hand*] My respects to you.

AKÍM [*does not answer*] Drink, I mean drink, what it does! It's filthy!

NIKÍTA. Drink, what's that? I've been drinking? I'm to blame, that's flat! I've had a glass with a friend, drank his health.

ANÍSIA. Go and lie down, I say.

NIKÍTA. Wife, say where am I standing?

ANÍSIA. Now then, it's all right, lie down!

NIKÍTA. No, I'll first drink a samovár with my parent. Go and light the samovár. Akoulína, I say, come here!

Enter Akoulína, smartly dressed and carrying their purchases.

AKOULÍNA. Why have you thrown everything about? Where's the yarn?

NIKÍTA. The yarn? The yarn's there. Hullo, Mítritch, where are you? Asleep? Asleep? Go and put the horse up.

AKÍM [*not seeing Akoulína but looking at his son*] Dear me, what is he doing? The old man's what d'ye call it, quite done up, I mean,—been thrashing,—and look at him, what d'ye call it, putting on airs! Put up the horse! Faugh, what filth!

MÍTRITCH [*climbs down from the oven, and puts on felt boots*] Oh, merciful Lord! Is the horse in the yard? Done it to death, I dare say. Just see how he's been swilling, the deuce take him. Up to his very throat. Oh Lord, holy Nicholas! [*Puts on sheepskin, and exit*].

NIKÍTA [*sits down*] You must forgive me, father. It's true I've had a drop; well, what of that? Even a hen will drink. Ain't it true? So you must forgive me. Never mind Mítritch, he doesn't mind, he'll put it up.

ANÍSIA. Shall I really light the samovár?

NIKÍTA. Light it! My parent has come. I wish to talk



to him, and shall drink tea with him. [*To Akoulina*]
Have you brought all the parcels?

AKOULINA. The parcels? I've brought mine, the rest's in the sledge. Hi, take this, this isn't mine!

Throws a parcel on the table and puts the others into her box. Nan watches her while she puts them away. Akim does not look at his son, but puts his leg-bands and bast-shoes on the oven.

ANISYA [*going out with the samovar*] Her box is full as it is, and still he's bought more!

NIKITA [*pretending to be sober*] You must not be cross with me, father. You think I'm drunk? I am all there, that's flat! As they say, "Drink, but keep your wits about you." I can talk with you at once, father. I can attend to any business. You told me about the money; your horse is worn-out,—I remember! That can all be managed. That's all in our hands. If it was an enormous sum that's wanted, then we might wait; but as it is I can do everything. That's the case.

AKIM [*goes on fidgeting with the leg-bands*] Eh, lad, "It's ill sledging when the thaw has set in."

NIKITA. What d'you mean by that? "And it's ill talking with one who is drunk"? But don't you worry, let's have some tea. And I can do anything; that's flat! I can put everything to rights.

AKIM [*shakes his head*] Eh, eh, eh!

NIKITA. The money, here it is. [*Puts his hand in his pocket, pulls out pocket-book, handles the notes in it and takes out a ten-rouble note*] Take this to get a horse; I can't forget my parent. I shan't forsake him, that's flat. Because he's my parent! Here you are, take it! Really now, I don't grudge it. [*Comes up and pushes the note towards Akim who won't take it. Nikita catches hold of his father's hand*] Take it, I tell you. I don't grudge it.

AKIM. I can't, what d'you call it, I mean, can't take it! And can't what d'ye call it, talk to you, because you're not yourself, I mean.

NIKÍTA. I'll not let you go! Take it! [*Puts the money into Akim's hand*].

ANÍSYA [*enters, and stops*] You'd better take it, he'll give you no peace!

AKÍM [*takes it, and shakes his head*] Oh! that liquor. Not like a man, I mean!

NIKÍTA. That's better! If you repay it you'll repay it, if not I'll make no bother. That's what I am! [*Sees Akoulína*] Akoulína, show your presents.

AKOULÍNA. What?

NIKÍTA. Show your presents.

AKOULÍNA. The presents, what's the use of showing 'em? I've put 'em away.

NIKÍTA. Get them, I tell you. Nan will like to see 'em. Undo the shawl. Give it here.

AKÍM. Oh, oh! It's sickening! [*Climbs on the oven*].

AKOULÍNA [*gets out the parcels and puts them on the table*] Well, there you are,—what's the good of looking at 'em?

NAN. Oh how lovely! It's as good as Stepanída's.

AKOULÍNA. Stepanída's? What's Stepanída's compared to this? [*Brightening up and undoing the parcels*] Just look here,—see the quality! It's a French one.

NAN. The print is fine! Mary has a dress like it, only lighter on a blue ground. This is pretty.

NIKÍTA. Ah, that's it!

Anísya passes angrily into the closet, returns with a tablecloth and the chimney of the samovár, and goes up to the table.

ANÍSYA. Drat you, littering the table!

NIKÍTA. You look here!

ANÍSYA. What am I to look at? Have I never seen anything? Put it away! [*Sweeps the shawl on to the floor with her arm*].

AKOULÍNA. What are you pitching things down for? You pitch your own things about! [*Picks up the shawl*].

NIKÍTA. Anísya! Look here!

ANÍSYA. Why am I to look ?

NIKÍTA. You think I have forgotten you ? Look here !
[Shows her a parcel and sits down on it] It's a present for you. Only you must earn it ! Wife, where am I sitting ?

ANÍSYA. Enough of your humbug. I'm not afraid of you. Whose money are you spreeing on and buying your fat wench presents with ? Mine !

AKOULÍNA. Yours indeed ? No fear ! You wished to steal it, but it did not come off ! Get out of the way ! [Pushes her while trying to pass].

ANÍSYA. What are you shoving for ? I'll teach you to shove !

AKOULÍNA. Shove me ? You try ! [Presses against Anísya].

NIKÍTA. Now then, now then, you women. Have done now ! [Steps between them].

AKOULÍNA. Comes shoving herself in ! You ought to keep quiet and remember your doings ! You think no one knows !

ANÍSYA. Knows what ? Out with it, out with it ! What do they know ?

AKOULÍNA. I know something about you !

ANÍSYA. You're a slut who goes with another's husband !

AKOULÍNA. And you did yours to death !

ANÍSYA [throwing herself on Akoulína] You're raving !

NIKÍTA [holding her back] Anísya, you seem to have forgotten !

ANÍSYA. Want to frighten me ! I'm not afraid of you !

NIKÍTA [turns Anísya round and pushes her out] Be off !

ANÍSYA. Where am I to go ? I'll not go out of my own house !

NIKÍTA. Be off, I tell you, and don't dare to come in here !

ANÍSYA. I won't go ! [Nikíta pushes her, Anísya cries and screams and clings to the door] What ! am I to be turned out of my own house by the scruff of the neck ? What

are you doing, you scoundrel? Do you think there's no law for you? You wait a bit!

NIKÍTA. Now then!

ANÍSIA. I'll go to the Elder! To the policeman!

NIKÍTA. Off, I tell you! [*Pushes her out*].

ANÍSIA [*behind the door*] I'll hang myself!

NIKÍTA. No fear!

NAN. Oh, oh, oh! Mother, dear, darling! [*Cries*].

NIKÍTA. Me frightened of her! A likely thing! What are you crying for? She'll come back, no fear. Go and see to the samovár. [*Exit Nan*].

AKOULÍNA [*collects and folds her presents*] The mean wretch, how she's messed it up. But wait a bit, I'll cut up her jacket for her! Sure I will!

NIKÍTA. I've turned her out, what more do you want?

AKOULÍNA. She's dirtied my new shawl. If that bitch hadn't gone away, I'd have torn her eyes out!

NIKÍTA. That's enough. Why should you be angry? Now if I loved her . . .

AKOULÍNA. Loved her? She's worth loving, with her fat mug! If you'd have given her up, then nothing would have happened. You should have sent her to the devil. And the house was mine all the same, and the money was mine! Says she is the mistress, but what sort of mistress is she to her husband? She's a murderess, that's what she is! She'll serve you the same way!

NIKÍTA. Oh dear, how's one to stop a woman's jaw? You don't yourself know what you're jabbering about!

AKOULÍNA. Yes, I do. I'll not live with her! I'll turn her out of the house! She can't live here with me. The mistress indeed! She's not the mistress,—that jail-bird!

NIKÍTA. That's enough! What have you to do with her? Don't mind her. You look at me! I am the master! I do as I like. I've ceased to love her, and now I love you. I love who I like! The power is mine,

she's under me. That's where I keep her. [*Points to his feet*] A pity we've no concertina. [*Sings*].

"We have loaves on the stoves,
We have porridge on the shelf.
So we'll live and be gay,
Making merry every day,
And when death comes,
Then we'll die!
We have loaves on the stoves,
We have porridge on the shelf . . ."

Enter Mitritch. He takes off his outdoor things and climbs on the oven.

MÍTRITCH. Seems the women have been fighting again! Tearing each other's hair. Oh Lord, gracious Nicholas!

AKÍM [*sitting on the edge of the oven, takes his leg-bands and shoes and begins putting them on*] Get in, get into the corner.

MÍTRITCH. Seems they can't settle matters between them. Oh Lord!

NIKÍTA. Get out the liquor, we'll have some with our tea.

NAN [*to Akoulína*] Sister, the samovár is just boiling over.

NIKÍTA. And where's your mother?

NAN. She's standing and crying out there in the passage.

NIKÍTA. Oh, that's it! Call her, and tell her to bring the samovár. And you, Akoulína, get the tea things.

AKOULÍNA. The tea things? All right. [*Brings the things*].

NIKÍTA [*unpacks spirits, rusks, and salt herrings*] That's for myself. This is yarn for the wife. The paraffin is out there in the passage, and here's the money. Wait a bit, [*takes a counting-frame*] I'll add it up. [*Adds*] Wheat-flour, 80 kopéýkas, oil . . . Father, 10 roubles. . . . Father, come let's have some tea!

Silence. Akím sits on the oven and winds the bands round his legs. Enter Antsya with samovár.

ANÍSYA. Where shall I put it?

NIKÍTA. Here on the table. Well! have you been to the Elder? Ah, that's it! Have your say and then eat your words. Now then, that's enough. Don't be cross, sit down and drink this. [*Fills a wine-glass for her*] And here's your present. [*Gives her the parcel he had been sitting on. Anísya takes it silently and shakes her head*].

AKÍM [*gets down and puts on his sheepskin, then comes up to the table and puts down the money*] Here, take your money back! Put it away.

NIKÍTA [*does not see the money*] Why have you put on your things?

AKÍM. I'm going, going I mean; forgive me for the Lord's sake. [*Takes up his cap and belt*].

NIKÍTA. My gracious! Where are you going to at this time of night?

AKÍM. I can't, I mean what d'ye call 'em, in your house, what d'ye call 'em, can't stay I mean, stay, can't stay, forgive me.

NIKÍTA. But are you going without having any tea?

AKÍM [*fastens his belt*] Going, because, I mean, it's not right in your house, I mean, what d'you call it, not right, Nikíta, in the house, what d'ye call it, not right! I mean, you are living a bad life, Nikíta, bad,—I'll go.

NIKÍTA. Eh now! Have done talking! Sit down and drink your tea!

ANÍSYA. Why, father, you'll shame us before the neighbours. What has offended you?

AKÍM. Nothing what d'ye call it, nothing has offended me, nothing at all! I mean only, I see, what d'you call it, I mean, I see my son, to ruin I mean, to ruin, I mean my son's on the road to ruin, I mean.

NIKÍTA. What ruin? Just prove it!

AKÍM. Ruin, ruin; you're in the midst of it! What did I tell you that time?

NIKÍTA. You said all sorts of things!

AKÍM. I told you, what d'ye call it, I told you about the orphan lass. That you had wronged an orphan—Marína, I mean, wronged her!

NIKÍTA. Eh! he's at it again. Let bygones be bygones . . . All that's past!

AKÍM [*excited*] Past! No, lad, it's not past. Sin, I mean, fastens on to sin—drags sin after it, and you've stuck fast, Nikíta, fast in sin! Stuck fast in sin! I see you're fast in sin. Stuck fast, sunk in sin, I mean!

NIKÍTA. Sit down and drink your tea, and have done with it!

AKÍM. I can't, I mean can't what d'ye call it, can't drink tea. Because of your filth, I mean; I feel what d'ye call it, I feel sick, very sick! I can't what d'ye call it, I can't drink tea with you.

NIKÍTA. Eh! There he goes rambling! Come to the table.

AKÍM. You're in your riches same as in a net—you're in a net, I mean. Ah, Nikíta, it's the soul that God needs!

NIKÍTA. Now really, what right have you to reprove me in my own house? Why do you keep on at me? Am I a child that you can pull by the hair? Nowadays those things have been dropped!

AKÍM. That's true. I have heard that nowadays, what d'ye call it, that nowadays children pull their fathers' beards, I mean! But that's ruin, that's ruin, I mean!

NIKÍTA [*angrily*] We are living without help from you, and it's you who came to us with your wants!

AKÍM. The money? There's your money! I'll go begging, begging I mean, before I'll take it, I mean.

NIKÍTA. That's enough! Why be angry and upset the whole company! [*Holds him by the arm*].

AKÍM [*shrieks*] Let go! I'll not stay. I'd rather sleep under some fence than in the midst of your filth! Faugh! God forgive me! [*Exit*].

NIKÍTA. Here's a go!

AKÍM [*reopens the door*] Come to your senses, Nikíta!
It's the soul that God wants! [*Exit*].

AKOULÍNA [*takes cups*] Well, shall I pour out the tea?
[*Takes a cup. All are silent*].

MÍTRITCH [*roars*] Oh Lord, be merciful to me a sinner!
[*All start*].

NIKÍTA [*lies down on the bench*] Oh, it's dull, it's dull!
[*To Akoulína*] Where's the concertina?

AKOULÍNA. The concertina? He's bethought himself of
it. Why, you took it to be mended. I've poured out
your tea. Drink it!

NIKÍTA. I don't want it! Put out the light . . . Oh,
how dull I feel, how dull! [*Sobs*].

Curtain.

ACT IV

Autumn. Evening. The moon is shining. The stage represents the interior of courtyard. The scenery at the back shows, in the middle, the back porch of the hut. To the right the winter half of the hut and the gate; to the left the summer half and the cellar. To the right of the stage is a shed. The sound of tipsy voices and shouts are heard from the hut.¹ Second Neighbour Woman comes out of the hut and beckons to First Neighbour Woman.

SECOND NEIGHBOUR. How's it Akoulína has not shown herself?

FIRST NEIGHBOUR. Why hasn't she shown herself? She'd have been glad to; but she's too ill, you know. The suitor's relatives have come, and want to see the girl; and she, my dear, she's lying in the cold hut and can't come out, poor thing!

SECOND NEIGHBOUR. But how's that?

FIRST NEIGHBOUR. They say she's been bewitched by an evil eye! She's got pains in the stomach!

SECOND NEIGHBOUR. You don't say so?

FIRST NEIGHBOUR. What else could it be? [*Whispers*].

SECOND NEIGHBOUR. Dear me! There's a go! But his relatives will surely find it out?

FIRST NEIGHBOUR. They find it out! They're all drunk! Besides, they are chiefly after her dowry. Just think what

¹ Where not otherwise mentioned in the stage directions, it is always the winter half of the hut that is referred to as "the hut." The summer half is not heated, and not used in winter under ordinary circumstances.

they give with the girl! Two furs, my dear, six dresses, a French shawl, and I don't know how many pieces of linen, and money as well,—two hundred roubles, it's said!

SECOND NEIGHBOUR. That's all very well, but even money can't give much pleasure in the face of such a disgrace.

FIRST NEIGHBOUR. Hush! . . . There's his father, I think. *They cease talking, and go into the hut.*

The Suitor's Father comes out of the hut hiccupping.

THE FATHER. Oh, I'm all in a sweat. It's awfully hot! Will just cool myself a bit. [*Stands puffing*] The Lord only knows what—something is not right. I can't feel happy. —Well, it's the old woman's affair.

Enter Matryóna from hut.

MATRYÓNA. And I was just thinking, where's the father? Where's the father? And here you are, dear friend. . . . Well, dear friend, the Lord be thanked! Everything is as honourable as can be! When one's arranging a match one should not boast. And I have never learnt to boast. But as you've come about the right business, so with the Lord's help, you'll be grateful to me all your life! She's a wonderful girl! There's no other like her in all the district!

THE FATHER. That's true enough, but how about the money?

MATRYÓNA. Don't you trouble about the money! All she had from her father goes with her. And it's more than one gets easily, as things are nowadays. —Three times fifty roubles!

THE FATHER. We don't complain, but it's for our own child. Naturally we want to get the best we can.

MATRYÓNA. I'll tell you straight, friend: if it hadn't been for me, you'd never have found anything like her! They've had an offer from the Karmilins, but I stood out against it. And as for the money, I'll tell you truly:

when her father, God be merciful to his soul, was dying, he gave orders that the widow should take Nikíta into the homestead—of course I know all about it from my son,—and the money was to go to Akoulína. Why, another one might have thought of his own interests, but Nikíta gives everything clean! It's no trifle. Fancy what a sum it is!

THE FATHER. People are saying, that more money was left her? The lad's sharp too!

MATRYÓNA. Oh, dear soul alive! A slice in another's hand always looks big; all she had will be handed over. I tell you, throw doubts to the wind and make all sure! What a girl she is! as fresh as a daisy!

THE FATHER. That's so. But my old woman and I were only wondering about the girl; why has she not come out? We've been thinking, suppose she's sickly?

MATRYÓNA. Oh, ah. . . . Who? She? Sickly? Why, there's none to compare with her in the district. The girl's as sound as a bell; you can't pinch her. But you saw her the other day! And as for work, she's wonderful! She's a bit deaf, that's true, but there are spots on the sun, you know. And her not coming out, you see, it's from an evil eye! A spell's been cast on her! And I know the bitch who's done the business! They know of the betrothal and they bewitched her. But I know a counter-spell. The girl will get up to-morrow. Don't you ~~worry~~ worry about the girl!

THE FATHER. Well, of course, the thing's settled.

MATRYÓNA. Yes, of course! Don't you turn back. And don't forget me, I've had a lot of trouble. Don't forget . . .

A woman's voice from the hut.

VOICE. If we are to go, let's go. Come along, Iván!

THE FATHER. I'm coming. [*Exeunt. Guests crowd together in the passage and prepare to go away.*]

NAN [*runs out of the hut and calls to Anísya*] Mother!

ANÍSIA [*from inside*] What d'you want?

NAN. Mother, come here, or they'll hear.

Anísia enters and they go together to the shed.

ANÍSIA. Well? What is it? Where's Akoulína?

NAN. She's gone into the barn. It's awful what's she's doing there! I'm blest! "I can't bear it," she says. "I'll scream," she says, "I'll scream out loud." Blest if she didn't.

ANÍSIA. She'll have to wait. We'll see our visitors off first.

NAN. Oh mother! She's so bad! And she's angry too. "What's the good of their drinking my health?" she says. "I shan't marry," she says. "I shall die," she says. Mother, supposing she does die! It's awful. I'm so frightened!

ANÍSIA. No fear, she'll not die. But don't you go near her. Come along. [*Exit Anísia and Nan*].

MITRITCH [*comes in at the gate and begins collecting the scattered hay*] Oh Lord! Merciful Nicholas! What a lot of liquor they've been and swilled, and the smell they've made! It smells even out here! But no, I don't want any, drat it! See how they've scattered the hay about. They don't eat it, but only trample it under foot. A truss gone before you know it. Oh, that smell, it seems to be just under my nose! Drat it! [*Yawns*] It's time to go to sleep! But I don't care to go into the hut. It seems to float just round my nose! It has a strong scent, the damned stuff! [*The guests are heard driving off*] They're off at last. Oh Lord! Merciful Nicholas! There they go, binding themselves and gulling one another. And it's all gammon!

Enter Nikíta.

NIKÍTA. Mitritch, you get off to sleep and I'll put this straight.

MITRITCH. All right, you throw it to the sheep. Well have you seen 'em all off?

NIKÍTA. Yes, they're off! But things are not right! I don't know what to do!

MÍTRITCH. It's a fine mess. But there's the Foundlings'¹ for that sort of thing. Whoever likes may drop one there; they'll take 'em all. Give 'em as many as you like, they ask no questions, and even pay—if the mother goes in as a wet-nurse. It's easy enough nowadays.

NIKÍTA. But mind, Mítritch, don't go blabbing.

MÍTRITCH. It's no concern of mine. Cover the tracks as you think best. Dear me, how you smell of liquor! I'll go in. Oh Lord! [*Exit, yawning*].

Nikita is long silent. Sits down on a sledge.

NIKÍTA. Here's a go!

Enter Anísya.

ANÍSYA. Where are you?

NIKÍTA. Here.

ANÍSYA. What are you doing there? There's no time to be lost! We must take it out directly!

NIKÍTA. What are we to do?

ANÍSYA. I'll tell you what you are to do. And you'll have to do it!

NIKÍTA. You'd better take it to the Foundlings'—if anything.

ANÍSYA. Then you'd better take it there yourself if you like! You've a hankering for smut, but you're weak when it comes to settling up, I see!

NIKÍTA. What's to be done?

ANÍSYA. Go down into the cellar, I tell you, and dig a hole!

NIKÍTA. Couldn't you manage, somehow, some other way?

ANÍSYA [*imitating him*] "Some other way?" Seems we can't "some other way!" You should have thought about it a year ago. Do what you're told to!

NIKÍTA. Oh dear, what a go!

¹ The Foundlings' Hospital in Moscow, where 80 to 90 per cent. of the children die.

Enter Nan.

NAN. Mother! Grandmother's calling! I think sister's got a baby! I'm blest if it didn't scream!

ANÍSYA. What are you babbling about? Plague take you! It's kittens whining there. Go into the hut and sleep, or I'll give it you!

NAN. Mammy dear, truly, I swear . . .

ANÍSYA [*raising her arm as if to strike*] I'll give it you! You be off and don't let me catch sight of you! [*Nan runs into hut. To Nikíta*] Do as you're told, or else mind! [*Exit*].

NIKÍTA [*alone. After a long silence*] Here's a go! Oh these women! What a fix! Says you should have thought of it a year ago. When's one to think beforehand? When's one to think? Why, last year this Anísya dangled after me. What was I to do? Am I a monk? The master died; and I covered my sin as was proper, so I was not to blame there. Aren't there lots of such cases? And then those powders. Did I put her up to that? Why, had I known what the bitch was up to, I'd have killed her! I'm sure I should have killed her! She's made me her partner in these horrors—that jade! And she became loathsome to me from that day! She became loathsome, loathsome to me as soon as mother told me about it. I can't bear the sight of her! Well then, how could I live with her? And then it begun. . . . That wench began hanging round. Well, what was I to do! If I had not done it, someone else would. And this is what comes of it! Still I'm not to blame in this either. Oh, what a go! [*Sits thinking*] They are bold, these women! What a plan to think of! But I won't have a hand in it!

Enter Matryóna with a lantern and spade, panting.

MATRYÓNA. Why are you sitting there like a hen on a perch? What did your wife tell you to do? You just get things ready!

NIKÍTA. What do you mean to do?

MATRYÓNA. We know what to do. You do your share!

NIKÍTA. You'll be getting me into a mess!

MATRYÓNA. What? You're not thinking of backing out, are you? Now it's come to this, and you back out!

NIKÍTA. Think ~~what a~~ thing it would be! It's a living soul.

MATRYÓNA. A living soul indeed! Why, it's more dead than alive. And what's one to do with it? Go and take it to the Foundlings'—it will die just the same, and the rumour will get about, and people will talk, and the girl be left on our hands.

NIKÍTA. And supposing it's found out?

MATRYÓNA. Not manage to do it in one's own house? We'll manage it so that no one will have an inkling. Only do as I tell you. We women can't do it without a man. There, take the spade, and get it done there,—I'll hold the light.

NIKÍTA. What am I to get done?

MATRYÓNA [*in a low voice*] Dig a hole; then we'll bring it out and get it out of the way in a trice! There, she's calling again. Now then, get in, and I'll go.

NIKÍTA. Is it dead then?

MATRYÓNA. Of course it is. Only you must be quick, or else people will notice! They'll see or they'll hear! The rascals must needs know everything. And the policeman went by this evening. Well then, you see [*gives him the spade*], you get down into the cellar and dig a hole right in the corner; the earth is soft there, and you'll smooth it over. Mother earth will not blab to any one; she'll keep it close. Go then; go, dear.

NIKÍTA. You'll get me into a mess, bother you! I'll go away! You do it alone as best you can!

ANÍSIA [*through the doorway*] Well? Has he dug it?

MATRYÓNA. Why have you come away? What have you done with it?

ANÍSYA. I've covered it with rags. No one can hear it. Well, has he dug it?

MATRYÓNA. He doesn't want to!

ANÍSYA [*springs out enraged*] Doesn't want to! How will he like feeding vermin in prison! I'll go straight away and tell everything to the police! It's all the same if one must perish. I'll go straight and tell!

NIKÍTA [*taken aback*] What will you tell?

ANÍSYA. What? Everything! Who took the money? You! [*Nikíta is silent*] And who gave the poison? I did! But you knew! You knew! You knew! We were in agreement!

MATRYÓNA. That's enough now. Nikíta dear, why are you obstinate? What's to be done now? One must take some trouble. Go, honey.

ANÍSYA. See the fine gentleman! He doesn't like it! You've put upon me long enough! You've trampled me under foot! Now it's my turn! Go, I tell you, or else I'll do what I said. . . . There, take the spade; there, now go!

NIKÍTA. Drat you! Can't you leave a fellow alone! [*Takes the spade, but shrinks*] If I don't choose to, I'll not go!

ANÍSYA. Not go? [*Begins to shout*] Neighbours! Heh! heh!

MATRYÓNA [*closes her mouth*] What are you about? You're mad! He'll go. . . . Go, sonnie; go, my own.

ANÍSYA. I'll cry murder!

NIKÍTA. Now stop! Oh what people! You'd better be quick. . . . As well be hung for a sheep as a lamb! [*Goes towards the cellar*].

MATRYÓNA. Yes, that's just it, honey. If you know how to amuse yourself, you must know how to hide the consequences.

ANÍSYA [*still excited*] He's trampled on me . . . he and his slut! But it's enough! I'm not going to be the only one! Let him also be a murderer! Then he'll know how it feels!

MATRYÓNA. There, there! How she flares up! Don't you be cross, lass, but do things quietly little by little, as it's best. You go to the girl, and he'll do the work. [*Follows Nikíta to the cellar with a lantern. He descends into the cellar*].

ANÍSIA. And I'll make him strangle his dirty brat! [*Still excited*] I've worried myself to death all alone, with Peter's bones weighing on my mind! Let him feel it too! I'll not spare myself; I've said I'll not spare myself!

NIKÍTA [*from the cellar*] Show a light!

MATRYÓNA [*holds up the lantern to him. To Anísya*] He's digging. Go and bring it.

ANÍSIA. You stay with him, or he'll go away, the wretch! And I'll go and bring it.

MATRYÓNA. Mind, don't forget to baptize it, or I will if you like. Have you a cross?

ANÍSIA. I'll find one. I know how to do it. [*Exit*].

See at end of Act, Variation, which may be used instead of the following.

MATRYÓNA. How the woman bristled up! But one must allow she's been put upon. Well, but with the Lord's help, when we've covered this business, there'll be an end of it. We'll shove the girl off without any trouble. My son will live in comfort. The house, thank God, is as full as an egg. They'll not forget me either. Where would they have been without Matryóna? They'd not have known how to contrive things. [*Peering into the cellar*] Is it ready, sonnie?

NIKÍTA [*puts out his head*] What are you about there? Bring it quick! What are you dawdling for? If it is to be done, let it be done.

MATRYÓNA [*goes towards door of the hut and meets Anísya. Anísya comes out with a baby wrapped in rags*] Well, have you baptized it?

ANÍSYA. Why, of course! It was all I could do to take it away—she wouldn't give it up! [*Comes forward and hands it to Nikíta*].

NIKÍTA [*does not take it*] You bring it yourself!

ANÍSYA. Take it, I tell you! [*Throws the baby to him*].

NIKÍTA [*catches it*] It's alive! Gracious me, it's moving! It's alive! What am I to . . .

ANÍSYA [*snatches the baby from him and throws it into the cellar*] Be quick and smother it, and then it won't be alive! [*Pushes Nikíta down*] It's your doing, and you must finish it.

MATRYÓNA [*sits on the doorstep of the hut*] He's tender-hearted. It's hard on him, poor dear. Well, what of that? Isn't it also his sin?

Anísya stands by the cellar.

MATRYÓNA [*sits looking at her and discourses*] Oh, oh, oh! How frightened he was: well, but what of that? If it is hard, it's the only thing to be done. Where was one to put it? And just think, how often it happens that people pray to God to have children! But no, God gives them none; or they are all still-born. Look at our priest's wife now. . . . And here, where it's not wanted, here it lives. [*Looks towards the cellar*] I suppose he's finished. [*To Anísya*] Well?

ANÍSYA [*looking into the cellar*] He's put a board on it and is sitting on it. It must be finished!

MATRYÓNA. Oh, oh! One would be glad not to sin, but what's one to do?

Re-enter Nikíta from cellar, trembling all over.

NIKÍTA. It's still alive! I can't! It's alive!

ANÍSYA. If it's alive, where are you off to? [*Tries to stop him*].

NIKÍTA [*rushes at her*] Go away! I'll kill you! [*Catches hold of her arms; she escapes, he runs after her with the spade. Matryóna runs towards him and stops him. Anísya runs into the porch. Matryóna tries to wrench the spade from him. To his mother*] I'll kill you! I'll kill you! Go away!

MATRYÓNA. That's because he's so frightened! Never mind, it will pass!

MATRYÓNA [to *Anísya*] He's going; it seems he means to bury it. Nikíta, you'd better take the lantern!

MATRYÓNA. What is it, sonnie?

MATRYÓNA. Oh dear, how frightened you are, my darling! Come, come, drink a drop to give you courage!

MATRYÓNA. Come, my own, have a drink ! It certainly does seem uncanny at night-time. But wait a bit. When the day breaks, you know, and one day and another passes, you'll forget even to think of it. Wait a bit ; when the girl's married we'll even forget to think of it. But you go and have a drink ; have a drink ! I'll go and put things straight in the cellar myself.

NIKÍTA [*rouses himself*] Is there any drink left? Perhaps I can drink it off! [*Exit*].

Anísya, who has stood all the time by the door, silently makes way for him.

MATRYÓNA. Go, go, honey, and I'll set to work! I'll go down myself and dig! Where has he thrown the spade to? [*Finds the spade, and goes down into the cellar*] Anísya, come here! Hold the light, will you?

ANÍSya. And what of him?

MATRYÓNA. He's so frightened! You've been too hard with him. Leave him alone, he'll come to his senses. God help him! I'll set to work myself. Put the lantern down here. I can see.

Matryóna disappears into the cellar.

ANÍSya [*looking towards the door by which Nikíta entered the hut*] Well, have you had enough spree? You've been puffing yourself up, but now you'll know how it feels! You'll lose some of your bluster!

NIKÍTA [*rushes out of the hut towards the cellar*] Mother! mother, I say!

MATRYÓNA [*puts out her head*] What is it, sonnie?

NIKÍTA [*listening*] Don't bury it, it's alive! Don't you hear? Alive! There—it's whimpering! There . . . quite plain!

MATRYÓNA. How can it whimper? Why, you've flattened it into a pancake! The whole head is smashed to bits!

NIKÍTA. What is it then? [*Stops his ears*] It's still whimpering! I am lost! Lost! What have they done with me? . . . Where shall I go? [*Sits down on the step*].

Curtain.

VARIATION

Instead of the end of Act IV. (from the words, "ANISYA. I'll find one. I know how to do it. [Exit]") the following variation may be read, and is the one usually acted.

SCENE 2.

The interior of the hut as in Act I.

Nan lies on the bench, and is covered with a coat. Mítritch is sitting on the oven smoking.

MÍTRITCH. Dear me! How they've made the place smell! Drat 'em! They've been spilling the fine stuff. Even tobacco don't get rid of the smell! It keeps tickling one's nose so. Oh Lord! But it's bedtime, I guess. [*Approaches the lamp to put it out*].

NAN [*jumps up, and remains sitting up*] Daddy dear,¹ don't put it out!

MÍTRITCH. Not put it out? Why?

NAN. Didn't you hear them making a row in the yard? [*Listens*] D'you hear, there in the barn again now?

MÍTRITCH. What's that to you? I guess no one's asked you to mind! Lie down and sleep! And I'll turn down the light. [*Turns down lamp*].

NAN. Daddy darling! Don't put it right out; leave a little bit if only as big as a mouse's eye, else it's so frightening!

MÍTRITCH [*laughs*] All right, all right. [*Sits down by her*] What's there to be afraid of?

¹ Nan calls Mítritch "daddy" merely as a term of endearment.

NAN. How can one help being frightened, daddy! Sister did go on so! She was beating her head against the box! [*Whispers*] You know, I know . . . a little baby is going to be born. . . . It's already born, I think. . . .

MÍTRITCH. Eh, what a little busybody it is! May the frogs kick her! Must needs know everything. Lie down and sleep! [*Nan lies down*] That's right! [*Tucks her up*] That's right! There now, if you know too much you'll grow old too soon.

NAN. And you are going to lie on the oven?

MÍTRITCH. Well, of course! What a little silly you are, now I come to look at you! Must needs know everything. [*Tucks her up again, then stands up to go*] There now, lie still and sleep! [*Goes up to the oven*].

NAN. It gave just one cry, and now there's nothing to be heard.

MÍTRITCH. Oh Lord! Gracious Nicholas! What is it you can't hear?

NAN. The baby.

MÍTRITCH. There is none, that's why you can't hear it.

NAN. But I heard it! Blest if I didn't hear it! Such a thin voice!

MÍTRITCH. Heard indeed! Much you heard! Well, if you know,—why then it was just such a little girl as you that the bogey popped into his bag and made off with.

NAN. What bogey?

MÍTRITCH. Why, just his very self! [*Climbs up on to the oven*] The oven is beautifully warm to-night. Quite a treat! Oh Lord! Gracious Nicholas!

NAN. Daddy! are you going to sleep?

MÍTRITCH. What else? Do you think I'm going to sing songs?

Silence.

NAN. Daddy! Daddy, I say! They are digging! they're digging—don't you hear? Blest if they're not, they're digging!

MÍTRITCH. What are you dreaming about? Digging! Digging in the night! Who's digging? The cow's rubbing herself, that's all. Digging indeed! Go to sleep I tell you, else I'll just put out the light!

NAN. Daddy darling, don't put it out! I won't . . . truly, truly, I won't. It's so frightful!

MÍTRITCH. Frightful? Don't be afraid and then it won't be frightful. Look at her, she's afraid, and then says it's frightful. How can it help being frightful if you are afraid? Eh, what a stupid little girl!

Silence. The cricket chirps.

NAN [*whispers*] Daddy! I say, daddy! Are you asleep?

MÍTRITCH. Now then, what d'you want?

NAN. What's the bogey like?

MÍTRITCH. Why, like this! When he finds such a one as you, who won't sleep, he comes with a sack and pops the girl into it, then in he gets himself, head and all, lifts her dress, and gives her a fine whipping!

NAN. What with?

MÍTRITCH. He takes a birch-broom with him.

NAN. But he can't see there—inside the sack!

MÍTRITCH. He'll see, no fear!

NAN. But I'll bite him.

MÍTRITCH. No, friend, him you can't bite!

NAN. Daddy, there's some one coming! Who is it? Oh gracious goodness! Who can it be?

MÍTRITCH. Well, if some one's coming, let them come! What's the matter with you? I suppose it's your mother!

Enter Anísya.

ANÍSya. Nan! [*Nun pretends to be asleep*] Mítritch!

MÍTRITCH. What?

ANÍSya. What's the lamp burning for? We are going to sleep in the summer-hut.

MÍTRITCH. Why, you see I've only just got straight. I'll put the light out all right.

ANÍSYA [*rummages in her box and grumbles*] When a thing's wanted one never can find it!

MÍTRITCH. Why, what is it you are looking for?

ANÍSYA. I'm looking for a cross. Suppose it were to die unbaptized! It would be a sin, you know!

MÍTRITCH. Of course it would! Everything in due order. . . . Have you found it?

ANÍSYA. Yes, I've found it. [*Exit*].

MÍTRITCH. That's right, else I'd have lent her mine. Oh Lord!

NAN [*jumps up trembling*] Oh, oh, daddy! Don't go to sleep; for goodness' sake, don't! It's so frightful!

MÍTRITCH. What's frightful?

NAN. It will die—the little baby will! At Aunt Irene's the old woman also baptized the baby, and it died!

MÍTRITCH. If it dies, they'll bury it!

NAN. But maybe it wouldn't have died, only old Granny Matryóna's there! Didn't I hear what granny was saying? I heard her! Blest if I didn't!

MÍTRITCH. What did you hear? Go to sleep, I tell you. Cover yourself up, head and all, and let's have an end of it!

NAN. If it lived, I'd nurse it!

MÍTRITCH [*roars*] Oh Lord!

NAN. Where will they put it?

MÍTRITCH. In the right place! It's no business of yours! Go to sleep I tell you, else mother will come; she'll give it you! [*Silence*].

NAN. Daddy! Eh, daddy! That girl, you know, you were telling about—they didn't kill her?

MÍTRITCH. That girl? Oh yes. That girl turned out all right!

NAN. How was it? You were saying you found her?

MÍTRITCH. Well, we just found her!

NAN. But where did you find her? Do tell!

MÍTRITCH. Why, in their own house; that's where! We

came to a village, the soldiers began hunting about in the house, when suddenly there's that same little girl lying on the floor, flat on her stomach. We were going to give her a knock on the head, but all at once I felt that sorry, that I took her up in my arms; but no, she wouldn't let me! Made herself so heavy, quite a hundredweight, and caught hold where she could with her hands, so that one couldn't get them off! Well, so I began stroking her head. It was so bristly,—just like a hedgehog! So I stroked and stroked, and she quieted down at last. I soaked a bit of rusk and gave it her. She understood that, and began nibbling. What were we to do with her? We took her; took her, and began feeding and feeding her, and she got so used to us that we took her with us on the march, and so she went about with us. Ah, she was a fine girl!

NAN. Yes, and not baptized?

MÍTRITCH. Who can tell! They used to say, not altogether. 'Cos why, those people weren't our own.

NAN. Germans?

MÍTRITCH. What an idea! Germans! Not Germans, but Asiatics. They are just the same as Jews, but still not Jews. Polish, yet Asiatics. Curls . . . or, Curdlys is their name. . . . I've forgotten what it is!¹ We called the girl Sášhka. She was a fine girl, Sášhka was! There now, I've forgotten everything I used to know! But that girl—the deuce take her—seems to be before my eyes now! Out of all my time of service, I remember how they flogged me, and I remember that girl. That's all I remember! She'd hang round one's neck, and one 'ud carry her so. That was a girl,—if you wanted a better you'd not find one! We gave her away afterwards. The captain's wife took her to bring up as her daughter. So—she was all right! How sorry the soldiers were to let her go!

¹ Probably Kurds.

NAN. There now, daddy, and I remember when father was dying,—you were not living with us then. Well, he called Nikita and says, “Forgive me, Nikita!” he says, and begins to cry. [*Sighs*] That also felt very sad!

MÍTRITCH. Yes; there now, so it is . . .

NAN. Daddy! Daddy, I say! There they are again, making a noise in the cellar! Oh gracious heavens! Oh dear! Oh dear! Oh, daddy! They’ll do something to it! They’ll make away with it, and it’s so little! Oh, oh! [*Covers up her head and cries*].

MÍTRITCH [*listening*] Really they’re up to some villainy, blow them to shivers! Oh, these women are vile creatures! One can’t say much for men either; but women! . . . They are like wild beasts, and stick at nothing!

NAN [*rising*] Daddy; I say, daddy!

MÍTRITCH. Well, what now?

NAN. The other day a traveller stayed the night; he said that when an infant died its soul goes up straight to heaven. Is that true?

MÍTRITCH. Who can tell. I suppose so. Well?

NAN. Oh, it would be best if I died too. [*Whimpers*].

MÍTRITCH. Then you’d be off the list!

NAN. Up to ten one’s an infant, and maybe one’s soul would go to God. Else one’s sure to go to the bad!

MÍTRITCH. And how to the bad? How should the likes of you not go to the bad? Who teaches you? What do you see? What do you hear? Only vileness! I, though I’ve not been taught much, still know a thing or two. I’m not quite like a peasant woman. A peasant woman, what is she? Just mud! There are many millions of the likes of you in Russia, and all as blind as moles—knowing nothing! All sorts of spells: how to stop the cattle-plague with a plough, and how to cure children by putting them under the perches in the hen-house! That’s what they know!

NAN. Yes, mother also did that!

MÍTRITCH. Yes,—there it is,—just so ! So many millions of girls and women, and all like beasts in a forest ! As she grows up, so she dies ! Never sees anything ; never hears anything. A peasant,—he may learn something at the pub, or maybe in prison, or in the army,—as I did. But a woman ? Let alone about God, she doesn't even know rightly what Friday it is ! Friday ! Friday ! But ask her what's Friday ? She don't know ! They're like blind puppies, creeping about and poking their noses into the dung-heap. . . . All they know are their silly songs. Ho, ho, ho, ho ! But what they mean by ho-ho, they don't know themselves !

NAN. But I, daddy, I do know half the Lord's Prayer !

MÍTRITCH. A lot you know ! But what can one expect of you ? Who teaches you ? Only a tipsy peasant—with the strap perhaps ! That's all the teaching you get ! I don't know who'll have to answer for you. For a recruit, the drill-sergeant or the corporal has to answer ; but for the likes of you there's no one responsible ! Just as the cattle that have no herdsman are the most mischievous, so with you women—you are the stupidest class ! The most foolish class is yours !

NAN. Then what's one to do ?

MÍTRITCH. That's what one has to do. . . . You just cover up your head and sleep ! Oh Lord !

Silence. The cricket chirps.

NAN [*jumps up*] Daddy ! Some one's screaming awfully ! Blest if some one isn't screaming ! Daddy darling, it's coming here !

MÍTRITCH. Cover up your head, I tell you !

Enter Nikíta, followed by Matryóna.

NIKÍTA. What have they done with me ? What have they done with me ?

MATRYÓNA. Have a drop, honey ; have a drop of drink ! What's the matter ? [*Fetches the spirits and sets the bottle before him*].

NIKÍTA. Give it here ! Perhaps the drink will help me !

MATRYÓNA. Mind ! They're not asleep ! Here you are, have a drop !

NIKÍTA. What does it all mean ? Why did you plan it ? You might have taken it somewhere !

MATRYÓNA [*whispers*] Sit still a bit and drink a little more, or have a smoke. It will ease your thoughts !

NIKÍTA. My own mother ! My turn seems to have come ! How it began to whimper, and how the little bones crunched . . . krr . . . I'm not a man now !

MATRYÓNA. Eh, now, what's the use of talking so silly ! Of course it does seem fearsome at night, but wait till the daylight comes, and a day or two passes, and you'll forget to think of it ! [*Goes up to Nikíta and puts her hand on his shoulder*].

NIKÍTA. Go away from me ! What have you done with me ?

MATRYÓNA. Come, come, sonnie ! Now really, what's the matter with you ? [*Takes his hand*].

NIKÍTA. Go away from me ! I'll kill you ! It's all one to me now ! I'll kill you !

MATRYÓNA. Oh, oh, how frightened he's got ! You should go and have a sleep now !

NIKÍTA. I have nowhere to go ; I'm lost !

MATRYÓNA [*shaking her head*] Oh, oh, I'd better go and tidy things up. He'll sit and rest a bit, and it will pass ! [*Exit*].

Nikíta sits with his face in his hands. Múritch and Nan seem stunned.

NIKÍTA. It's whining ! It's whining ! It is really—there, there, quite plain ! She'll bury it, really she will ! [*Runs to the door*] Mother, don't bury it, it's alive. . . .

Enter Matryóna.

MATRYÓNA [*whispers*] Now then, what is it ? Heaven help you ! Why won't you get to rest ? How can it be alive ? All its bones are crushed !

NIKÍTA. Give me more drink ! [*Drinks*].

MATRYÓNA. Now go, sonnie. You'll fall asleep now all right.

NIKÍTA [*stands listening*] Still alive . . . there . . . it's whining ! Don't you hear ? . . . There !

MATRYÓNA [*whispers*] No ! I tell you !

NIKÍTA. Mother ! My own mother ! I've ruined my life ! What have you done with me ? Where am I to go ? [*Runs out of the hut ; Matryóna follows him*].

NAN. Daddy dear, darling, they've smothered it !

MÍTRITCH [*angrily*] Go to sleep, I tell you ! Oh dear, may the frogs kick you ! I'll give it to you with the broom ! Go to sleep, I tell you !

NAN. Daddy, my treasure ! Something is catching hold of my shoulders, something is catching hold with its paws ! Daddy dear . . . really, really . . . I must go ! Daddy, darling ! let me get up on the oven with you ! Let me, for Heaven's sake ! Catching hold . . . catching hold ! Oh ! [*Runs to the stove*].

MÍTRITCH. See how they've frightened the girl . . . What vile creatures they are ! May the frogs kick them ! Well then, climb up.

NAN [*climbs on oven*] But don't you go away !

MÍTRITCH. Where should I go to ? Climb up, climb up ! Oh Lord ! Gracious Nicholas ! Holy Mother ! . . . How they have frighted the girl. [*Covers her up*] There's a little fool—really a little fool ! How they've frighted her ; really, they are vile creatures ! The deuce take 'em !

Curtain.

ACT V

SCENE I

In front of scene a stack-stand, to the left a thrashing ground, to the right a barn. The barn doors are open. Straw is strewn about in the doorway. The hut with yard and out-buildings is seen in the background, whence proceed sounds of singing and of a tambourine. Two Girls are walking past the barn towards the hut.

FIRST GIRL. There, you see we've managed to pass without so much as getting our boots dirty! But to come by the street is terribly muddy! [*Stop and wipe their boots on the straw. First Girl looks at the straw and sees something*] What's that?

SECOND GIRL [*looks where the straw lies and sees some one*] It's Mitritch, their labourer. Just look how drunk he is!

FIRST GIRL. Why, I thought he didn't drink.

SECOND GIRL. It seems he didn't, until it was going around.

FIRST GIRL. Just see! He must have come to fetch some straw. Look! he's got a rope in his hand, and he's fallen asleep.

SECOND GIRL [*listening*] They're still singing the praises.¹ So I s'pose the bride and bridegroom have not yet been blessed! They say Akoufna didn't even lament!²

FIRST GIRL. Mammie says she is marrying against her

¹ This refers to the songs customary at the wedding of Russian peasants, praising the bride and bridegroom.

² It is etiquette for a bride to bewail the approaching loss of her maidenhood.

will. Her stepfather threatened her, or else she'd not have done it for the world! Why, you know what they've been saying about her?

MARÍNA [*catching up the Girls*] How d'you do, lassies?

GIRLS. How d'you do?

MARÍNA. Going to the wedding, my dears?

FIRST GIRL. It's nearly over! We've come just to have a look.

MARÍNA. Would you call my old man for me? Simon, from Zouévo; but surely you know him?

FIRST GIRL. To be sure we do; he's a relative of the bridegroom's, I think?

MARÍNA. Of course; he's my old man's nephew, the bridegroom is.

SECOND GIRL. Why don't you go yourself? Fancy not going to a wedding!

MARÍNA. I have no mind for it, and no time either. It's time for us to be going home. We didn't mean to come to the wedding. We were taking oats to town. We only stopped to feed the horse, and they made my old man go in.

FIRST GIRL. Where did you put up then? At Fyódor-itch's?

MARÍNA. Yes. Well then, I'll stay here and you go and call him, my dear—my old man. Call him, my pet, and say "Your missis, Marína, says you must go now!" His mates are harnessing.

FIRST GIRL. Well, all right—if you won't go in yourself.

The Girls go away towards the house along a footpath. Sounds of songs and tambourine.

MARÍNA [*alone, stands thinking*] I might go in, but I don't like to, because I have not met him since that day he threw me over. It's more than a year now. But I'd have liked to have a peep and see how he lives with his Anísya. People say they don't get on. She's a coarse woman, and with a character of her own. I should think

he's remembered me more than once. He's been caught by the idea of a comfortable life and has changed me for it. But, God help him, I don't cherish ill-will! Then it hurt! Oh dear, it was pain! But now it's worn away and been forgotten. But I'd like to have seen him. [*Looks towards hut and sees Nikita*] Look there! Why, he is coming here! Have the girls told him? How's it he has left his guests? I'll go away! [*Nikita approaches, hanging his head down, swinging his arms, and muttering*] And how sullen he looks!

NIKITA [*sees and recognises Marina*] Marina, dearest friend, little Marina, what do you want?

MARINA. I have come for my old man.

NIKITA. Why didn't you come to the wedding? You might have had a look round, and a laugh at my expense!

MARINA. What have I to laugh at? I've come for my husband.

NIKITA. Ah, Marina dear! [*Tries to embrace her*].

MARINA [*steps angrily aside*] You'd better drop that sort of thing, Nikita! What has been, is past! I've come for my husband. Is he in your house?

NIKITA. So I must not remember the past? You won't let me?

MARINA. It's no use recalling the past! What used to be is over now!

NIKITA. And can never come back, you mean?

MARINA. And will never come back! But why have you gone away? You, the master,—and to go away from the feast!

NIKITA [*sits down on the straw*] Why have I gone away? Eh, if you knew, if you had any idea . . . I'm dull, Marina, so dull that I wish my eyes would not see! I rose from the table and left them, to get away from the people. If I could only avoid seeing any one!

MARINA [*coming nearer to him*] How's that?

NIKITA. This is how it is: when I eat, it's there! When

I drink, it's there! When I sleep, it's there! I'm so sick of it—so sick! But it's chiefly because I'm all alone that I'm so sick, little Marina. I have no one to share my trouble.

MARINA. You can't live your life without trouble, Nikita. However, I've wept over mine and wept it away.

NIKITA. The former, the old trouble! Ah, dear friend, you've wept yours away, and I've got mine up to there! [*Puts his hand to his throat*].

MARINA. But why?

NIKITA. Why, I'm sick of my whole life! I am sick of myself! Ah, Marina, why did you not know how to keep me? You've ruined me, and yourself too! Is this life?

MARINA [*stands by the barn crying, but restrains herself*] I do not complain of my life, Nikita! God grant every one a life like mine. I do not complain. I confessed to my old man at the time, and he forgave me. And he does not reproach me. I'm not discontented with my life. The old man is quiet, and is fond of me, and I keep his children clothed and washed! He is really kind to me. Why should I complain? It seems God willed it so. And what's the matter with your life? You are rich . . .

NIKITA. My life! . . . It's only that I don't wish to disturb the wedding feast, or I'd take this rope here [*takes hold of the rope on the straw*] and throw it across that rafter there. Then I'd make a noose and stretch it out, and I'd climb on to that rafter and jump down with my head in the noose! That's what my life is!

MARINA. That's enough! Lord help you!

NIKITA. You think I'm joking? You think I'm drunk? I'm not drunk! To-day even drink takes no hold on me! I'm devoured by misery! Misery is eating me up completely, so that I care for nothing! Oh, little Marina, it's only with you I ever lived! Do you remember how we used to while away the nights together at the railway?

MARINA. Don't you rub the sores, Nikita! I'm bound

legally now, and you too. My sin has been forgiven, don't disturb . . .

NIKÍTA. What shall I do with my heart? Where am I to turn to?

MARÍNA. What's there to be done? You've got a wife. Don't go looking at others, but keep to your own! You loved Anísya, then go on loving her!

NIKÍTA. Oh, that Anísya, she's gall and wormwood to me, but she's round my feet like rank weeds!

MARÍNA. Whatever she is, still she's your wife. . . . But what's the use of talking; you'd better go to your visitors, and send my husband to me.

NIKÍTA. Oh dear, if you knew the whole business . . . but there's no good talking!

Enter Marína's husband, red and tipsy, and Nan.

MARÍNA'S HUSBAND. Marína! Missis! My old woman! are you here?

NIKÍTA. There's your husband calling you. Go!

MARÍNA. And you?

NIKÍTA. I? I'll lie down here for a bit! [*Lies down on the straw*].

HUSBAND. Where is she then?

NAN. There she is, near the barn.

HUSBAND. What are you standing there for? Come to the feast! The hosts want you to come and do them honour! The wedding party is just going to start, and then we can go too.

MARÍNA [*going towards her husband*] I didn't want to go in.

HUSBAND. Come on, I tell you! You'll drink a glass to our nephew Peter's health, the rascal! Else the hosts might take offence! There's plenty of time for our business. [*Marína's husband puts his arm around her, and goes reeling out with her*].

NIKÍTA [*rises and sits down on the straw*] Ah, now that I've seen her, life seems more sickening than ever! It was

only with her that I ever really lived! I've ruined my life for nothing! I've done for myself! [*Lies down*] Where can I go? If mother earth would but open and swallow me!

NAN [*sees Nikíta, and runs towards him*] Daddy, I say, daddy! They're looking for you! Her godfather and all of them have already blessed her. Truly they have, they're getting cross!

NIKÍTA [*aside*] Where can I go to?

NAN. What? What are you saying?

NIKÍTA. I'm not saying anything! Don't bother!

NAN. Daddy! Come, I say! [*Nikíta is silent, Nan pulls him by the hand*] Dad, go and bless them! My word, they're angry, they're grumbling!

NIKÍTA [*drags away his hand*] Leave me alone!

NAN. Now then!

NIKÍTA [*threatens her with the rope*] Go, I say! I'll give it you!

NAN. Then I'll send mother! [*Runs away*].

NIKÍTA [*rises*] How can I go? How can I take the holy icón in my hands? How am I to look her in the face! [*Lies down again*] Oh, if there were a hole in the ground, I'd jump in! No one should see me, and I should see no one! [*Rises again*] No, I shan't go . . . May they all go to the devil, I shan't go! [*Takes the rope and makes a noose, and tries it on his neck*] That's the way!

Enter Matryóna. Nikíta sees his mother, takes the rope off his neck, and again lies down in the straw.

MATRYÓNA [*comes in hurriedly*] Nikíta! Nikíta, I say! He don't even answer! Nikíta, what's the matter? Have you had a drop too much? Come, Nikíta dear; come, honey! The people are tired of waiting.

NIKÍTA. Oh dear, what have you done with me? I'm a lost man!

MATRYÓNA. But what is the matter then? Come, my own; come, give them your blessing, as is proper and

honourable, and then it'll all be over! Why, the people are waiting!

NIKÍTA. How can I give blessings?

MATRYÓNA. Why, in the usual way! Don't you know?

NIKÍTA. I know, I know! But who is it I am to bless? What have I done to her?

MATRYÓNA. What have you done? Eh, now he's going to remember it! Why, who knows anything about it? Not a soul! And the girl is going of her own accord.

NIKÍTA. Yes, but how?

MATRYÓNA. Because she's afraid, of course. But still she's going. Besides, what's to be done now? She should have thought sooner! Now she can't refuse. And his kinsfolk can't take offence either. They saw the girl twice, and get money with her too! It's all safe and sound!

NIKÍTA. Yes, but what's in the cellar?

MATRYÓNA [*laughs*]. In the cellar? Why, cabbages, mushrooms, potatoes, I suppose! Why remember the past?

NIKÍTA. I'd be only too glad to forget it; but I can't! When I let my mind go, it's just as if I heard. . . . Oh, what have you done with me?

MATRYÓNA. Now, what are you humbugging for?

NIKÍTA [*turns face downward*]. Mother! Don't torment me! I've got it up to there! [*Puts his hand to his throat*].

MATRYÓNA. Still it has to be done! As it is, people are talking. "The master's gone away and won't come; he can't make up his mind to give his blessing." They'll be putting two and two together. As soon as they see you're frightened they'll begin guessing. "The thief none suspect who walks bold and erect!" But you'll be getting out of the frying-pan into the fire! Above all, lad, don't show it; don't lose courage, else they'll find out all the more!

NIKÍTA. Oh dear! You have snared me into a trap!

MATRYÓNA. That'll do, I tell you; come along! Come in

and give your blessing, as is right and honourable ;—and there's an end of the matter !

NIKÍTA [*lies face down*] I can't !

MATRYÓNA [*aside*] What has come over him? He seemed all right, and suddenly this comes over him ! It seems he's bewitched ! Get up, Nikíta ! See ! There's Anísya coming ; she's left her guests !

Anísya enters, dressed up, red and tipsy.

ANÍSYA. Oh, how nice it is, mother ! So nice, so respectable ! And how the people are pleased. . . . But where is he ?

MATRYÓNA. Here, honey, he's here ; he's laid down on the straw and there he lies ! He won't come !

NIKÍTA [*looking at his wife*] Just see, she's tipsy too ! When I look at her my heart seems to turn ! How can one live with her ? [*Turns on his face*] I'll kill her some day ! It'll be worse then !

ANÍSYA. Only look, how he's got all among the straw ! Is it the drink ? [*Laughs*] I'd not mind lying down there with you, but I've no time ! Come, I'll lead you ! It is so nice in the house ! It's a treat to look on ! A concertina ! And the women singing so well ! All tipsy ! Everything so respectable, so nice !

NIKÍTA. What's nice ?

ANÍSYA. The wedding—such a jolly wedding ! They all say it's quite an uncommon fine wedding ! All so respectable, so nice ! Come along ! We'll go together ! I have had a drop, but I can give you a hand yet ! [*Takes his hand*].

NIKÍTA [*pulls it back with disgust*] Go alone ! I'll come !

ANÍSYA. What are you humbugging for ? We've got rid of all the bother, we've got rid of her as came between us ; now we have nothing to do but to live and be merry ! And all so respectable, and quite legal ! I'm so pleased ! I have no words for it ! It's just as if I were going to marry you over again ! And oh, the people, they *are*

pleased! They're all thanking us! And the guests are all of the best: Ivan Moséitch is there, and the Police Officer; they've also been singing songs of praise!

NIKÍTA. Then you should have stayed with them! What have you come for?

ANÍSIA. True enough, I must go back! Else what does it look like! The hosts both go and leave the visitors! And the guests are all of the best!

NIKÍTA [*gets up and brushes the straw off himself*] Go, and I'll come at once!

MATRYÓNA. Just see! He listens to the young bird, but wouldn't listen to the old one! He would not hear me, but he follows his wife at once! [*Matryóna and Anísya turn to go*] Well, are you coming?

NIKÍTA. I'll come directly! You go and I'll follow! I'll come and give my blessing! [*The women stop*] Go on! I'll follow! Now then, go! [*Exit women. Sits down and takes his boots off*] Yes, I'm going! A likely thing! No, you'd better look at the rafter for me! I'll fix the noose and jump with it from the rafter, then you can look for me! And the rope is here just handy. [*Ponders*] I'd have got over it, over any sorrow—I'd have got over that. But this now—here it is, deep in my heart, and I can't get over it! [*Looks towards the yard*] Surely she's not coming back? [*Imitates Anísya*] "So nice, so nice. I'd lie down here with you." Oh, the baggage! Well then, here I am! Come and cuddle when they've taken me down from the rafter! There's only one way! [*Takes the rope and pulls it*].

Mítritch, who is tipsy, sits up and won't let go of the rope.

MÍTRITCH. Shan't give it up! Shan't give it to no one! I'll bring it myself! I said I'd bring the straw—and so I will! Nikita, is that you? [*Laughs*] Oh, the devil! Have you come to get the straw?

NIKÍTA. Give me the rope!

MÍTRITCH. No, you wait a bit! The peasants sent me! I'll bring it . . . [*Rises to his feet and begins getting the straw*]



THE POWER OF DARKNESS. ACT V.

NIKÍTA. True enough ! What was I about ?

MÍTRICH. What ?

NIKÍTA. You tell me not to fear men.

together, but reels for a time, then falls] It has beaten me. It's stronger . . .

NIKÍTA. Give me the rope!

MÍTRITCH. Didn't I say I won't! Oh, Nikíta, you're as stupid as a hog! [*Laughs*] I love you, but you're a fool! You see that I'm drunk . . . devil take you! You think I need you? . . . You just look at me; I'm a Non . . . fool, can't say it—Non-commissioned Officer of Her Majesty's very First Regiment of Grenadier Guards! I've served Tsar and country, loyal and true! But who am I? You think I'm a warrior? No, I'm not a warrior; I'm the very least of men, a poor lost orphan! I swore not to drink, and now I had a smoke, and . . . Well then, do you think I'm afraid of you? No fear; I'm afraid of no man! I've taken to drink, and I'll drink! Now I'll go it for a fortnight; I'll go it hard! I'll drink my last shirt; I'll drink my cap; I'll pawn my passport; and I'm afraid of no one! They flogged me in the army to stop me drinking! They switched and switched! "Well," they say, "will you leave off?" "No," says I! Why should I be afraid of them? Here I am! Such as I am, God made me! I swore off drinking, and didn't drink. Now I've took to drink, and I'll drink! And I fear no man! 'Cos I don't lie; but just as . . . Why should one mind them—such muck as they are! "Here you are," I say; that's me. A priest told me, the devil's the biggest bragger! "As soon," says he, "as you begin to brag, you get frightened; and as soon as you fear men, then the hoofed one just collars you and pushes you where he likes!" But as I don't fear men, I'm easy! I can spit in the devil's beard, and at the sow his mother! He can't do me no harm! There, put that in your pipe!

NIKÍTA [*crossing himself*] True enough! What was I about? [*Throws down the rope*].

MÍTRITCH. What?

NIKÍTA [*rises*] You tell me not to fear men?

MÍTRITCH. Why fear such muck as they are? You look at 'em in the bath-house! All made of one paste! One has a bigger belly, another a smaller; that's all the difference there is! Fancy being afraid of 'em! Deuce take 'em!

MATRYÓNA [*from the yard*] Well, are you coming?

NIKÍTA. Ah! Better so! I'm coming! [*Goes towards yard*].

SCENE 2.

Interior of hut, full of people, some sitting round tables and others standing. In the front corner Akoulina and the Bridegroom. On one of the tables an Icón and a loaf of rye-bread. Among the visitors are Marina, her husband, and a Police Officer, also a Hired Driver, the Matchmaker, and the Best Man. The women are singing. Anísya carries round the drink. The singing stops.

THE DRIVER. If we are to go, let's go! The church ain't so near.

THE BEST MAN. All right; you wait a bit till the stepfather has given his blessing. But where is he?

ANÍSYA. He is coming—coming at once, dear friends! Have another glass all of you; don't refuse!

THE MATCHMAKER. Why is he so long? We've been waiting such a time!

ANÍSYA. He's coming; coming directly, coming in no time! He'll be here before one could plait a girl's hair who's had her hair cropped! Drink, friends! [*Offers the drink*] Coming at once! Sing again, my pets, meanwhile!

THE DRIVER. They've sung all their songs, waiting here! *The women sing. Nikíta and Akím enter during the singing.*

NIKÍTA [*holds his father's arm and pushes him in before him*] Go, father; I can't do without you!

AKÍM. I don't like—I mean what d'ye call it . . .

NIKÍTA [*to the women*] Enough! Be quiet! [*Looks round the hut*] Marína, are you there?

THE MATCHMAKER. Go, take the icón, and give them your blessing!

NIKÍTA. Wait a while! [*Looks round*] Akoulína, are you there?

MATCHMAKER. What are you calling everybody for? Where should she be? How queer he seems!

ANÍSIA. Gracious goodness! Why, he's barefoot!

NIKÍTA. Father, you are here! Look at me! Christian Commune, you are all here, and I am here! I am . . . [*Falls on his knees*].

ANÍSIA. Nikíta darling, what's the matter with you. Oh my head, my head!

MATCHMAKER. Here's a go!

MATRYÓNA. I did say he was taking too much of that French wine! Come to your senses; what are you about?

They try to lift him; he takes no heed of them, but looks in front of him.

NIKÍTA. Christian Commune! I have sinned, and I wish to confess!

MATRYÓNA [*shakes him by the shoulder*] Are you mad? Dear friends, he's gone crazy! He must be taken away!

NIKÍTA [*shakes her off*] Leave me alone! And you, father, hear me! And first, Marína, look here! [*Bows to the ground to her and rises*] I have sinned towards you! I promised to marry you, I tempted you, and forsook you! Forgive me, in Christ's name! [*Again bows to the ground before her*].

ANÍSIA. And what are you drivelling about? It's not becoming! No one wants to know! Get up! It's like your impudence!

MATRYÓNA. Oh, oh, he's bewitched! And however did it happen? It's a spell! Get up! what nonsense are you jabbering? [*Pulls him*].

NIKÍTA [*shakes his head*] Don't touch me! Forgive me

my sin towards you, Marina! Forgive me, for Christ's sake!

Marina covers her face with her hands in silence.

ANÍSYA. Get up, I tell you! Don't be so impudent! What are you thinking about—to recall it? Enough humbug! It's shameful! Oh my poor head! He's quite crazy!

NIKÍTA [*pushes his wife away and turns to Akoulína*] Akoulína, now I'll speak to you! Listen, Christian Commune! I'm a fiend, Akoulína! I have sinned against you! Your father died no natural death! He was poisoned!

ANÍSYA [*screams*] Oh my head! What's he about?

MATRYÓNA. The man's beside himself! Lead him away!

The folk come up and try to seize him.

AKÍM [*motions them back with his arms*] Wait! You lads, what d'ye call it, wait, I mean!

NIKÍTA. Akoulína, I poisoned him! Forgive me, in Christ's name!

AKOULÍNA [*jumps up*] He's telling lies! I know who did it!

MATCHMAKER. What are you about? You sit still!

AKÍM. Oh Lord, what sins, what sins!

POLICE OFFICER. Seize him, and send for the Elder! We must draw up an indictment and have witnesses to it! Get up and come here!

AKÍM [*to Police Officer*] Now you—with the bright buttons—I mean, you wait! Let him, what d'ye call it, speak out, I mean!

POLICE OFFICER. Mind, old man, and don't interfere! I have to draw up an indictment!

AKÍM. Eh, what a fellow you are; wait, I say! Don't talk, I mean, about, what d'ye call it, 'ditements! Here God's work is being done. . . . A man is confessing, I mean! And you, what d'ye call it . . . 'ditements!

POLICE OFFICER. The Elder!

AKÍM. Let God's work be done, I mean, and then you, I mean, you do your business !

NIKÍTA. And, Akoulína, my sin is great towards you ; I seduced you ; forgive me in Christ's name ! [*Bows to the ground before her*].

AKOULÍNA [*leaves the table*] Let me go ! I shan't be married ! He told me to, but I shan't now !

POLICE OFFICER. Repeat what you have said.

NIKÍTA. Wait, sir, let me finish !

AKÍM [*with rapture*] Speak, my son ! Tell everything—you'll feel better ! Confess to God, don't fear men ! God—God ! It is He !

NIKÍTA. I poisoned the father, dog that I am, and I ruined the daughter ! She was in my power, and I ruined her, and her baby !

AKOULÍNA. True, that's true !

NIKÍTA. I smothered the baby in the cellar with a board ! I sat on it and smothered it—and its bones crunched ! [*Weeps*] And I buried it ! I did it, all alone !

AKOULÍNA. He raves ! I told him to !

NIKÍTA. Don't shield me ! I fear no one now ! Forgive me, Christian Commune ! [*Bows to the ground*].

Silence.

POLICE OFFICER. Bind him ! The marriage is evidently off !

Men come up with their belts.

NIKÍTA. Wait, there's plenty of time ! [*Bows to the ground before his father*] Father, dear father, forgive me too,—fiend that I am ! You told me from the first, when I took to bad ways, you said then, "If a claw is caught, the bird is lost !" I would not listen to your words, dog that I was, and it has turned out as you said ! Forgive me, for Christ's sake !

AKÍM [*rapturously*] God will forgive you, my own son ! [*Embraces him*] You have had no mercy on yourself, He will show mercy on you ! God—God ! It is He !

Enter Elder.

ELDER. There are witnesses enough here.

POLICE OFFICER. We will have the examination at once.
Nikita is bound.

AKOULÍNA [*goes and stands by his side*] I shall tell the truth ! Ask me !

NIKÍTA [*bound*] No need to ask ! I did it all myself. The design was mine, and the deed was mine. Take me where you like. I will say no more !

Curtain.

END OF "THE POWER OF DARKNESS."

THE FIRST DISTILLER

A COMEDY IN SIX ACTS

(1886)

CHARACTERS

A PEASANT.

HIS { **WIFE.**
MOTHER.
GRANDFATHER.
LITTLE DAUGHTER.

A NEIGHBOUR.

FOUR VILLAGE ELDERS.

OLD WOMEN, WOMEN, GIRLS AND LADS.

THE CHIEF OF THE DEVILS.

HIS SECRETARY.

A DANDY IMP.

THE OFFICIALS' IMP.

THE PEASANTS' IMP.

SENTINELS, DOORKEEPERS AND IMPS.

THE FIRST DISTILLER

A COMEDY

ACT I

PEASANT [*ploughing. Looks up*] It's noon. Time to unharness. Gee up, get along! Fagged out? Poor old beast! One more turn and back again, that will be the last furrow, and then dinner. It was a good idea to bring that chunk of bread with me. I'll not go home, but sit down by the well and have a bite and a rest, and Peggy can graze awhile. Then, with God's help, to work again, and the ploughing will be done in good time.

Enter Imp; hides behind a bush.

IMP. See what a good fellow he is! Keeps calling on God. Wait a bit, friend,—you'll be calling on the Devil before long! I'll just take away his chunk. He'll miss it before long, and will begin to hunt for it. He'll be hungry, and then he'll swear and call on the Devil.

Takes the chunk of bread and sits down behind the bush watching to see what the Peasant will do.

PEASANT [*unharnesses the horse*] With God's blessing! [*Lets the horse loose, and goes towards the place where his coat is lying*] I'm awfully hungry. The wife cut a big chunk, but see if I don't eat it all. [*Coming up to the coat*] Gone! I must have put it under the coat. [*Lifting the coat*] No, it's not here either! What has happened? [*Shakes the coat*].

IMP [*behind the bush*] Go on, go on, search away! I've got it safe!

PEASANT [*moves the plough and shakes his coat again*] This is strange! Very strange! No one was here, yet the chunk is gone! If the birds had been at it there would be some crumbs left, but there's not a single crumb! No one has been here, and yet some one has taken it!

IMP [*rises and looks out*] Now he'll call on the Devil.

PEASANT. Well, it seems there's no help for it! Never mind, I shan't starve to death. If some one has taken it, he's taken it; let him eat it, and may it do him good.

IMP [*spits*] Oh, the damned peasant! Instead of swearing properly, he only says, "May it do him good." What can one do with such a fellow?

Peasant lies down to rest, makes the sign of the cross, yawns, and falls asleep.

IMP [*comes out from behind the bush*] It's all very well for the boss to talk. The boss keeps on saying, "You don't bring enough peasants to Hell! See what a lot of tradesmen, gentlefolk, and all sorts of people flock in every day, and how few peasants!" Now, how's one to get round this one? There's no way of getting hold of him. Haven't I stolen his last crust? What can I do better than that? And yet he didn't swear. I'm at my wits' end what to do! Well, I must go and report!

Disappears into the ground.

Curtain.

ACT II

Hell. The Chief of the Devils sits in the highest place. The Devil's Secretary sits lower down, at a table with writing materials. Sentinels stand at each side. To the right are five Imps of different kinds. To the left, by the door, the Doorkeeper. A dandified Imp stands before the Chief.

THE DANDY IMP. The whole of my booty for the three years has been 220,005 men. They're all in my power now.

THE CHIEF. All right. Thank you. Pass on.

The Dandy Imp goes to the right.

THE CHIEF [*to the Secretary*] I'm tired! Is there much business left? Whose reports have we had, and whose are still to come?

THE SECRETARY [*counts on his fingers and, as he counts, points to the Imps to the right. When he mentions any Imp, the one referred to bows*] We've had the Gentlemen's Devil's report. He's captured 1836 in all. And the Tradesmen's Devil's with 9643. From the Lawyers', 3423. The Women's we've also just had: 186,315 married women, and 17,438 maids. Only two Devils are left, the Officials' and the Peasants'. There are altogether 220,005 souls on the list.

CHIEF. Well then, we'd better finish it all to-day. [*To the Doorkeeper*] Let them in!

The Officials' Devil enters, and bows to the Chief.

CHIEF. Well, how have you got on?

OFFICIALS' IMP [*laughing, and rubbing his hands*] My affairs are all right, just as soot they are white! The booty is

The First Distiller

such that I don't remember anything like it since the creation of the world.

CHIEF. What, have you captured a great many?

OFFICIALS' IMP. It's not so much the quantity. Only 1350 men in all, but such splendid fellows! Such fellows, they might shame any Devil! They can embroil people better than we ourselves can. I've introduced a new fashion among them.

CHIEF. What's that new fashion?

OFFICIALS' IMP. Why, in former times lawyers were in attendance on the judges and deceived people. Now, I've arranged for them to do business also apart from the judges. Whoever pays most, is the one to whose business they attend. And they'll take such trouble over it that they'll make out a case where there is none! They and the officials between them embroil people far better than we Devils can.

CHIEF. All right. I'll have a look at them. You may pass on.

The Officials' Imp goes to the right.

CHIEF [*to Doorkeeper*] Let in the last one.

Enter the Peasants' Imp with the chunk of bread. He bows to the ground.

PEASANTS' IMP. I can't live like this any longer! Give me another appointment!

CHIEF. What appointment? What are you jabbering about? Get up and talk sense. Give in your report! How many peasants have you captured this week?

PEASANTS' IMP [*crying*] Not one!

CHIEF. What? Not one! What do you mean? What have you been doing? Where have you been loafing?

PEASANTS' IMP [*whimpering*] I've not been loafing; I've been straining every nerve all the time, but I can't do anything! There now, I went and took his last crust from under the very nose of one of them, and, instead of swearing, he wished it might do me good!

CHIEF. What? . . . What? . . . What are you mumbling there? Just blow your nose, and then speak sensibly! One can't make head or tail of what you're saying.

PEASANTS' IMP. Why, there was a peasant ploughing; and I knew he had brought only a chunk of bread with him, and had nothing else to eat. I stole his crust. By rights he should have sworn; but what does he do? He says, "Let him who has taken it eat it, and may it do him good!" I've brought the chunk of bread away with me. Here it is!

CHIEF. Well, and what of the others?

PEASANTS' IMP. They're all alike. I could not manage to take a single one.

CHIEF. How dare you appear before me with empty hands? And as if that were not enough, you must needs bring some stinking crust or other here! Do you mean to mock me? Do you mean to live in Hell and eat the bread of idleness? The others do their best, and work hard! Why, they [*points to the Imps*] have each supplied 10,000 or 20,000, or even 200,000. And you come with empty hands, and bring a miserable crust, and begin spinning your yarns. You chatter, but don't work; and that's why you've lost hold of them. But wait a bit, my friend, I'll teach you a thing or two!

PEASANTS' IMP. Before you punish me, listen to what I'll tell you. It's all very well for those other Devils, who have to do with gentlefolk, with merchants, or with women. It's all plain sailing for them! Show a nobleman a coronet, or a fine estate, and you've got him, and may lead him where you like. It's the same with a tradesman. Show him some money and stir up his covetousness, and you may lead him as with a halter. And with the women it's also plain sailing. Give them finery and sweets—and you may do what you like with them. But as to the peasants—there's a long row to hoe with them! When he's at work from morn till night—sometimes even far

into the night—and never starts without a thought of God, how's one to get at him? Master, remove me from these peasants! I'm tired to death of them, and have angered you into the bargain!

CHIEF. You're humbugging, you idler! It's no use your talking about the others. They've got hold of the merchants, the nobles, and the women, because they knew how to treat them, and invented new traps for them! The official one there—he has made quite a new departure. You must think of something too! You've stolen a crust, and brag about it! What a clever thing to do! Surround them with snares, and they'll get caught in one or other of them. But loafing about as you do, and leaving the way open for them, those peasants of yours have gained strength. They begin not to care about their last crust. If they take to such ways, and teach their women the same, they'll get quite beyond us! Invent something! Get out of the hole as best you can.

PEASANTS' IMP. I can't think how to set about it. Let me off! I can stand it no longer!

CHIEF [*angrily*] Can't stand it! What do you think, then? Am I to do your work for you?

PEASANTS' IMP. I can't!

CHIEF. Can't? Wait a bit! Hollo, there! bring the switches; give him a thrashing.

The Sentinels seize the Imp and whip him.

PEASANTS' IMP. Oh! Oh! Oh! . . .

CHIEF. Have you thought of something?

PEASANTS' IMP. Oh, oh, I can't!

CHIEF. Give him some more. [*They whip*] Well—thought of something?

PEASANTS' IMP. Yes—yes, I have!

CHIEF. Well, tell us what it is.

PEASANTS' IMP. I've invented a dodge that will bring them all into my grasp, if you'll only let me take a

labourer's place with that peasant. But I can't explain what it is beforehand.

CHIEF. All right. Only remember, that if you don't atone for that crust within three years, I'll flay you alive!

PEASANTS' IMP. They'll all be mine in three years' time.

CHIEF. All right. When the three years are past, I shall come and see for myself!

Curtain.

ACT III

A barn. Carts loaded with grain. The Imp as a Labourer He is shovelling grain off the cart, and the Peasant is carrying it away in a measure.

LABOURER. Seven !

PEASANT. How many quarters ?

LABOURER [*looks at the numbers marked on the barn door*] Twenty-six quarters. And this is the seventh bushel of the twenty-seventh quarter.

PEASANT. It won't all go in ; the barn is nearly full !

LABOURER. Shovel it nice and even.

PEASANT. So I will.

Exit with measure.

LABOURER [*alone, takes off his cap, his horns appear*] It will be some time before he returns. I'll ease my horns a bit. [*Horns rise*] And I'll take my boots off too ; I can't do it when he's here. [*Takes his boots off, his hoofs appear. Sits on the threshold*] It's the third year now. It's near the time of reckoning. There's more corn than there's room for. Only one more thing left to teach him, and then let the Chief come and see for himself. I'll have something worth showing him ! He'll forgive me for that crust !

Neighbour approaches. Labourer hides his horns and hoofs.

NEIGHBOUR. Good day to you.

LABOURER. The same to you.

NEIGHBOUR. Where's your master ?

LABOURER. He's gone to spread the grain more even ; it won't all go in.

NEIGHBOUR. Dear me, what a run of luck your master is

having! More than he has room for? We're all amazed at the harvests your master has had these two years. It's as if some one had told him what was coming. Last year was a dry season, and he had sown in the bog. Others had no harvest, but your threshing ground was covered with sheaves! This year we've a rainy summer, and he's been sharp enough to sow on the hill. Everybody's corn has rotted, but you have a splendid harvest. What grain! Ah, what grain!

Takes some grain, weighs it in his hand, and chews it.

PEASANT [*enters with empty measure*] How d'ye do, neighbour?

NEIGHBOUR. Good day. I was saying to your man here, how well you managed to guess where to sow your corn. Every one envies you. What heaps, what heaps of corn you have got! You'll not eat it all in ten years.

PEASANT. It's all thanks to Nicholas here. [*Points to Labourer*] It was his luck. Last year I sent him to plough, and what did he do but plough in the bog. I gave him a scolding, but he persuaded me to sow there. And so I did, and it turned out all for the best! And this year he again guessed right, and sowed on the hill!

NEIGHBOUR. It's as if he knew what kind of season it would be. Yes, you have got corn enough and no mistake! [*Silence*] And I have come to ask you to lend me a sack of rye. Ours is all used up. I'll return it next year.

PEASANT. All right, you may have it.

LABOURER [*nudging the Peasant*] Don't give it!

PEASANT. No more words about it. Take it.

NEIGHBOUR. Thank you. I'll just run and fetch a sack.

LABOURER [*aside*] He keeps to his old ways . . . still goes on giving. He doesn't always obey me. But just wait a bit. He'll soon stop giving away.

Exit Neighbour.

PEASANT [*sitting down on the threshold*] Why should one not give to a good man?

LABOURER. Giving is one thing, getting back another!
You know—

“It’s a good world to lend in, a good world to spend in,
But to get back one’s own, it’s the worst world that’s known.”

That’s what the old folk say.

PEASANT. Don’t worry. We’ve plenty of corn.

LABOURER. Well, what of that?

PEASANT. We’ve enough, not only till next harvest but
for two years ahead. What are we to do with it all?

LABOURER. What are we to do with it? I could make
such stuff of this corn as would make you rejoice all the
days of your life.

PEASANT. Why, what would you make of it?

LABOURER. A kind of drink. Drink, that would give
you strength when you are weak, satisfy you when you
are hungry, give you sleep when you are restless, make
you merry when you’re sad, give you courage when you’re
afraid. That’s the drink I’d make!

PEASANT. Rubbish!

LABOURER. Rubbish indeed! It was just the same when
I told you to sow in the bog, and then on the hill. You
did not believe me then, but now you know! You’ll
find out about the drink the same way.

PEASANT. But what will you make it of?

LABOURER. Why, of this same corn.

PEASANT. But won’t that be a sin?

LABOURER. Just hear him! Why should it be a sin?
Everything is given for a joy to man.

PEASANT. And where did you get all your wisdom from,
Nick? You seem a very ordinary man to look at, and
hard-working too. Why, I don’t remember you so much
as ever taking your boots off all these two years you’ve been
with me. And yet you seem to know everything. Where
did you learn it?

LABOURER. I’ve been about a good deal!

PEASANT. And so you say this drink will give one strength?

LABOURER. Just wait till you try it and see the good that comes of it.

PEASANT. And how are we to make it?

LABOURER. It's not hard to make when you know how! Only we shall want a copper and a couple of iron vessels.

PEASANT. And does it taste nice?

LABOURER. As sweet as honey. When once you've tasted it you'll never give it up.

PEASANT. Is that so? Well, I'll go to the neighbour's; he used to have a copper. We'll have a try!

Curtain

ACT IV

A barn. In the middle a closed copper on the fire, with another vessel, under which is a tap.

LABOURER [*holds a tumbler under the tap and drinks the spirit*] Well, master, it's ready now.

PEASANT [*sitting on his heels and looking on*] What a queer thing. Here's water coming out of the mixture. Why are you letting this water off first?

LABOURER. It's not water. It is the very stuff itself!

PEASANT. Why is it so clear? I thought it would be yellow like grain. This is just like water.

LABOURER. But you just smell it!

PEASANT. Ah, what a scent! Well, well, let's see what it's like in the mouth. Let me taste! [*Tries to take the tumbler out of the Labourer's hand*].

LABOURER. Mind, you'll spill it! [*Turns the tap off, drinks and smacks his lips*] It's ready! Here you are. Drink it!

PEASANT [*drinks, first sipping, then taking more and more, till he empties the glass and gives it back*] Now then, some more. One can't tell the taste from such a drop.

LABOURER [*laughing*] Well, you seem to like it! [*Draws some more*].

PEASANT [*drinks*] Eh, that's the sort! Let's call the missis. Hey, Martha! Come along! It's ready! Come on there!

Enter Wife and little girl.

WIFE. What's the matter? Why are you kicking up such a row?

PEASANT. You just taste what we've been distilling.
[*Hands her the glass*] Smell! What does it smell of?

WIFE [*smells*] Dear me!

PEASANT. Drink!

WIFE. But perhaps it may do one some harm?

PEASANT. Drink, fool!

WIFE. True. It is nice!

PEASANT [*a little tipsy*] Nice indeed! You wait and see what'll happen. Nick says it drives all weariness out of one's bones. The young grow old. I mean, the old grow young. There now, I've only had two glasses of it, and all my bones have got easy. [*Swaggers*] You see? Wait a bit, when you and I drink it every day we'll grow young again! Come, Martha! [*Embraces her*].

WIFE. Get along. Why, it's made you quite silly.

PEASANT. There, you see! You said Nick and I were wasting the corn, but just see what stuff we've concocted. Eh? It's good, ain't it?

WIFE. Of course, it's good if it makes the old young again. Just see how jolly it has made you! And I feel jolly too! Now then, join in! Ah . . . Ah . . . Ah . . . [*Sings*].

PEASANT. Yes, that's the way! We'll all be young, all young.

WIFE. We must call mother-in-law, for she's always sad and grumbling. She needs renewing. When she's younger she'll get kinder.

PEASANT [*tipsy*] Yes, call mother. Call her here, and grandfather too. I say, Mary, run and call your granny and great-grandfather. Tell him he must get down from the oven! We'll make him young again. Now then, quick! One, two, three, and away! Off like a shot! [*Girl runs off. To Wife*] We'll have another glass.

Labourer fills and hands the glasses.

PEASANT [*drinks*] At first we got young at the top, in the tongue; then it went down into the arms. Now it has

The First Distiller

reached the feet. I feel my feet getting younger. They're moving of themselves. [*Starts dancing*].

WIFE [*drinks*] You're a real clever 'un, Nick! Now then, strike up!

Labourer takes a balaláyka¹ and plays. Peasant and Wife dance.

LABOURER [*plays in the foreground of the scene, laughing and ninking as he watches them. Then he leaves off playing, but they still continue to dance*] You'll pay for that crust! You've done it now, my fine fellows. They'll never get out of it. The Chief can come when he likes now!

Enter a fresh-looking elderly woman, and a very old white-haired man, the Peasant's Grandfather.

GRANDFATHER. What's the matter? Have you gone mad? Dancing while every one else is at work!

WIFE [*dances and claps her hands*] Oh—Oh—Oh—
[*Sings*]

"That I'm sinning I will own,
Free from sin is God alone!"

OLD WOMAN. Oh, you wretch! The oven's not cleaned out yet, and here you are dancing!

PEASANT. Wait a bit, mother. See what has been happening here. We can make old people young again! Here you are! Just drink this! [*Passes tumbler*].

OLD WOMAN. There's plenty of water in the well. [*Smells it*] But what have you put in? My—what a smell!

PEASANT. You just drink it.

OLD WOMAN [*tastes*] Dear me! But won't one die of it?

WIFE. It will make you more alive. You'll grow young again!

OLD WOMAN. Nonsense! [*Drinks*] But it's nice! Better than our drinks. Here, father, have some too.

Grandfather sits down and shakes his head.

¹ The balaláyka is an instrument (generally three-stringed) used by Russian peasants, and answering to the negroes' banjo.

LABOURER. Never mind him. But granny must have another glass. [*Hands some to the old woman*].

OLD WOMAN. If only no harm comes of it. Oh dear, it does burn ! But it is nice.

WIFE. Drink it ! Then you'll feel it running through your veins.

OLD WOMAN. Well, I suppose I'll have to try. [*Drinks*].

WIFE. Has it reached your feet yet ?

OLD WOMAN. True enough, it does run through you. I feel it here now ! And it really makes one feel quite light. Come—give me some more. [*Drinks again*] Fine ' Now I'm quite young again.

PEASANT. Didn't I tell you ?

OLD WOMAN. Ah, it's a pity my old man is no longer here. He might have seen once more what I was like in my young days.

Labourer plays. Peasant and Wife dance.

OLD WOMAN [*comes into the middle*] Do you call that dancing ? Let me show you. [*Dances*] That's the way ! Then like this, and like that ! Do you see ?

Grandfather goes up to the vessel and lets the spirit run out on to the ground.

PEASANT [*notices and rushes at his Grandfather*] What are you up to, you old fool ? Spilling such fine stuff ! Oh, you old dotard ! [*Pushes him away and holds tumbler under tap*] You've emptied it all !

GRANDFATHER. It's evil and not good ! God has sent you a good harvest for you to feed yourself and others, but you have turned the corn into devils' drink. No good will come of it. Give up this business. Else you'll perish and ruin others ! You think this is drink ? It's fire, and will burn you up ! [*Takes a brand from the fire and lights the spilt spirit. The spirit burns. They all look on with horror*].

ACT V

Interior of hut. The Labourer alone, his horns and hoofs showing.

LABOURER. There's lots of corn. More than there's room for, and he's now got a taste for it. We've been distilling again, and we've filled a barrel and hidden it away. We're not going to treat any one for nothing, but when we want to get something out of a fellow, then we'll treat him! So to-day I told him to invite the village elders and treat them, that they should divide up the property between him and his grandfather, and give everything to him and nothing to the old man! My three years are up to-day, and my work is finished. Let the Chief come and see for himself. I needn't be ashamed of his seeing it!

Chief appears out of the ground.

CHIEF. Time's up! Have you redeemed your bread-blunder? I told you I'd come and see for myself. Have you managed the Peasant?

LABOURER. Done him completely! Judge for yourself. Some of them will meet here soon. Get into the oven, and see what they'll do. You'll be well satisfied!

CHIEF [*climbs into the oven*] We'll see!

Enter the Peasant and four old men. The Wife follows. The men sit down round the table. The Wife lays the cloth, sets ox-foot brawn and pies on the table. The old men exchange greetings with Labourer.

FIRST ELDER. Well, have you made more of the drink?

LABOURER. Yes, we've distilled as much as we need. Why let valuable stuff be wasted?

SECOND ELDER. And is it a success?

LABOURER. Better than the first lot.

SECOND ELDER. But where did you learn to make it?

LABOURER. Going about in the world one learns many things!

THIRD ELDER. Yes, yes, you're a knowing fellow.

Wife brings spirits and glasses.

PEASANT. Have a drop!

Wife takes a decanter and fills glasses.

WIFE. Do us the honour!

FIRST ELDER [*drinks*] Your health! Ah, that's good. It runs right through all one's joints. That's what I call proper drink!

The other three Elders do the same. Chief gets out of the oven. Labourer goes and stands by him.

LABOURER [*to Chief*] See what will happen now! I'll trip up the woman with my foot and she'll spill the liquor. Formerly he did not grudge his last crust, but now see what he'll do about a glass of spirits!

PEASANT. Now then, wife, fill again and hand it round in due order—first to our friend here, then to Daddy Michael.

Wife fills a glass and goes round the table. The Labourer trips her up; she stumbles and upsets the glass.

WIFE. Gracious goodness, I've spilt it! Why do you get in my way, confound you?

PEASANT [*to Wife*] There now, what a clumsy beast! Her fingers are all thumbs, and she goes swearing at others! See what fine stuff she goes spilling on the ground!

WIFE. I didn't do it on purpose.

PEASANT. On purpose indeed! Wait till I get up; I'll teach you how to pour spirits on the ground. [*To Labourer*] And you too, you confounded fool, what are you prancing round the table for? Go to the Devil!

Wife again fills and hands the glasses round

LABOURER [*goes back to the oven to the Chief*] You see? Formerly he did not grudge his last crust, and now for a glass of spirits he nearly beat his wife and sent me to you—to the Devil!

CHIEF. It's good, very good! I'm satisfied.

LABOURER. You wait a bit. Let them empty the bottle—and you'll see what will happen. Even now they are giving each other smooth oily words; presently they'll start flattering each other,—as cunning as foxes.

PEASANT. Well, old friends, what's your opinion of my business? My grandfather has been living with me, and I have been feeding him and feeding him, and now he's gone to live with my uncle, and wants to take his share of the property and give it to uncle! Consider it well; you are wise men. We could as well do without our own heads as without you. There's no one in the whole village to come near you. Take you for example, Iván Fedótitch—doesn't every one say you're first among men? And as for me, I'll tell you the truth, Iván Fedótitch, I'm fonder of you than of my own father or mother. As for Michael Stepánitch, he's an old friend.

FIRST ELDER [*to Peasant*] It's good to talk with a good man. It's the way to get wisdom. It's just the same with you. One can't find any one to compare with you either.

SECOND ELDER. Wise and affectionate—that's what I like you for.

THIRD ELDER. You have my best sympathy. I can't find words to express it. I was saying to my old woman only to-day . . .

FOURTH ELDER. A friend, a real friend!

LABOURER [*nudges the Chief*] Do you hear? All lies! They abuse one another behind their backs, but see how thick they are laying it on now,—like foxes wagging their tails! And it all comes from that drink.

CHIEF. That drink is good, very good! If they take to lying like that, they'll all be ours. Very good; I'm satisfied!

LABOURER. Wait a bit. When they've finished a second bottle it will be better still!

WIFE [*serves*] Do have another glass.

FIRST ELDER. Won't it be too much? Your health! [*Drinks*] It's pleasant to drink in the company of a good man.

SECOND ELDER. How can one help drinking? Health to the host and hostess!

THIRD ELDER. Friends, your health!

FOURTH ELDER. This is a brew of the right sort! Let's be merry! We'll arrange things for you. 'Cos it all depends on me!

FIRST ELDER. On you? No, not on you, but on what your seniors say.

FOURTH ELDER. My seniors are greater fools. Go where you came from!

SECOND ELDER. What are you up to now? You fool!

THIRD ELDER. It's true what he's saying! 'Cos why? The host is not entertaining us for nothing. He means business. The business can be arranged. Only you must stand treat! Show us due respect. 'Cos it's you as wants me, and not I you! You're own brother to the pig!

PEASANT. And you're itself! What are you yelling for? Think to surprise me? You are all good at stuffing yourselves!

FIRST ELDER. What are you giving yourself airs for? See if I don't twist your nose to one side!

PEASANT. We'll see whose nose will get twisted!

SECOND ELDER. Think yourself such a marvel? Go to the Devil! I won't speak to you—I'll go away!

PEASANT [*holds him*] What, will you break up the company?

SECOND ELDER. Let me go, or I'll call for help!

PEASANT. I won't! What right have you to . . . ?

SECOND ELDER. This right! [*Beats him*].

PEASANT [*to the other Elders*] Help me!

They fall on one another, and all speak at once.

FIRST ELDER. That's why. 'Cos it means we're all having a spree-ee!

SECOND ELDER. I can arrange everything!

THIRD ELDER. Let's have some more!

PEASANT [*to Wife*] Bring another bottle!

All sit round the table again and drink.

LABOURER [*to Chief*] Have you noticed? The wolf's blood in them was aroused, and they've turned as fierce as wolves.

CHIEF. The drink is good! I'm satisfied!

LABOURER Wait a bit. Let them empty a third bottle. Things will be better still!

Curtain

ACT VI

The scene represents a village street. To the right some old women are sitting on logs of wood with the Grandfather. In the centre, is a ring of women, girls, and lads. Dance music is played and they dance. Noise is heard from the hut, and drunken screams. An old man comes out and shouts in a tipsy voice. The Peasant follows him and leads him back.

GRANDFATHER. Ah, what doings! what doings! One would think, what more would any one want than to do his work on week days, and when Sunday comes round, to have a good wash, clean the harness, and rest a bit and sit with his family; or go outside and have a talk with the old folk about matters concerning the Commune. Or, if you're young, have a game. There they are playing,—and it's pleasant to look at them. It's all pleasant and good. [*Screams inside the hut*] But this sort of thing, what is it? It only leads men astray, and pleases the Devils. And it all comes of fat living!

Tipsy men come tumbling out of the hut, shout, and catch hold of the girls.

GIRLS. Leave off, Daddy Tom! What do you mean by it?

LADS. Let's go into the lane. It's impossible to play here.

Exeunt all who were playing in the ring.

PEASANT [*goes up to Grandfather*] What have you got now? The Elders will allot everything to me! [*Snaps his fingers at him*] That's what you'll get! So there you are! It's all mine and you've nothing! They'll tell you so themselves!

The four Elders speak all at once.

FIRST ELDER. 'Cos I know what's what!

SECOND ELDER.

“’Fore all I’ll be heard,
’Cos I’m an old bird!”

THIRD ELDER. Friend! dear friend, dearest friend!

FOURTH ELDER.

“Jog along but, jog along bed,
The missis has nowhere to lay down her head!”

Now then, come along!

The Elders take each other's arms in couples and go off reeling, one couple following the other. The Peasant turns back to the hut, but stumbles before he reaches it,—falls down, and lies muttering incomprehensible words that sound like grunts. The Grandfather and those he was with, rise and exeunt.

Enter Labourer and Chief of Devils.

LABOURER. Did you see? Now the swine's blood has been roused in them, and from wolves they have turned into swine! [*Points to Peasant*] There he lies in the dirt and grunts like a hog!

CHIEF. You have succeeded! First like foxes, then like wolves, and now like swine! Well, that is a drink! But tell me, how did you make it? I suppose it's made of a mixture of foxes', wolves', and swine's blood?

LABOURER. Oh no! I only supplied him with too much corn! As long as he had only as much corn as he needed, he did not grudge his last crust, but when he had more than he knew what to do with, the fox's, the wolf's, and the swine's blood in him awoke. He always had beast's blood in him, only it could not get the upper hand.

CHIEF. Well, you're a fine fellow! You've atoned for your crust-blunder. Now they only need to drink spirits, and they're altogether ours!

Curtain.

FRUITS OF CULTURE

A COMEDY IN FOUR ACTS

(1889)

CHARACTERS

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH ZVEZDÍNTSEF. *A retired Lieutenant of the Horse Guards. Owner of more than 60,000 acres of land in various provinces. A fresh-looking, bland, agreeable gentleman of 60. Believes in Spiritualism, and likes to astonish people with his wonderful stories.*

ANNA PÁVLOVNA ZVEZDÍNTSEVA. *Wife of Leoníd. Stout; pretends to be young; quite taken up with the conventionalities of life; despises her husband, and blindly believes in her doctor. Very irritable.*

BETSY. *Their daughter. A young woman of 20, fast, tries to be mannish, wears a pince-nez, flirts and giggles. Speaks very quickly and distinctly.*

VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH ZVEZDÍNTSEF. *Their son, aged 25; has studied law, but has no definite occupation. Member of the Cycling Club, Jockey Club, and of the Society for Promoting the Breeding of Hounds. Enjoys perfect health, and has imperturbable self-assurance. Speaks loud and abruptly. Is either perfectly serious—almost morose, or is noisily gay and laughs loud. Is nicknamed Vovo.*

ALEXÉY VLADÍMIROVITCH KROUGOSVÉTLOF. *A professor and scientist of about 50, with quiet and pleasantly self-possessed manners, and quiet, deliberate, harmonious speech. Likes to talk. Is mildly disdainful of those who do not agree with him. Smokes much. Is lean and active.*

THE DOCTOR. *About 40. Healthy, fat, red-faced, loud-voiced, and rough; with a self-satisfied smile constantly on his lips.*

MÁRYA KONSTANTÍNOVNA. *A girl of 20, from the Conservatoire, teacher of music. Wears a fringe, and is super-fashionably dressed. Obsequious, and gets easily confused.*

PETRÍSTCHEF. *About 28; has taken his degree in philology, and is looking out for a position. Member of the same clubs as Vasily Leoníditch, and also of the Society for the Organisation of Calico Balls.¹ Is bald-headed, quick in movement and speech, and very polite.*

¹ Economical balls at which the ladies are bound to appear in dresses made of cotton materials.

THE BARONESS. *A pompous lady of about 50, slow in her movements, speaks with monotonous intonation.*

THE PRINCESS. *A society woman, a visitor.*

HER DAUGHTER. *An affected young society woman, a visitor.*

THE COUNTESS. *An ancient dame, with false hair and teeth. Moves with great difficulty.*

GROSSMAN. *A dark, nervous, lively man of Jewish type. Speaks very loud.*

THE FAT LADY: MÁRYA VASÍLYEVNA TOLBOÚHINA. *A very distinguished, rich, and kindly woman, acquainted with all the notable people of the last and present generations. Very stout. Speaks hurriedly, trying to be heard above every one else. Smokes.*

BARON KLÍNGEN (nicknamed KOKO). *A graduate of Petersburg University. Gentleman of the Bedchamber, Attaché to an Embassy. Is perfectly correct in his deportment, and therefore enjoys peace of mind and is quietly gay.*

TWO SILENT LADIES.

SERGÉY IVÁNITCH SAHÁTOF. *About 50, an ex-Assistant Minister of State. An elegant gentleman, of wide European culture, engaged in nothing and interested in everything. His carriage is dignified and at times even severe.*

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. *Personal attendant on Zvezdintsef, aged about 60. A man of some education and fond of information. Uses his pince-nez and pocket-handkerchief too much, unfolding the latter very slowly. Takes an interest in politics. Is kindly and sensible.*

GREGORY. *A footman, about 28, handsome, profligate, envious, and insolent.*

JACOB. *Butler, about 40, a bustling, kindly man, to whom the interests of his family in the village are all-important.*

SIMON. *The butler's assistant, about 20, a healthy, fresh, peasant lad, fair, beardless as yet; calm and smiling.*

THE COACHMAN. *A man of about 35, a dandy. Has moustaches but no beard. Rude and decided.*

A DISCHARGED MAN-COOK. *About 45, dishevelled, unshaved, bloated, yellow and trembling. Dressed in a ragged, light summer-overcoat and dirty trousers. Speaks hoarsely, ejecting the words abruptly.*

THE SERVANTS' COOK. *A talkative, dissatisfied woman of 30.*

THE DOORKEEPER. *A retired soldier.*

TÁNYA (TATYÁNA MÁRKOVNA). *Lady's-maid, 19, energetic, strong, merry, with quickly-changing moods. At moments, when strongly excited, she shrieks with joy.*

FIRST PEASANT. *About 60. Has served as village Elder. Imagines that he knows how to treat gentlefolk, and likes to hear himself talk.*

SECOND PEASANT. *About 45, head of a family. A man of few words. Rough and truthful. The father of Simon.*

THIRD PEASANT. *About 70. Wears shoes of plaited bast. Is nervous, restless, hurried, and tries to cover his confusion by much talking.*

FIRST FOOTMAN (*in attendance on the Countess*). *An old man, with old-fashioned manners, and proud of his place.*

SECOND FOOTMAN. *Of enormous size, strong, and rude.*

A PORTER FROM A FASHIONABLE DRESSMAKER'S SHOP. *A fresh-faced man in dark-blue long coat. Speaks firmly, emphatically, and clearly.*

The action takes place in Moscow, in Zvezdintsef's house.

FRUITS OF CULTURE

ACT I

The entrance hall of a wealthy house in Moscow. There are three doors : the front door, the door of Leoníd Fyódoritch's study, and the door of Vasily Leoníditch's room. A staircase leads up to the other rooms ; behind it is another door leading to the servants' quarters.

SCENE 1.

GREGORY [*looks at himself in the glass and arranges his hair, &c.*] I am sorry about those moustaches of mine ! " Moustaches are not becoming to a footman," she says ! And why ? Why, so that any one might see you're a footman,—else my looks might put her darling son to shame. He's a likely one ! There's not much fear of his coming anywhere near me, moustaches or no moustaches ! [*Smiling into the glass*] And what a lot of 'em swarm round me. And yet I don't care for any of them as much as for that Tánia. And she only a lady's-maid ! Ah well, she's nicer than any young lady. [*Smiles*] She is a duck ! [*Listening*] Ah, here she comes. [*Smiles*] Yes, that's her, clattering with her little heels. Oh !

Enter Tánia, carrying a cloak and boots.

GREGORY. My respects to you, Tatyána Márkovna.

TÁNIA. What are you always looking in the glass for ? Do you think yourself so good-looking ?

GREGORY. Well, and are my looks not agreeable ?

TÁNYA. So, so ; neither agreeable nor disagreeable, but just betwixt and between ! Why are all those cloaks hanging there ?

GREGORY. I am just going to put them away, your ladyship ! [*Takes down a fur cloak and, wrapping it round her, embraces her*] I say, Tánya, I'll tell you something . . .

TÁNYA. Oh, get away, do ! What do you mean by it ? [*Pulls herself angrily away*] Leave me alone, I tell you !

GREGORY [*looks cautiously around*] Then give me a kiss !

TÁNYA. Now, really, what are you bothering for ? I'll give you such a kiss ! [*Raises her hand to strike*].

VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH [*off the scene, rings and then shouts*] Gregory !

TÁNYA. There now, go ! Vasily Leoníditch is calling you.

GREGORY. He'll wait ! He's only just opened his eyes ! I say, why don't you love me ?

TÁNYA. What sort of loving have you imagined now ? I don't love anybody.

GREGORY. That's a fib. You love Simon ! You have found a nice one to love—a common, dirty-pawed peasant, a butler's assistant !

TÁNYA. Never mind ; such as he is, you are jealous of him !

VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH [*off the scene*] Gregory !

GREGORY. All in good time. . . . Jealous indeed ! Of what ? Why, you have only just begun to get licked into shape, and who are you tying yourself up with ? Now, wouldn't it be altogether a different matter if you loved me ? . . . I say, Tánya . . .

TÁNYA [*angrily and severely*] You'll get nothing from me, I tell you !

VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH [*off the scene*] Gregory !!

GREGORY. You're mighty particular, ain't you ?

VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH [*off the scene, shouts persistently, monotonously, and with all his might*] Gregory ! Gregory ! Gregory ! [*Tánya and Gregory laugh*].

GREGORY. You should have seen the girls that have been sweet on me. [*Bell rings*].

TÁNYA. Well then, go to them, and leave me alone!

GREGORY. You are a silly, now I think of it. I'm not Simon!

TÁNYA. Simon means marriage, and not tomfoolery!

Enter Porter, carrying a large cardboard box.

PORTER. Good morning!

GREGORY. Good morning! Where are you from?

PORTER. From Bourdey's. I've brought a dress, and here's a note for the lady.

TÁNYA [*taking the note*] Sit down, and I'll take it in. [*Exit*].

Vasily Leoníditch looks out of the door in shirt-sleeves and slippers.

VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH. Gregory!

GREGORY. Yes, sir.

VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH. Gregory! Don't you hear me call?

GREGORY. I've only just come, sir.

VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH. Hot water, and a cup of tea.

GREGORY. Yes, sir; Simon will bring them directly.

VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH. And who is this? Ah, from Bourdier?

PORTER. Yes, sir.

Exeunt Vasily Leoníditch and Gregory. Bell rings. Tanya runs in at the sound of the bell and opens the front door.

TÁNYA [*to Porter*] Please wait a little.

PORTER. I am waiting.

Sahátov enters at front door.

TÁNYA. I beg your pardon, but the footman has just gone away. This way, sir. Allow me, please. [*Takes his fur cloak*].

SAHÁTOF [*adjusting his clothes*] Is Leoníd Fyódoritch at home? Is he up? [*Bell rings*].

TÁNYA. Oh yes, sir. He's been up a long time.

Doctor enters and looks round for the footman. Sees Sahátov and addresses him in an offhand manner.

DOCTOR. Ah, my respects to you!

SAHÁTOF [*looks fixedly at him*] The Doctor, I believe?

DOCTOR. And I thought you were abroad! Dropped in to see Leoníd Fyódoritch?

SAHÁTOF. Yes. And you? Is any one ill?

DOCTOR [*laughing*] Not exactly ill, but, you know . . . It's awful with these ladies! Sits up at cards till three every morning, and pulls her waist into the shape of a wine-glass. And the lady is flabby and fat, and carries the weight of a good many years on her back.

SAHÁTOF. Is this the way you state your diagnosis to Anna Pávlovna? I should hardly think it quite pleases her!

DOCTOR [*laughing*] Well, it's the truth. They do all these tricks—and then come derangements of the digestive organs, pressure on the liver, nerves, and all sorts of things, and one has to come and patch them up. It's just awful! [*Laughs*] And you? You are also a spiritualist it seems?

SAHÁTOF. I? No, I am not also a spiritualist. . . . Good morning! [*Is about to go, but is stopped by the Doctor*].

DOCTOR. No! But I can't myself, you know, positively deny the possibility of it, when a man like Krougosvétlof is connected with it all. How can one? Is he not a professor,—a European celebrity? There must be something in it. I should like to see for myself, but I never have the time. I have other things to do.

SAHÁTOF. Yes, yes! Good morning. [*Exit, bowing slightly*].

DOCTOR [*to Tánya*] Is Anna Pávlovna up?

TÁNYA. She's in her bedroom, but please come up.

Doctor goes upstairs.

Theodore Ivánitch enters with a newspaper in his hand.

THEODORE IVÁNITCH [*to Porter*] What is it you want?

PORTER. I'm from Bourdey's. I brought a dress and a note, and was told to wait.

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. Ah, from Bourdey's! [*To Tánya*] Who came in just now?

TÁNYA. It was Sergéy Ivánitch Sabátov and the Doctor. They stood talking here a bit. It was all about spiritualism.

THEODORE IVÁNITCH [*correcting her*] Spiritualism.

TÁNYA. Yes, that's just what I said—spiritualism. Have you heard how well it went off last time, Theodore Ivánitch? [*Laughs*] There was knocks, and things flew about!

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. And how do *you* know?

TÁNYA. Miss Elizabeth told me.

Jacob runs in with a tumbler of tea on a tray.

JACOB [*to the Porter*] Good morning!

PORTER [*disconsolately*] Good morning!

Jacob knocks at Vasily Leoníditch's door.

Gregory enters.

GREGORY. Give it here.

JACOB. You didn't bring back all yesterday's tumblers, nor the tray Vasily Leoníditch had. And it's me that have to answer for them!

GREGORY. The tray is full of cigars.

JACOB. Well, put them somewhere else. It's me who's answerable for it.

GREGORY. I'll bring it back! I'll bring it back!

JACOB. Yes, so you say, but it is not where it ought to be. The other day, just as the tea had to be served, it was not to be found.

GREGORY. I'll bring it back, I tell you. What a fuss!

JACOB. It's easy for you to talk. Here am I serving tea for the third time, and now there's the lunch to get ready. One does nothing but rush about the livelong day. Is there any one in the house who has more to do than me? Yet they are never satisfied with me.

GREGORY. Dear me? Who could wish for any one more satisfactory? You're such a fine fellow!

TÁNYA. Nobody is good enough for you! You alone . . .

GREGORY [*to Tányá*] No one asked your opinion! [*Exit*].

JACOB. Ah well, I don't mind. Tatyána Márkovna, did the mistress say anything about yesterday?

TÁNYA. About the lamp, you mean?

JACOB. And how it managed to drop out of my hands, the Lord only knows! Just as I began rubbing it, and was going to take hold of it in another place, out it slips and goes all to pieces. It's just my luck! It's easy for that Gregory Miháylitch to talk—a single man like him! But when one has a family, one has to consider things: they have to be fed. I don't mind work. . . . So she didn't say anything? The Lord be thanked! . . . Oh, Theodore Ivánitch, have you one spoon or two?

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. One. Only one! [*Reads newspaper*].

Exit Jacob.

Bell rings. Enter Gregory (carrying a tray) and the Doorkeeper.

DOORKEEPER [*to Gregory*] Tell the master some peasants have come from the village.

GREGORY [*pointing to Theodore Ivánitch*] Tell the major-domo here, it's his business. I have no time. [*Exit*].

TÁNYA. Where are these peasants from?

DOORKEEPER. From Kursk, I think.

TÁNYA [*shrieks with delight*] It's them. . . . It's Simon's father come about the land! I'll go and meet them! [*Runs off*].

DOORKEEPER. Well, then, what shall I say to them? Shall they come in here? They say they've come about the land—the master knows, they say.

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. Yes, they want to purchase some land. All right! But he has a visitor now, so you had better tell them to wait.

DOORKEEPER. Where shall they wait?

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. Let them wait outside. I'll send for them when the time comes. [*Exit Doorkeeper*].

Enter Tányá, followed by three Peasants.

TÁNYA. To the right. In here! In here!

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. I did not want them brought in here !

GREGORY. Forward minx !

TÁNYA. Oh, Theodore Ivánitch, it won't matter, they'll stand in this corner.

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. They'll dirty the floor.

TÁNYA. They've scraped their shoes, and I'll wipe the floor up afterwards. [*To Peasants*] Here, stand just here.

Peasants come forward carrying presents tied in cotton handkerchiefs : cake, eggs, and embroidered towels. They look around for an icon before which to cross themselves ; not finding one, they cross themselves looking at the staircase.

GREGORY [*to Theodore Ivánitch*]. There now, Theodore Ivánitch, they say Pironnet's boots are an elegant shape. But those there are ever so much better. [*Pointing to the third Peasant's bast shoes*].

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. Why will you always be ridiculing people ? [*Exit Gregory*].

THEODORE IVÁNITCH [*rises and goes up to the Peasants*] So you are from Kursk ? And have come to arrange about buying some land ?

FIRST PEASANT. Just so. We might say, it is for the completion of the purchase of the land we have come. How could we announce ourselves to the master ?

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. Yes, yes, I know. You wait a bit and I'll go and inform him. [*Exit*].

The Peasants look around ; they are embarrassed where to put their presents.

FIRST PEASANT. There now, couldn't we have what d'you call it ? Something to present these here things on ? To do it in a genteel way, like,—a little dish or something.

TÁNYA. All right, directly ; put them down here for the present. [*Puts bundles on settle*].

FIRST PEASANT. There now,—that respectable gentleman that was here just now,—what might be his station ?

TÁNYA. He's the master's valet.

FIRST PEASANT. I see. So he's also in service. And you, now, are you a servant too?

TÁNYA. I am lady's-maid. Do you know, I also come from Démen! I know you, and you, but I don't know him. [*Pointing to third Peasant*].

THIRD PEASANT. Them two you know, but me you don't know?

TÁNYA. You are Efim Antónitch.

FIRST PEASANT. That's just it!

TÁNYA. And you are Simon's father, Zachary Tri-fánitch.

SECOND PEASANT. Right!

THIRD PEASANT. And let me tell you, I'm Mítry Vlásitch Tchilíkin. Now do you know?

TÁNYA. Now I shall know you too!

SECOND PEASANT. And who may you be?

TÁNYA. I am Aksinya's, the soldier's wife's, orphan.

FIRST AND THIRD PEASANTS [*with surprise*] Never!

SECOND PEASANT. The proverb says true:

"Buy a penny pig, put it in the rye,
And you'll have a wonderful fat porker by-and-by."

FIRST PEASANT. That's just it! She's got the resemblance of a duchess!

THIRD PEASANT. That be so truly. Oh Lord!

VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH [*off the scene, rings, and then shouts*]
Gregory! Gregory!

FIRST PEASANT. Now who's that, for example, disturbing himself in such a way, if I may say so?

TÁNYA. That's the young master.

THIRD PEASANT. Oh Lord! Didn't I say we'd better wait outside until the time comes? [*Silence*].

SECOND PEASANT. Is it *you*, Simon wants to marry?

TÁNYA. Why, has he been writing? [*Hides her face in her apron*].

SECOND PEASANT. It's evident he's written! But it's a bad business he's imagined here. I see the lad's got spoilt!

TÁNYA [*quickly*] No, he's not at all spoilt! Shall I send him to you?

SECOND PEASANT. Why send him? All in good time. Where's the hurry?

VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH [*desperately, behind scene*] Gregory! Where the devil are you? . . . [*Enters from his room in shirt-sleeves, adjusting his pince-nez*].

VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH. Is every one dead?

TÁNYA. He's not here, sir. . . . I'll send him to you at once. [*Moves towards the back door*].

VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH. I could hear you talking, you know. How have these scarecrows sprung up here? Eh? What?

TÁNYA. They're peasants from the Kursk village, sir. [*Peasants bow*].

VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH. And who is this? Oh yes, from Bourdier.

Vasily Leoníditch pays no attention to the Peasants' bow. Tánya meets Gregory at the doorway and remains on the scene.

VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH [*to Gregory*] I told you the other boots. . . . I can't wear these!

GREGORY. Well, the others are also there.

VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH. But where is *there*?

GREGORY. Just in the same place!

VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH. They're not!

GREGORY. Well, come and see. [*Exeunt Gregory and Vasily Leoníditch*].

THIRD PEASANT. Say now, might we not in the meantime just go and wait, say, in some lodging-house or somewhere?

TÁNYA. No, no, wait a little. I'll go and bring you some plates to put the presents on. [*Exit*].

Enter Sahátóf and Leoníd Fyódoritch, followed by Theodore Ivánitch.

The Peasants take up the presents, and pose themselves.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH [*to Peasants*] Presently, presently! Wait a bit! [*Points to Porter*] Who is this?

PORTER. From Bourdey's.

LEONID FYÓDORITCH. Ah, from Bourdier.

SAHÁTOF [*smiling*] Well, I don't deny it: still you understand that, never having seen it, we, the uninitiated, have some difficulty in believing.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. You say you find it difficult to believe! We do not ask for faith; all we demand of you is to investigate! How can I help believing in this ring? Yet this ring came from there!

SAHÁTOF. From *there*? What do you mean? From where?

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. From the other world. Yes!

SAHÁTOF [*smiling*] That's very interesting—very interesting!

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Well, supposing we admit that I'm a man carried away by an idea, as you think, and that I am deluding myself. Well, but what of Alexéy Vladímiritch Krougosvétlof—he is not just an ordinary man, but a distinguished professor, and yet he admits it to be a fact. And not he alone. What of Crookes? What of Wallace?

SAHÁTOF. But I don't deny anything. I only say it is very interesting. It would be interesting to know how Krougosvétlof explains it!

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. He has a theory of his own. Could you come to-night?—he is sure to be here. First we shall have Grossman—you know, the famous thought-reader?

SAHÁTOF. Yes, I have heard of him but have never happened to meet him.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Then you must come! We shall first have Grossman, then Kaptchítch, and our mediumistic

séance. . . . [*To Theodore Ivánitch*] Has the man returned from Kaptchitch?

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. Not yet, sir.

SAHÁTOF. Then how am I to know?

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Never mind, come in any case! If Kaptchitch can't come we shall find our own medium. Márya Ignátievna is a medium—not such a good one as Kaptchitch, but still . . .

Tánya enters with plates for the presents, and stands listening.

SAHÁTOF [*smiling*] Oh yes, yes. But here is one puzzling point:—how is it that the mediums are always of the, so-called, educated class, such as Kaptchitch and Márya Ignátievna? If there were such a special force, would it not be met with also among the common people—the peasants?

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Oh yes, and it is! That is very common. Even here in our own house we have a peasant whom we discovered to be a medium. A few days ago we called him in—a sofa had to be moved, during a séance—and we forgot all about him. In all probability he fell asleep. And, fancy, after our séance was over and Kaptchitch had come to again, we suddenly noticed mediumistic phenomena in another part of the room, near the peasant: the table gave a jerk and moved!

TÁNYA [*aside*] That was when I was getting out from under it!

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. It is quite evident he also is a medium. Especially as he is very like Home in appearance. You remember Home—a fair-haired naïve sort of fellow?

SAHÁTOF [*shrugging his shoulders*] Dear me, this is very interesting, you know. I think you should try him.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. So we will! And he is not alone; there are thousands of mediums, only we do not know them. Why, only a short time ago a bedridden old woman moved a brick wall!

SAHÁTOF. Moved a brick . . . a brick wall?

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Yes, yes. She was lying in bed, and did not even know she was a medium. She just leant her arm against the wall, and the wall moved!

SAHÁTOF. And did not cave in?

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. And did not cave in.

SAHÁTOF. Very strange! Well then, I'll come this evening.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Pray do. We shall have a séance in any case. [*Sahátov puts on his outdoor things, Leoníd Fyódoritch sees him to the door*].

PORTER [*to Tánya*] Do tell your mistress! Am I to spend the night here?

TÁNYA. Wait a little; she's going to drive out with the young lady, so she'll soon be coming downstairs. [*Exit*].

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH [*comes up to the Peasants, who bow and offer him their presents*] That's not necessary!

FIRST PEASANT [*smiling*] Oh, but this-here is our first duty, it is! It's also the Commune's orders that we should do it!

SECOND PEASANT. That's always been the proper way.

THIRD PEASANT. Say no more about it! 'Cause as we are much satisfied. . . . As our parents, let's say, served, let's say, your parents, so we would like the same with all our hearts . . . and not just anyhow! [*Bows*].

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. But what is it about? What do you want?

FIRST PEASANT. It's to your honour we've come . . .

Enter Petrístchef briskly, in fur-lined overcoat.

PETRÍSTCHEF. Is Vasíly Leoníditch awake yet? [*Seeing Leoníd Fyódoritch, bows, moving only his head*].

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. You have come to see my son?

PETRÍSTCHEF. I? Yes, just to see Vovo for a moment.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Step in, step in.

Petrístchef takes off his overcoat and walks in briskly. Exit.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH [*to Peasants*] Well, what is it you want?

SECOND PEASANT. Please accept our presents!

FIRST PEASANT [*smiling*] That's to say, the peasants' offerings.

THIRD PEASANT. Say no more about it; what's the good? We wish you the same as if you were our own father! Say no more about it!

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. All right. Here, Theodore, take these.

THEODORE IVÁNITCH [*to Peasants*] Give them here. [*Takes the presents*].

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Well, what is the business?

FIRST PEASANT. We've come to your honour . . .

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. I see you have; but what do you want?

FIRST PEASANT. It's about making a move towards completing the sale of the land. It comes to this . . .

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Do you mean to buy the land?

FIRST PEASANT. That's just it. It comes to this . . . I mean the buying of the property of the land. The Commune has given us, let's say, the power of attorning, to enter, let's say, as is lawful, through the Government bank, with a stamp for the lawful amount.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. You mean that you want to buy the land through the land-bank.

FIRST PEASANT. That's just it. Just as you offered it to us last year. It comes to this, then, the whole sum in full for the buying of the property of the land is 32,864 roubles.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. That's all right, but how about paying up?

FIRST PEASANT. As to the payment, the Commune offers just as it was said last year—to pay in 'stalments, and your receipt of the ready money by lawful regulations, 4000 roubles in full.¹

¹ The present value of the rouble is rather over two shillings and one penny.

SECOND PEASANT. Take 4000 now, and wait for the rest of the money.

THIRD PEASANT [*unwrapping a parcel of money*] And about this be quite easy. We should pawn our own selves rather than do such a thing just anyhow say, but in this way, let's say, as it ought to be done.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. But did I not write and tell you that I should not agree to it unless you brought the whole sum?

FIRST PEASANT. That's just it. It would be more agreeable, but it is not in our possibilities, I mean.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Well then, the thing can't be done!

FIRST PEASANT. The Commune, for example, relied its hopes on that, that you made the offer last year to sell it in easy 'stalments . . .

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. That was last year. I would have agreed to it then, but now I can't.

SECOND PEASANT. But how's that? We've been depending on your promise—we've got the papers ready and have collected the money!

THIRD PEASANT. Be merciful, master! We're short of land; we'll say nothing about cattle, but even a hen, let's say, we've no room to keep. [*Bows*] Don't wrong us, master! [*Bows*].

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Of course it's quite true, that I agreed last year to let you have the land for payment by instalments, but now circumstances are such that it would be inconvenient.

SECOND PEASANT. Without this land we cannot live!

FIRST PEASANT. That's just it. Without land our lives must grow weaker and come to a decline.

THIRD PEASANT [*bowing*] Master, we have so little land, let's not talk about the cattle, but even a chicken, let's say, we've no room for. Master, be merciful, accept the money, master!

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH [*examining the document*] I quite un-

derstand, and should like to help you. Wait a little; I will give you an answer in half-an-hour. . . . Theodore, say I am engaged and am not to be disturbed.

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. Yes, sir. [*Exit Leoníd Fyódoritch*].
The Peasants look dejected.

SECOND PEASANT. Here's a go! "Give me the whole sum," he says. And where are we to get it from?

FIRST PEASANT. If he had not given us hopes, for example. As it is we felt quite insured it would be as was said last year.

THIRD PEASANT. Oh Lord! and I had begun unwrapping the money. [*Begins wrapping up the bundle of bank-notes again*] What are we to do now?

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. What is your business, then?

FIRST PEASANT. Our business, respected sir, depends in this. Last year he made us the offer of our buying the land in 'stalments. The Commune entered upon these terms and gave us the powers of atturning, and now d'you see he makes the offering that we should pay the whole in full! And as it turns out, the business is no ways convenient for us.

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. What is the whole sum?

FIRST PEASANT. The whole sum in readiness is 4000 roubles, you see.

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. Well, what of that? Make an effort and collect more.

FIRST PEASANT. Such as it is, it was collected with much effort. We have, so to say, in this sense, not got ammunition enough.

SECOND PEASANT. You can't get blood out of a stone.

THIRD PEASANT. We'd be glad with all our hearts, but we have swept even this together, as you might say, with a broom.

Vasíly Leoníditch and Petrístchef appear in the doorway both smoking cigarettes.

VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH. I have told you already I'll do my

best, so of course I will do all that is possible! Eh, what?

PETRÍSTCHEF. You must just understand that if you do not get it, the devil only knows what a mess we shall be in!

VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH. But I've already said I'll do my best, and so I will. Eh, what?

PETRÍSTCHEF. Nothing. I only say, get some at any cost. I will wait.

Exit into Vasíly Leoníditch's room, closing door.

VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH [*waving his arm*] It's a deuce of a go! [*The Peasants bow*].

VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH [*looking at Porter, to Theodore Ivánitch*] Why don't you attend to this fellow from Bourdier? He hasn't come to take lodgings with us, has he? Just look, he is asleep! Eh, what?

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. The note he brought has been sent in, and he has been told to wait until Anna Pávlovna comes down.

VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH [*looks at Peasants and notices the money*] And what is this? Money? For whom? Is it for us? [*To Theodore Ivánitch*] Who are they?

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. They are peasants from Kursk. They are buying land.

VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH. Has it been sold them?

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. No, they have not yet come to any agreement. They are too stingy.

VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH. Eh? Well, we must try and persuade them. [*To the Peasants*] Here, I say, are you buying land? Eh?

FIRST PEASANT. That's just it. We have made an offering as how we should like to acquire the possession of the land.

VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH. Then you should not be so stingy, you know. Just let me tell you how necessary land is to peasants! Eh, what? It's very necessary, isn't it?

FIRST PEASANT. That's just it. The land appears as the very first and foremost necessity to a peasant. That's just it.

VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH. Then why be so stingy? Just you think what land is! Why, one can sow wheat on it in rows! I tell you, you could get eighty bushels of wheat, at a rouble and a half a bushel—that would be 120 roubles. Eh, what? Or else mint! I tell you, you could collar 400 roubles off an acre by sowing mint!

FIRST PEASANT. That's just it. All sorts of products one could put into action if one had the right understanding.

VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH. Mint! Decidedly mint! I have learnt about it, you know. It's all printed in books. I can show them you. Eh, what?

FIRST PEASANT. That's just it, all concerns are clearer to you through your books. That's learnedness, of course.

VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH. Then pay up and don't be stingy! [*To Theodore Ivánitch*] Where's papa?

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. He gave orders not to be disturbed just now.

VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH. Oh, I suppose he's consulting a spirit whether to sell the land or not? Eh, what?

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. I can't say. All I know is that he went away undecided about it.

VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH. What d'you think, Theodore Ivánitch, is he flush of cash? Eh, what?

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. I don't know. I hardly think so, But what does it matter to you? You drew a good sum not more than a week ago.

VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH. But didn't I pay for those dogs? And now, you know, there's our new Society, and Petrístchef has been chosen, and I had borrowed money from Petrístchef and must pay the subscription both for him and for myself. Eh, what?

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. And what is this new Society? A Cycling Club?

VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH. No. Just let me tell you. It is quite a new Society. It is a very serious Society, you know. And who do you think is President? Eh, what?

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. What's the object of this new Society?

VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH. It is a "Society to Promote the Breeding of Pure-bred Russian Hounds." Eh, what? And I'll tell you, they're having the first meeting and a lunch, to-day. And I've no money. I'll go to him and have a try! [*Exit through study door*].

FIRST PEASANT [*to Theodore Ivánitch*] And who might he be, respected sir?

THEODORE IVÁNITCH [*smiles*] The young master.

THIRD PEASANT. The heir, so to say. Oh Lord! [*puts away the money*] I'd better hide it meanwhile.

FIRST PEASANT. And we were told he was in military service, in the cav'rely, for example.

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. No, as an only son he is exempt from military service.

THIRD PEASANT. Left for to keep his parents, so to say! That's right!

SECOND PEASANT [*shaking his head*] He's the right sort. He'll feed them finely!

THIRD PEASANT. Oh Lord!

Enter Vasily Leoníditch followed by Leoníd Fyódoritch.

VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH. That's always the way. It's really surprising! First I'm asked why I have no occupation, and now when I have found a field and am occupied, when a Society with serious and noble aims has been founded, I can't even have 300 roubles to go on with! . . .

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. I tell you I can't do it, and I can't! I haven't got it.

VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH. Why, you have just sold some land.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. In the first place I have not sold it! And above all, do leave me in peace! Weren't you told I was engaged? [*Exit, slamming door*].

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. I told you this was not the right moment.

VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH. Well, I say! Here's a position to be in! I'll go and see mamma—that's my only hope. He's going crazy over his spiritualism and forgets everything else. [*Goes upstairs*].

Theodore Ivánitch takes newspaper and is just going to sit down, when Betsy and Márya Konstantínovna, followed by Gregory, come down the stairs.

BETSY. Is the carriage ready?

GREGORY. Just coming to the door.

BETSY [*to Márya Konstantínovna*]. Come along, come along, I know it is he.

MÁRYA KONSTANTÍNOVNA. Which he?

BETSY. You know very well whom I mean—Petrístchef, of course.

MÁRYA KONSTANTÍNOVNA. But where is he?

BETSY. Sitting in Vovo's room. You'll see!

MÁRYA KONSTANTÍNOVNA. And suppose it is not he? [*The Peasants and Porter bow*].

BETSY [*to Porter*]. You brought a dress from Bourdier's?

PORTER. Yes, Miss. May I go?

BETSY. Well, I don't know. Ask my mother.

PORTER. I don't know whose it is, Miss; I was ordered to bring it here and receive the money.

BETSY. Well then, wait.

MÁRYA KONSTANTÍNOVNA. Is it still that costume for the charade?

BETSY. Yes, a charming costume. But mamma won't take it or pay for it.

MÁRYA KONSTANTÍNOVNA. But why not?

BETSY. You'd better ask mamma. She doesn't grudge Vovo 500 roubles for his dogs, but 100 is too much for a dress. I can't act dressed like a scarecrow. [*Pointing to Peasants*] And who are these?

GREGORY. Peasants who have come to buy some land or other.

BETSY. And I thought they were the beaters. Are you not beaters?

FIRST PEASANT. No, no, lady. We have come to see Leoníd Fyódoritch about the signing into our possession of the title-deeds to some land.

BETSY. Then how is it? Vovo was expecting some beaters who were to come to-day. Are you sure you are not the beaters? [*The Peasants are silent*] How stupid they are! [*Goes to Vasíly Leoníditch's door*] Vovo? [*Laughs*].

MÁRYA KONSTANTÍNOVNA. But we met him just now upstairs!

BETSY. Why need you remember that? Vovo, are you there?

Petrístchef enters.

PETRÍSTCHEF. Vovo is not here, but I am prepared to fulfil on his behalf anything that may be required. How do you do? How do you do, Márya Konstantínovna? [*Shakes hands long and violently with Betsy, and then with Márya Konstantínovna*].

SECOND PEASANT. See, it's as if he were pumping water!

BETSY. You can't replace him,—still you're better than nobody. [*Laughs*] What are these affairs of yours with Vovo?

PETRÍSTCHEF. What affairs? Our affairs are fie-nancial, that is, our business is fie! It's also nancial, and besides it is financial.

BETSY. What does nancial mean?

PETRÍSTCHEF. What a question! It means nothing, that's just the point.

BETSY. No, no, you have missed fire. [*Laughs*].

PETRÍSTCHEF. One can't always hit the mark, you know. It's something like a lottery. Blanks and blanks again, and at last you win! [*Theodore Ivánitch goes into the study*].

BETSY. Well, this was blank then ; but tell me, were you at the Mergásofs' last night ?

PETRÍSTCHEF. Not exactly at the *Mère Gásofs*, but rather at the *Père Gásofs*, or better still, at the *Fils Gásofs*.

BETSY. You can't do without puns. It's an illness. And were the Gypsies there ?¹ [*Laughs*].

PETRÍSTCHEF [*sings*] "On their aprons silken threads, little birds with golden heads !" . . .

BETSY. Happy mortals ! And we were yawning at Fofo's.

PETRÍSTCHEF [*continues to sing*] "And she promised and she swore, She would ope' her . . . her . . . her . . ." how does it go on, Márya Konstantínovna ?

MÁRYA KONSTANTÍNOVNA. "Closet door."

PETRÍSTCHEF. How ? What ? How, Márya Konstantínovna ?

BETSY. *Cessez, vous devenez impossible !*²

PETRÍSTCHEF. *J'ai cessé, j'ai bébé, j'ai dédé . . .*³

BETSY. I see the only way to rid ourselves of your wit is to make you sing ! Let us go into Vovo's room, his guitar is there. Come, Márya Konstantínovna, come ! [*Exeunt Betsy, Márya Konstantínovna, and Petrístchef*].

FIRST PEASANT. Who be they ?

GREGORY. One is our young lady, the other is a girl who teaches her music.

FIRST PEASANT. Administrates learning, so to say. And ain't she smart ? A reg'lar picture !

SECOND PEASANT. Why don't they marry her ? She is old enough, I should say.

GREGORY. Do you think it's the same as among you peasants,—marry at fifteen ?

FIRST PEASANT. And that man, for example, is he also in the musitional line ?

¹ The Gypsy choirs are very popular in Moscow.

² BETSY. Cease ! You are becoming quite unbearable !

³ PETRÍSTCHEF. I have O said (*ceased*), B said, and D said.

GREGORY [*mimicking him*] "Musitional" indeed! You don't understand anything!

FIRST PEASANT. That's just so. And stupidity, one might say, is our ignorance.

THIRD PEASANT. Oh Lord! [*Gipsy songs and guitar accompaniment are heard from Vasily Leoníditch's room*].

Enter Simon, followed by Tanya, who watches the meeting between father and son.

GREGORY [*to Simon*] What do you want?

SIMON. I have been to Mr. Kaptchitch.

GREGORY. Well, and what's the answer?

SIMON. He sent word he couldn't possibly come to-night.

GREGORY. All right, I'll let them know. [*Exit*].

SIMON [*to his father*] How d'you do, father! My respects to Daddy Efim and Daddy Mítry! How are all at home?

SECOND PEASANT. Very well, Simon.

FIRST PEASANT. How d'you do, lad?

THIRD PEASANT. How d'you do, sonny?

SIMON [*smiles*] Well, come along, father, and have some tea.

SECOND PEASANT. Wait till we've finished our business. Don't you see we are not ready yet?

SIMON. Well, I'll wait for you by the porch. [*Wishes to go away*].

TÁNYA [*running after him*] I say, why didn't you tell him anything?

SIMON. How could I before all those people? Give me time, I'll tell him over our tea. [*Exit*].

Theodore Ivánitch enters and sits down by the window.

FIRST PEASANT. Respected sir, how's our business proceeding?

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. Wait a bit, he'll be out presently, he's just finishing.

TÁNYA [*to Theodore Ivánitch*] And how do you know, Theodore Ivánitch, he is finishing?

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. I know that when he has finished questioning, he reads the question and answer aloud.

TÁNYA. Can one really talk with spirits by means of a saucer?

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. It seems so.

TÁNYA. But supposing they tell him to sign, will he sign?

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. Of course he will.

TÁNYA. But they do not speak with words?

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. Oh, yes. By means of the alphabet. He notices at which letter the saucer stops.

TÁNYA. Yes, but at a si-ance? . . .

Enter Leoníd Fyódoritch.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Well, friends, I can't do it! I should be very glad to, but it is quite impossible. If it were for ready money it would be a different matter.

FIRST PEASANT. That's just so. What more could any one desire? But the people are so inpennycuous—it is quite impossible!

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Well, I can't do it, I really can't. Here is your document; I can't sign it.

THIRD PEASANT. Show some pity, master; be merciful!

SECOND PEASANT. How can you act so? It is doing us a wrong.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Nothing wrong about it, friends. I offered it you in summer, but then you did not agree; and now I can't agree to it.

THIRD PEASANT. Master, be merciful! How are we to get along? We have so little land. We'll say nothing about the cattle; a hen, let's say, there's no room to let a hen run about.

Leoníd Fyódoritch goes up to the door and stops. Enter, descending the staircase, Anna Pávlovna and doctor, followed by Vástly Leoníditch, who is in a merry and playful mood and is putting some bank-notes into his purse.

ANNA PÁVLOVNA [*tightly laced, and wearing a bonnet*] Then I am to take it?

DOCTOR. If the symptoms recur you must certainly take it, but above all, you must behave better. How can you expect thick syrup to pass through a thin little hair tube, especially when we squeeze the tube? It's impossible; and so it is with the biliary duct. It's simple enough.

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. All right, all right!

DOCTOR. Yes, "All right, all right," and you go on in the same old way. It won't do, madam—it won't do. Well, good-bye!

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. No, not good-bye, only *au revoir*! For I still expect you to-night. I shall not be able to make up my mind without you.

DOCTOR. All right, if I have time I'll pop in. [*Exit*].

ANNA PÁVLOVNA [*noticing the Peasants*]. What's this? What? What people are these? [*Peasants bow*].

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. These are peasants from Kursk, come to see Leoníd Fyódoritch about the sale of some land.

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. I see they are peasants, but who let them in?

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. Leoníd Fyódoritch gave the order. He has just been speaking to them about the sale of the land.

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. What sale? There is no need to sell any. But above all, how can one let in people from the street into the house? One can't let people in from the street! One can't let people into the house who have spent the night heaven knows where! . . . [*Getting more and more excited*] I daresay every fold of their clothes is full of microbes—of scarlet-fever microbes, of smallpox microbes, of diphtheria microbes! Why, they are from Kursk Government, where there is an epidemic of diphtheria . . . Doctor! Doctor! Call the doctor back!

Leoníd Fyódoritch goes into his room and shuts the door. Gregory goes to recall the Doctor.

VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH [*smokes at the Peasants*] Never mind,

mamma; if you like I'll fumigate them so that all the microbes will go to pot! Eh, what?

Anna Pávlovna remains severely silent, awaiting the Doctor's return.

VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH [*to Peasants*] And do you fatten pigs? There's a first-rate business!

FIRST PEASANT. That's just so. We do go in for the pig-fattening line now and then.

VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH. This kind? . . . [*Grunts like a pig*].

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. Vovo, Vovo, leave off!

VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH. Isn't it like? Eh, what?

FIRST PEASANT. That's just so. It's very resemblant.

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. Vovo, leave off, I tell you!

SECOND PEASANT. What's it all about?

THIRD PEASANT. I said, we'd better go to some lodging meanwhile!

Enter Doctor and Gregory.

DOCTOR. What's the matter? What's happened?

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. Why, you're always saying I must not get excited. Now, how is it possible to keep calm? I do not see my own sister for two months, and am careful about any doubtful visitor—and here are people from Kursk, straight from Kursk, where there is an epidemic of diphtheria, right in my house!

DOCTOR. These good fellows you mean, I suppose?

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. Of course. Straight from a diphtheric place!

DOCTOR. Well, of course, if they come from an infected place it is rash; but still there is no reason to excite yourself so much about it.

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. But don't you yourself advise carefulness?

DOCTOR. Of course, of course. Still, why excite yourself?

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. How can I help it? Now we shall have to have the house completely disinfected.

DOCTOR. Oh no! Why completely? That would cost

300 roubles or more. I'll arrange it cheaply and well for you. Take, to a large bottle of water . . .

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. Boiled?

DOCTOR. It's all the same. Boiled would be better. To one bottle of water take a tablespoon of salicylic acid, and have everything they have come in contact with washed with the solution. As to the fellows themselves, they must be off, of course. That's all. Then you're quite safe. And it would do no harm to sprinkle some of the same solution through a spray—two or three tumblers—you'll see how well it will act. No danger whatever!

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. Tánya! Where is Tánya?

Enter Tánya.

TÁNYA. Did you call, M'm?

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. You know that big bottle in my dressing-room?

TÁNYA. Out of which we sprinkled the laundress yesterday?

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. Well, of course! What other bottle could I mean? Well then, take that bottle and first wash with soap the place where they have been standing, and then with . . .

TÁNYA. Yes, M'm; I know how.

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. And then take the spray . . . However, I had better do that myself when I get back.

DOCTOR. Well then, do so, and don't be afraid! Well, *au revoir* till this evening. [*Exit*].

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. And they must be off! Not a trace of them must remain! Get out, get out! Go—what are you looking at?

FIRST PEASANT. That's just so. It's because of our stupidity, as we were instructed . . .

GREGORY [*pushes the Peasants out*] There, there; be off!

SECOND PEASANT. Let me have my handkerchief back! [*The handkerchief in which the presents were wrapped*].

THIRD PEASANT. Oh Lord, oh Lord! didn't I say—some lodging-house meanwhile!

Gregory pushes him out. Exeunt Peasants.

PORTER [*who has repeatedly tried to say something*] Will there be any answer?

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. Ah, from Bourdier? [*Excitedly*] None! None! You can take it back. I told her I never ordered such a costume, and I will not allow my daughter to wear it!

PORTER. I know nothing about it. I was sent . . .

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. Go, go, take it back! I will call myself about it!

VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH [*solemnly*] Sir Messenger from Bourdier, depart!

PORTER. I might have been told that long ago. I have sat here nearly five hours!

VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH. Ambassador from Bourdier, begone!

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. Cease, please!

Exit Porter.

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. Betsy! Where is she? I always have to wait for her.

VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH [*shouting at the top of his voice*] Betsy! Petrístchef! Come quick, quick, quick! Eh? What?

Enter Petrístchef, Betsy, and Márya Konstantínovna.

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. You always keep one waiting!

BETSY. On the contrary, I was waiting for you!

Petrístchef bows with his head only, then kisses Anna Pávlovna's hand.

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. How d'you do! [*To Betsy*] You always have an answer ready!

BETSY. If you are upset, mamma, I had better not go.

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. Are we going or not?

BETSY. Well, let us go; it can't be helped.

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. Did you see the man from Bourdier?

BETSY. Yes, and I was very glad. I ordered the costume, and am going to wear it when it is paid for.

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. I am not going to pay for a costume that is indecent!

BETSY. Why has it become indecent? First it was decent, and now you have a fit of prudery.

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. Not prudery at all! If the bodice were completely altered, then it would do.

BETSY. Mamma, that is quite impossible.

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. Well, get dressed. [*They sit down. Gregory puts on their over-shoes for them.*]

VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH. Márya Konstantínovna, do you notice a vacuum in the hall?

MÁRYA KONSTANTÍNOVNA. What is it? [*Laughs in anticipation.*]

VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH. Bourdier's man has gone! Eh, what? Good, eh? [*Laughs loudly.*]

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. Well, let us go. [*Goes out of the door, but returns at once*] Tánya!

TÁNYA. Yes, M'm?

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. Don't let Frisk catch cold while I am away. If she wants to be let out, put on her little yellow cloak. She is not quite well to-day.

TÁNYA. Yes, M'm.

Exeunt Anna Pávlovna, Betsy, and Gregory.

PETRÍSTCHEF. Well, have you got it?

VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH. Not without trouble, I can tell you! First I rushed at the gov'nor; he began to bellow and turned me out. Off to the mater—I got it out of her. It's here! [*Slaps his breast pocket*] If once I make up my mind, there's no getting away from me. I have a deadly grip! Eh, what? And d'you know, my wolf-hounds are coming to-day.

Petrístchef and Vasíly Leoníditch put on their outdoor things and go out. Tánya follows.

THEODORE IVÁNITCH [*alone*] Yes, nothing but unpleasantness. How is it they can't live in peace? But one must say the new generation are not—the thing. And

as to the women's dominion! . . . Why, Leoníd Fyódoritch just now was going to put in a word, but seeing what a frenzy she was in—slammed the door behind him. He is a wonderfully kind-hearted man. Yes, wonderfully kind. What's this? Here's Tánja bringing them back again!

TÁNJA. Come in, come in, grand-dads, never mind!

Enter Tánja and the Peasants.

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. Why have you brought them back?

TÁNJA. Well, Theodore Ivánitch, we must do something about their business. I shall have to wash the place anyhow.

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. But the business will not come off, I see that already.

FIRST PEASANT. How could we best put our affair into action, respected sir? Your reverence might take a little trouble over it, and we should give you full thankings from the Commune for your trouble.

THIRD PEASANT. Do try, honey! We can't live! We have so little land. Talk of cattle—why, we have no room to keep a hen! [*They bow*].

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. I am sorry for you, friends, but I can't think of any way to help you. I understand your case very well, but he has refused. So what can one do? Besides, the lady is also against it. Well, give me your papers—I'll try and see what I can do, but I hardly hope to succeed. [*Exit*].

Tánja and the three Peasants sigh.

TÁNJA. But tell me, grand-dads, what is it that is wanted?

FIRST PEASANT. Why, only that he should put his signature to our document.

TÁNJA. That the master should sign? Is that all?

FIRST PEASANT. Yes, only lay his signature on the deed and take the money, and there would be an end of the matter.

THIRD PEASANT. He only has to write and sign, as the peasants, let's say, desire, so, let's say, I also desire. That's the whole affair—if he'd only take it and sign it, it's all done.

TÁNYA [*considering*] He need only sign the paper and it's done?

FIRST PEASANT. That's just so. The whole matter is in dependence on that, and nothing else. Let him sign, and we ask no more.

TÁNYA. Just wait and see what Theodore Ivánitch will say. If he cannot persuade the master, I'll try something.

FIRST PEASANT. Get round him, will you?

TÁNYA. I'll try.

THIRD PEASANT. Ay, the lass is going to bestir herself. Only get the thing settled, and the Commune will bind itself to keep you all your life. See there, now!

FIRST PEASANT. If the affair can be put into action, truly we might put her in a gold frame.

SECOND PEASANT. That goes without saying!

TÁNYA. I can't promise for certain, but as the saying is: "An attempt is no sin, if you try . . ."

FIRST PEASANT. "You may win." That's just so.

Enter Theodore Ivánitch.

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. No, friends, it's no go! He has not done it, and he won't do it. Here, take your document. You may go.

FIRST PEASANT [*gives Tányá the paper*] Then it's on you we pin all our reliance, for example.

TÁNYA. Yes, yes! You go into the street, and I'll run out to you in a minute and have a word with you.

Exeunt Peasants.

TÁNYA. Theodore Ivánitch, dear Theodore Ivánitch, ask the master to come out and speak to me for a moment. I have something to say to him.

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. What next?

TÁNYA. I must, Theodore Ivánitch. Ask him, do ; there's nothing wrong about it, on my sacred word.

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. But what do you want with him?

TÁNYA. That's a little secret. I will tell you later on, only ask him.

THEODORE IVÁNITCH [*smiling*] I can't think what you are up to ! All right, I'll go and ask him. [*Exit*].

TÁNYA. I'll do it ! Didn't he say himself that there is that power in Simon ? And I know how to manage. No one found me out that time, and now I'll teach Simon what to do. If it doesn't succeed it's no great matter. After all it's not a sin.

Enter Leoníd Fyódoritch followed by Theodore Ivánitch.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH [*smiling*] Is this the petitioner ? Well, what is your business ?

TÁNYA. It's a little secret, Leoníd Fyódoritch ; let me tell it you alone.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. What is it ? Theodore, leave us for a minute.

Exit Theodore Ivánitch.

TÁNYA. As I have grown up and lived in your house, Leoníd Fyódoritch, and as I am very grateful to you for everything, I shall open my heart to you as to a father. Simon, who is living in your house, wants to marry me.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. So that's it !

TÁNYA. I open my heart to you as to a father ! I have no one to advise me, being an orphan.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Well, and why not ? He seems a nice lad.

TÁNYA. Yes, that's true. He would be all right ; there is only one thing I have my doubts about. It's something about him that I have noticed and can't make out . . . perhaps it is something bad.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. What is it ? Does he drink ?

TÁNYA. God forbid ! But since I know that there is such a thing as spiritualism . . .

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Ah, you know that?

TÁNYA. Of course! I understand it very well. Some, of course, through ignorance, don't understand it.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Well, what then?

TÁNYA. I am very much afraid for Simon. It does happen to him.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. What happens to him?

TÁNYA. Something of a kind like spiritualism. You ask any of the servants. As soon as he gets drowsy at the table, the table begins to tremble, and creak like that: *tuke, . . . tuke!* All the servants have heard it.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Why, it's the very thing I was saying to Sergéy Ivánitch this morning! Yes? . . .

TÁNYA. Or else . . . when was it? . . . Oh yes, last Wednesday. We sat down to dinner, and the spoon just jumps into his hand of itself!

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Ah, that is interesting! Jumps into his hand? When he was drowsing?

TÁNYA. That I didn't notice. I think he was, though.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Yes? . . .

TÁNYA. And that's what I'm afraid of, and what I wanted to ask you about. May not some harm come of it? To live one's life together, and him having such a thing in him!

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH [*smiling*] No, you need not be afraid, there is nothing bad in that. It only proves him to be a *medium*—simply a medium. I knew him to be a medium before this.

TÁNYA. So that's what it is! And I was afraid!

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. No, there's nothing to be afraid of. [*Aside*]. That's capital! Kaptchitch can't come, so we will test him to-night. . . . [*To Tányá*] No, my dear, don't be afraid, he will be a good husband and . . . that is only a kind of special power, and every one has it, only in some it is weaker and in others stronger.

TÁNYA. Thank you, sir. Now I shan't think any more

about it; but I was so frightened. . . . What a thing it is, our want of education !

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. No, no, don't be frightened. . . . Theodore !

Enter Theodore Ivánitch.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. I am going out now. Get everything ready for to-night's séance.

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. But Mr. Kaptchitch is not coming.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. That does not matter. [*Puts on overcoat*] We shall have a trial séance with our own medium. [*Exit. Theodore Ivánitch goes out with him*].

TÁNYA [*alone*] He believes it ! He believes it ! [*Shrieks and jumps with joy*] He really believes it ! Isn't it wonderful ! [*Shrieks*] Now I'll do it, if only Simon has pluck for it !

Theodore Ivánitch returns.

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. Well, have you told him your secret?

TÁNYA. I'll tell you too, only later on. . . . But I have a favour to ask of you too, Theodore Ivánitch.

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. Yes ? What is it ?

TÁNYA [*shyly*] You have been a second father to me, and I will open my heart before you as before God.

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. Don't beat about the bush, but come straight to the point.

TÁNYA. The point is . . . well, the point is, that Simon wants to marry me.

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. Is that it ? I thought I noticed . . .

TÁNYA. Well, why should I hide it ? I am an orphan, and you know yourself how matters are in these town establishments. Every one comes bothering ; there's that Gregory Mihályitch, for instance, he gives me no peace. And also that other one . . . you know. They think I have no soul, and am only here for their amusement.

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. Good girl, that's right ! Well, what then ?

TÁNYA. Well, Simon wrote to his father ; and he, his

father, sees me to-day, and says : " He's spoilt "—he means his son. Theodore Ivánitch [*bows*], take the place of a father to me, speak to the old man,—to Simon's father ! I could take them into the kitchen, and you might come in and speak to the old man !

THEODORE IVÁNITCH [*smiling*] Then I am to turn match-maker—am I ? Well, I can do that.

TÁNYA. Theodore Ivánitch, dearest, be a father to me, and I'll pray for you all my life long.

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. All right, all right, I'll come later on. Haven't I promised ? [*Takes up newspaper*].

TÁNYA. You are a second father to me !

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. All right, all right.

TÁNYA. Then I'll rely on you. [*Exit*].

THEODORE IVÁNITCH [*alone, shaking his head*] A good affectionate girl. To think that so many like her perish ! Get but once into trouble and she'll go from hand to hand until she sinks into the mire, and can never be found again ! There was that dear little Nataly. She, too, was a good girl, reared and cared for by a mother. [*Takes up paper*] Well, let's see what tricks Ferdinand is up to in Bulgaria.

Curtain.

ACT II

Evening of the same day. The scene represents the interior of the servants' kitchen. The Peasants have taken off their outer garments and sit drinking tea at the table, and perspiring. Theodore Ivánitch is smoking a cigar at the other side of the stage. The discharged Cook is lying on the brick oven, and is unseen during the early part of the scene.

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. My advice is, don't hinder him ! If it's his wish and hers, in Heaven's name let him do it. She is a good, honest girl. Never mind her being a bit dressy ; she can't help that, living in town : she is a good girl all the same.

SECOND PEASANT. Well, of course, if it is his wish, let him ! He'll have to live with her, not me. But she's certainly uncommon spruce. How's one to take her into one's hut ? Why, she'll not let her mother-in-law so much as pat her on the head.

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. That does not depend on the spruceness, but on character. If her nature is good, she's sure to be docile and respectful.

SECOND PEASANT. Ah, well, we'll have her if the lad's bent on having her. After all, it's a bad job to live with one as one don't care for. I'll consult my missus, and then may Heaven bless them !

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. Then let's shake hands on it !

SECOND PEASANT. Well, it seems it will have to come off.

FIRST PEASANT. Eh, Zachary ! fortune's a-smiling on you ! You've come to accomplish a piece of business, and just see what a duchess of a daughter-in-law you've obtained.

All that's left to be done is to have a drink on it, and then it will be all in order.

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. That's not at all necessary. [*An awkward silence*].

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. I know something of your way of life too, you know. I am even thinking of purchasing a bit of land, building a cottage, and working on the land myself somewhere: maybe in your neighbourhood.

SECOND PEASANT. A very good thing too.

FIRST PEASANT. That's just it. When one has got the money one can get all kinds of pleasure in the country.

THIRD PEASANT. Say no more about it! Country life, let's say, is freer in every way, not like the town!

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. There now, would you let me join your Commune if I settled among you?

SECOND PEASANT. Why not? If you stand drink for the Elders, they'll accept you soon enough!

FIRST PEASANT. And if you open a public-house, for example, or an inn, why, you'd have such a life you'd never need to die! You might live like a king, and no mistake.

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. Well, we'll see. I should certainly like to have a few quiet years in my old age. Though my life here is good enough, and I should be sorry to leave. Leoníd Fyódoritch is an exceedingly kind-hearted man.

FIRST PEASANT. That's just it. But how about our business? Is it possible that he is going to leave it without any termination?

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. He'd do it willingly.

SECOND PEASANT. It seems he's afraid of his wife.

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. It's not that he's afraid, but they don't hit things off together.

THIRD PEASANT. But you should try, father! How are we to live else? We've so little land . . .

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. We'll see what comes of Tánya's attempt. She's taken the business into her hands now!

THIRD PEASANT [*takes a sip of tea*] Father, be merciful. We've so little land. A hen, let's say, we've no room for a hen, let alone the cattle.

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. If the business depended on me. . . . [*To Second Peasant*] Well, friend, so we've done our bit of match-making! It's agreed then about Tánya?

SECOND PEASANT. I've given my word, and I'll not go back on it without a good reason. If only our business succeeds!

Enter Servants' Cook who looks up at the oven, makes a sign, and then begins to speak animatedly to Theodore Ivánitch.

SERVANTS' COOK. Just now Simon was called upstairs from the front kitchen! The master and that other bald-headed one who calls up spirits with him, ordered him to sit down and take the place of Kaptchitch!

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. You don't say so!

SERVANTS' COOK. Yes, Jacob told Tánya.

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. Extraordinary!

Enter Coachman.

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. What do you want?

COACHMAN [*to Theodore Ivánitch*] You may just tell them I never agreed to live with a lot of dogs! Let any one who likes do it, but I will never agree to live among dogs!

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. What dogs?

COACHMAN. Three dogs have been sent into our room by Vasily Leoníditch! They've messed it all over. They're whining, and if one comes near them they bite—the devils! They'd tear you to pieces if you didn't mind. I've a good mind to take a club and smash their legs for them!

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. But when did they come?

COACHMAN. Why, to-day, from the Dog Show; the devil knows what kind they are, but they're an expensive sort. Are we or the dogs to live in the coachmen's quarters? You just go and ask!

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. Yes, that will never do. I'll go and ask about it.

COACHMAN. They'd better be brought here to Loukérya
SERVANTS' COOK [*angrily*] People have to eat here, and you'd like to lock dogs in here! As it is . . .

COACHMAN. And I've got the liveries, and the sledge-covers and the harness there, and they expect things kept clean! Perhaps the porter's lodge might do.

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. I must ask Vasily Leoníditch.

COACHMAN [*angrily*] He'd better hang the brutes round his neck and lug them about with him! But no fear: he'd rather ride on horseback himself. It's he as spoilt Beauty without rhyme or reason. That was a horse! . . . Oh dear! what a life! [*Exit, slamming door*].

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. That's not right! Certainly not right! [*To Peasants*] Well then, it's time we were saying good-bye, friends.

PEASANTS. Good-bye!

Exit Theodore Ivánitch.

As soon as he is gone a sound of groaning is heard from the top of the oven.

SECOND PEASANT. He's sleek, that one; looks like a general.

SERVANTS' COOK. Rather! Why, he has a room all to himself; he gets his washing, his tea and sugar, and food from the master's table.

DISCHARGED COOK [*on the oven*] Why shouldn't the old beggar live well? He's lined his pockets all right!

SECOND PEASANT. Who's that up there, on the oven?

SERVANTS' COOK. Oh, it's only a man.

Silence.

FIRST PEASANT. Well, and you too, as I noticed a while since when you were supping, have capital food to eat.

SERVANTS' COOK. We can't complain. She's not mean about the food. We have wheat bread every Sunday, and fish when a holiday happens to be a fast-day too, and those who like may eat meat.

SECOND PEASANT. And does any one tuck into flesh on fast-days?

SERVANTS' COOK. Oh, they nearly all do! Only the old coachman—not the one who was here just now but the old one—and Simon, and I and the housekeeper, fast—all the others eat meat.

SECOND PEASANT. And the master himself?

SERVANTS' COOK. Catch him! Why, I bet he's forgotten there is such a thing as fasting!

THIRD PEASANT. Oh Lord!

FIRST PEASANT. That's the gentlefolks' way: they have got it all out of their books. 'Cos of their intlex!

THIRD PEASANT. Shouldn't wonder if they feed on wheat bread every day!

SERVANTS' COOK. Wheat bread indeed! Much they think of wheat bread! You should see what food they eat. No end of different things!

FIRST PEASANT. In course gentlefolks' food is of an airial kind.

SERVANTS' COOK. Airial, of course, but all the same they're good at stuffing themselves, they are!

FIRST PEASANT. Have healthy appekites, so to say.

SERVANTS' COOK. 'Cos they always rinse it down! All with sweet wines, and spirits, and fizzy liquors. They have a different one to suit every kind of food. They eat and rinse it down, and eat and rinse it down, they do.

FIRST PEASANT. And so the food's floated down in proportion, so to say.

SERVANTS' COOK. Ah yes, they are good at stuffing! It's awful! You see, it's not just sitting down, eating, then saying grace and going away—they're always at it!

SECOND PEASANT. Like pigs with their feet in the trough!
[Peasants laugh].

SERVANTS' COOK. As soon as, by God's grace, they have opened their eyes, the samovár is brought in—tea, coffee, chocolate. Hardly is the second samovár emptied, a third

has to be set. Then lunch, then dinner, then again coffee. They've hardly left off, then comes tea, and all sorts of tit-bits and sweetmeats—there's never an end to it! They even lie in bed and eat!

THIRD PEASANT. There now; that's good! [*Laughs*].

FIRST AND SECOND PEASANTS. What are you about?

THIRD PEASANT. If I could only live a single day like that!

SECOND PEASANT. But when do they do their work?

SERVANTS' COOK. Work indeed! What is their work? Cards and piano—that's all their work. The young lady used to sit down to the piano as soon as she opened her eyes, and off she'd go! And that other one who lives here, the teacher, stands and waits. "When will the piano be free?" When one has finished, off rattles the other, and sometimes they'd put two pianos near one another and four of 'em would bust out at once. Bust out in such a manner, you could hear 'em down here!

THIRD PEASANT. Oh Lord!

SERVANTS' COOK. Well, and that's all the work they do! Piano or cards! As soon as they have met together—cards, wine, smoking, and so on all night long. And as soon as they are up: eating again!

Enter Simon.

SIMON. Hope you're enjoying your tea!

FIRST PEASANT. Come and join us.

SIMON [*comes up to the table*] Thank you kindly. [*First Peasant pours out a cup of tea for him*].

SECOND PEASANT. Where have you been?

SIMON. Upstairs.

SECOND PEASANT. Well, and what was being done there?

SIMON. Why, I couldn't make it out at all! I don't know how to explain it.

SECOND PEASANT. But what was it?

SIMON. I can't explain it. They have been trying some kind of strength in me. I can't make it out. Tánya says,

"Do it, and we'll get the land for our peasants; he'll sell it them."

SECOND PEASANT. But how is she going to manage it?

SIMON. I can't make it out, and she won't say. She says, "Do as I tell you," and that's all.

SECOND PEASANT. But what is it you have to do?

SIMON. Nothing just now. They made me sit down, put out the lights and told me to sleep. And Tanya had hidden herself there. They didn't see her, but I did.

SECOND PEASANT. Why? What for?

SIMON. The Lord only knows—I can't make it out.

FIRST PEASANT. Naturally it is for the distraction of time.

SECOND PEASANT. Well, it's clear you and I can make nothing of it. You had better tell me whether you have taken all your wages yet.

SIMON. No, I've not drawn any. I have twenty-eight roubles to the good, I think.

SECOND PEASANT. That's all right! Well, if God grants that we get the land, I'll take you home, Simon.

SIMON. With all my heart!

SECOND PEASANT. You've got spoilt, I should say. You'll not want to plough?

SIMON. Plough? Only give me the chance! Plough or mow,—I'm game. Those are things one doesn't forget.

FIRST PEASANT. But it don't seem very desirous after town life, for example? Eh!

SIMON. It's good enough for me. One can live in the country too.

FIRST PEASANT. And Daddy Mítry here, is already on the look-out for your place; he's hankering after a life of luckshury!

SIMON. Eh, Daddy Mítry, you'd soon get sick of it. It seems easy enough when one looks at it, but there's a lot of running about that takes it out of one.

SERVANTS' COOK. You should see one of their balls, Daddy Mítry, then you would be surprised!

THIRD PEASANT. Why, do they eat all the time?

SERVANTS' COOK. My eye! You should have seen what we had here awhile ago. Theodore Ivánitch took me upstairs and I peeped in. The ladies—awful! Dressed up! Dressed up, bless my heart, and all bare down to here, and their arms bare.

THIRD PEASANT. Oh Lord!

SECOND PEASANT. Faugh! How beastly!

FIRST PEASANT. I take it the climate allows of that sort of thing!

SERVANTS' COOK. Well, daddy, so I peeped in. Dear me, what it was like! All of 'em in their natural skins! Would you believe it: old women—our mistress, only think, she's a grandmother, and even she'd gone and bared her shoulders.

THIRD PEASANT. Oh Lord!

SERVANTS' COOK. And what next? The music strikes up, and each man of 'em went up to his own, catches hold of her, and off they go twirling round and round!

SECOND PEASANT. The old women too?

SERVANTS' COOK. Yes, the old ones too.

SIMON. No, the old ones sit still.

SERVANTS' COOK. Get along,—I've seen it myself!

SIMON. No they don't.

DISCHARGED COOK [*in a hoarse voice, looking down from the oven*] That's the Polka-Mazurka. You fools don't understand what dancing is. The way they dance . . .

SERVANTS' COOK. Shut up, you dancer! And keep quiet—there's some one coming.

Enter Gregory; old Cook hides hurriedly.

GREGORY [*to Servants' Cook*] Bring some sour cabbage.

SERVANTS' COOK. I am only just up from the cellar, and now I must go down again! Who is it for?

GREGORY. For the young ladies. Be quick, and send it up with Simon. I can't wait!

SERVANTS' COOK. There now, they tuck into sweetmeats

till they are full up, and then they crave for sour cabbage!

FIRST PEASANT. That's to make a clearance.

SERVANTS' COOK. Of course, and as soon as there is room inside, they begin again! [*Takes basin, and exit*].

GREGORY [*at Peasants*] Look at them, how they've established themselves down here! Mind, if the mistress finds it out she'll give it you hot, like she did this morning! [*Exit, laughing*].

FIRST PEASANT. That's just it, she did raise a storm that time—awful!

SECOND PEASANT. That time it looked as if the master was going to step in, but seeing that the missus was about to blow the very roof off the house, he slams the door. Have your own way, thinks he.

THIRD PEASANT [*waving his arm*] It's the same everywhere. My old woman, let's say, she kicks up such a rumpus sometimes—it's just awful! Then I just get out of the hut. Let her go to Jericho! She'll give you one with the poker if you don't mind. Oh Lord!

Jacob enters hurriedly with a prescription.

JACOB. Here, Simon, you run to the chemist's and get these powders for the mistress!

SIMON. But master told me not to go out.

JACOB. You've plenty of time; your business won't begin till after their tea. Hope you are enjoying your tea!

FIRST PEASANT. Thanks, come and join us.

Exit Simon.

JACOB. I haven't time. However, I'll just have one cup for company's sake.

FIRST PEASANT. And we've just been having a conversation as to how your mistress carried on so haughty this morning.

JACOB. Oh, she's a reg'lar fury! So hot-tempered, that she gets quite beside herself. Sometimes she even bursts out crying.

FIRST PEASANT. Now, there's a thing I wanted to ask you about. What, for example, be these mikerots she was illuding to erewhile? "They've infested the house with mikerots, with mikerots," she says. What is one to make of these same mikerots?

JACOB. Mikerogues, you mean! Well, it seems there is such a kind of bugs; all illnesses come from them, they say. So she says there are some of 'em on you. After you were gone, they washed and washed and sprinkled the place where you had stood. There's a kind of physic as kills these same bugs, they say.

SECOND PEASANT. Then where have we got these bugs on us?

JACOB [*drinking his tea*]. Why, they say they're so small that one can't see 'em even through a glass.

SECOND PEASANT. Then how does she know I've got 'em on me? Perhaps there's more of that muck on her than on me!

JACOB. There now, you go and ask her!

SECOND PEASANT. I believe it's humbug.

JACOB. Of course it's bosh. The doctors must invent something, or else what are they paid for? There's one comes to us every day. Comes,—talks a bit,—and pockets ten roubles!

SECOND PEASANT. Nonsense!

JACOB. Why, there's one as takes a hundred!

FIRST PEASANT. A hundred? Humbug!

JACOB. A hundred. Humbug, you say? Why, if he has to go out of town, he'll not do it for less than a thousand! "Give a thousand," he says, "or else you may kick the bucket for what I care!"

THIRD PEASANT. Oh Lord!

SECOND PEASANT. Then does he know some charm?

JACOB. I suppose he must. I served at a General's outside Moscow once: a cross, terrible proud old fellow he was—just awful. Well, this General's daughter fell ill. They send for that doctor at once. "A thousand roubles,

then I'll come." Well, they agreed, and he came. Then they did something or other he didn't like, and he bawled out at the General and says, "Is this the way you show your respect for me? Then I'll not attend her!" And, oh my! The old General forgot all his pride, and starts wheedling him in every way not to chuck up the job!

FIRST PEASANT. And he got the thousand?

JACOB. Of course!

SECOND PEASANT. That's easy got money. What wouldn't a peasant do with such a sum!

THIRD PEASANT. And I think it's all bosh. That time my foot was festering I had it doctored ever so long. I spent nigh on five roubles on it,—then I gave up doctoring, and it got all right.

Discharged Cook on the oven coughs.

JACOB. Ah, the old crony is here again!

FIRST PEASANT. Who might that man be?

JACOB. He used to be our master's cook. He comes to see Loukérya.

FIRST PEASANT. Kitchen-master, as one might say. Then, does he live here?

JACOB. No, they won't allow that. He's here one day, there another. If he's got a copper he goes to a doss-house; but when he has drunk all, he comes here.

SECOND PEASANT. How did he come to this?

JACOB. Simply grew weak. And what a man he used to be—like a gentleman! Went about with a gold watch; got forty roubles a month wages. And now look at him! He'd have starved to death long ago if it hadn't been for Loukérya.

Enter Servants' Cook with the sour cabbage.

JACOB [to Servants' Cook] I see you've got Paul Petróvitch here again?

SERVANTS' COOK. And where's he to go to? Is he to go and freeze?

THIRD PEASANT. What liquor does. . . . Liquor, let's say . . . [*Clicks his tongue sympathetically*].

SECOND PEASANT. Of course. A firm man's firm as a rock; a weak man's weaker than water.

DISCHARGED COOK [*gets off the oven with trembling hands and legs*] Loukérya, I say, give us a drop!

SERVANTS' COOK. What are you up to? I'll give you such a drop! . . .

DISCHARGED COOK. Have you no conscience? I'm dying! Brothers, a copper . . .

SERVANTS' COOK. Get back on the oven, I tell you!

DISCHARGED COOK. Half a glass only, cook, for Heaven's sake! I say, do you understand? I ask you in the name of Heaven, now!

SERVANTS' COOK. Come along, here's some tea for you.

DISCHARGED COOK. Tea; what is tea? Weak, sloppy stuff. A little vodka—just one little drop . . . Loukérya!

THIRD PEASANT. Poor old soul, what agony it is!

SECOND PEASANT. You'd better give him some.

SERVANTS' COOK [*gets out a bottle and fills a wine-glass*] Here you are; you'll get no more.

DISCHARGED COOK [*clutches hold of it and drinks, trembling all over*] Loukérya, Cook! I am drinking, and you must understand . . .

SERVANTS' COOK. Now then, stop your chatter! Get on to the oven, and let not a breath of you be heard! [*The old Cook meekly begins to climb up, muttering something to himself*].

SECOND PEASANT. What it is, when a man gives way to his weakness!

FIRST PEASANT. That's just it—human weakness.

THIRD PEASANT. That goes without saying.

The Discharged Cook settles down, muttering all the time. Silence.

SECOND PEASANT. I want to ask you something: that girl of Aksinya's as comes from our village and is living

here. How is she? What is she like? How is she living—I mean, does she live honest?

JACOB. She's a nice girl; one can say nothing but good of her.

SERVANTS' COOK. I'll tell you straight, daddy; I know this here establishment out and out, and if you mean to have Tányá for your son's wife—be quick about it, before she comes to grief, or else she'll not escape!

JACOB. Yes, that's true. A while ago we had a girl here, Nataly. She was a good girl too. And she was lost without rhyme or reason. No better than that chap! [*Pointing to the old Cook*].

SERVANTS' COOK. There's enough to dam a mill-pool, with the likes of us, as perish! 'Cos why, every one is tempted by the easy life and the good food. And see there,—as soon as one has tasted the good food she goes and slips. And once she's slipped, they don't want her, but get a fresh one in her place. So it was with dear little Nataly; she also slipped, and they turned her out. She had a child and fell ill, and died in the hospital last spring. And what a girl she used to be!

THIRD PEASANT. Oh Lord! People are weak; they ought to be pitied.

DISCHARGED COOK. Those devils pity? No fear! [*He hangs his legs down from the oven*] I have stood roasting myself by the kitchen range for thirty years, and now that I am not wanted, I may go and die like a dog. . . . Pity indeed! . . .

FIRST PEASANT. That's just it. It's the old circumstances.

SECOND PEASANT.

While they drank and they fed, you were "curly head."

When they'd finished the prog, 'twas "Get out, mangy dog!"

THIRD PEASANT. Oh Lord!

DISCHARGED COOK. Much you know. What is "Sautey a la Bongmont"? What is "Bavassary"? Oh, the things

I could make! Think of it! The Emperor tasted my work, and now the devils want me no longer. But I am not going to stand it!

SERVANTS' COOK. Now then, stop that noise, mind. . . . Get up right into the corner, so that no one can see you, or else Theodore Ivánitch or some one may come in, and both you and me'll be turned out! [*Silence*].

JACOB. And do you know my part of the country? I'm from Voznesénsky.

SECOND PEASANT. Not know it? Why, it's no more'n ten miles from our village; not *that* across the ford! Do you cultivate any land there?

JACOB. My brother does, and I send my wages. Though I live here, I am dying for a sight of home.

FIRST PEASANT. That's just it.

SECOND PEASANT. Then Anísim is your brother?

JACOB. Own brother. He lives at the farther end of the village.

SECOND PEASANT. Of course, I know; his is the third house.

Enter Tányá, running.

TÁNYA. Jacob, what are you doing, amusing yourself here? She is calling you!

JACOB. I'm coming; but what's up?

TÁNYA. Frisk is barking; it's hungry. And she's scolding you. "How cruel he is," she says. "He's no feeling," she says. "It's long past Frisk's dinner-time, and he has not brought her food!" [*Laughs*].

JACOB [*rises to go*] Oh, she's cross? What's going to happen now, I wonder?

SERVANTS' COOK. Here, take the cabbage with you.

JACOB. All right, give it here. [*Takes basin, and exits*].

FIRST PEASANT. Who is going to dine now?

TÁNYA. Why, the dog! It's her dog [*Sits down and takes up the tea-pot*] Is there any more tea? I've brought some. [*Puts fresh tea into the tea-pot.*]

FIRST PEASANT. Dinner for a dog?

TÁNYA. Yes, of course! They prepare a special cutlet for her; it must not be too fat. And I do the washing—the dog's washing, I mean.

THIRD PEASANT. Oh Lord!

TÁNYA. It's like that gentleman who had a funeral for his dog.

SECOND PEASANT. What's that?

TÁNYA. Why, some one told me he had a dog—I mean the gentleman had a dog. And it died. It was winter, and he went in his sledge to bury that dog. Well, he buried it, and on the way home he sits and cries—the gentleman does. Well, there was such a bitter frost that the coachman's nose keeps running, and he has to keep wiping it. Let me fill your cup! [*Fills it*] So he keeps wiping his nose, and the gentleman sees it, and says, "What are you crying about?" And the coachman, he says, "Why, sir, how can I help it; is there another dog like him?" [*Laughs*].

SECOND PEASANT. And I daresay he thinks to himself, "If your own self was to kick the bucket I'd not cry." [*Laughs*].

DISCHARGED COOK [*from up on the oven*] That is true; that's right!

TÁNYA. Well, the gentleman, he gets home and goes straight to his lady: "What a good-hearted man our coachman is; he was crying all the way home about poor Dash. Have him called. . . . Here, drink this glass of vódka," he says, "and here's a rouble as a reward for you." That's just like her saying Jacob has no feelings for her dog! [*The Peasants laugh*].

FIRST PEASANT. That's the style!

SECOND PEASANT. That was a go!

THIRD PEASANT. Ay, lassie, but you've set us a-laughing!

TÁNYA [*pouring out more tea*] Have some more! Yes, it only seems that our life is pleasant; but sometimes it is very disgusting,—clearing up all their messes! Faugh! It's

better in the country. [*Peasants turn their cups upside-down, as a polite sign that they have had enough. Tanya pours out more tea*] Have some more, Efim Antónitch. I'll fill your cup, Mítry Vlásitch.

THIRD PEASANT. All right, fill it, fill it.

FIRST PEASANT. Well, dear, and what progression is our business making?

TÁNYA. It's getting on . . .

FIRST PEASANT. Simon told us . . .

TÁNYA [*quickly*] Did he?

SECOND PEASANT. But he could not make us understand.

TÁNYA. I can't tell you now, but I'm doing my best—all I can! And I've got your paper here! [*Shows the paper hidden under the bib of her apron*] If only one thing succeeds. . . . [*Shrieks*] Oh, how nice it would be!

SECOND PEASANT. Don't lose that paper, mind. It has cost money.

TÁNYA. Never fear. You only want him to sign it? Is that all?

THIRD PEASANT. Why, what else? Let's say he's signed it, and it's done! [*Turns his cup upside-down*] I've had enough.

TÁNYA [*aside*] He'll sign it; you'll see he will. . . Have some more. [*Pours out tea*].

FIRST PEASANT. If only you get this business about the sale of the land settled, the Commune would pay your marriage expenses. [*Refuses the tea*].

TÁNYA [*pouring out tea*] Do have another cup.

THIRD PEASANT. You get it done, and we'll arrange your marriage, and I myself, let's say, will dance at the wedding. Though I've never danced in all my born days, I'll dance then!

TÁNYA [*laughing*] All right, I'll be in hopes of it. [*Silence*].

SECOND PEASANT [*examines Tanya*] That's all very well, but you're not fit for peasant work.

TÁNYA. Who? I? Why, don't you think me strong



FRUITS OF CULTURE. ACT II.

FIRST PEASANT. Well, dear, and what progression is our business making?
TANYA. It's getting on . . .

enough? You should see me lacing up my mistress. There's many a peasant couldn't tug as hard.

SECOND PEASANT. Where do you tug her to?

TÁNYA. Well, there's a thing made with bone, like—something like a stiff jacket, only up to here! Well, and I pull the strings just as when you saddle a horse—when you . . . what d'ye call it? You know, when you spit on your hands!

SECOND PEASANT. Tighten the girths, you mean.

TÁNYA. Yes, yes, that's it. And you know I mustn't shove against her with my knee. [*Laughs*].

SECOND PEASANT. Why do you pull her in?

TÁNYA. For a reason!

SECOND PEASANT. Why, is she doing penance?

TÁNYA. No, it's for beauty's sake!

FIRST PEASANT. That's to say, you pull in her paunch for appearance' sake.

TÁNYA. Sometimes I lace her up so that her eyes are ready to start from her head, and she says, "Tighter," till my hands tingle. And you say I'm not strong! [*Peasants laugh and shake their heads*].

TÁNYA. But here, I've been jabbering. [*Runs away, laughing*].

THIRD PEASANT. Ah, the lassie has made us laugh!

FIRST PEASANT. She's a tidy one!

SECOND PEASANT. She's not bad.

Enter Sahátóf and Vasily Leoníditch. Sahátóf holds a teaspoon in his hand.

VASILY LEONÍDITCH. Not exactly a dinner, but a *déjeuner dinatoire*. And first-rate it was, I tell you. Ham of sucking-pig, delicious! Roulier feeds one splendidly! I've only just returned. [*Sees Peasants*] Ah, the peasants are here again!

SAHÁTÓF. Yes, yes, that's all very well, but we came here to hide this article. Where shall we hide it?

VASILY LEONÍDITCH. Excuse me a moment. [*To Servants' Cook*] Where are the dogs?

SERVANTS' COOK. In the coachman's quarters. You can't keep dogs in the servants' kitchen!

VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH. Ah, in the coachman's quarters? All right.

SAHÁTOF. I am waiting.

VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH. Excuse me, please. Eh, what? Hide it? I'll tell you what. Let's put it into one of the peasants' pockets. That one. I say, where's your pocket? Eh, what?

THIRD PEASANT. What for d'ye want my pocket? You're a good 'un! My pocket! There's money in my pocket!

VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH. Where's your bag, then?

THIRD PEASANT. What for?

SERVANTS' COOK. What d'you mean? That's the young master!

VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH [*laughs. To Sahátóf*] D'you know why he's so frightened? Shall I tell you? He's got a heap of money. Eh, what?

SAHÁTOF. Yes, yes, I see. Well, you talk to them a bit, and I'll put it into that bag without being observed, so that they should not notice and could not point it out to him. Talk to them.

VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH. All right! [*To Peasants*] Well then, old fellows, how about the land? Are you buying it? Eh, what?

FIRST PEASANT. We have made an offering, so to say, with our whole heart. But there,—the business don't come into action nohow.

VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH. You should not be so stingy! Land is an important matter! I told you about planting mint. Or else tobacco would also do.

FIRST PEASANT. That's just it. Every kind of products.

THIRD PEASANT. And you help us, master. Ask your father. Or else how are we to live? There's so little land. A fowl, let's say, there's not enough room for a fowl to run about.

SAHÁTOF [*having put the spoon into a bag belonging to the Third Peasant*] *C'est fait.* Ready. Come along. [*Exit*].

VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH. So don't be stingy! Eh? Well, good-bye. [*Exit*].

THIRD PEASANT. Didn't I say, come to some lodging-house? Well, supposing we'd had to give three-pence each, then at least we'd have been in peace. As to here, the Lord be merciful! "Give us the money," he says. What's that for?

SECOND PEASANT. He's drunk, I daresay.

Peasants turn their cups upside-down, rise, and cross themselves.

FIRST PEASANT. And d'you mind what a saying he threw out? Sowing mint! One must know how to understand them, that one must!

SECOND PEASANT. Sow mint indeed! He'd better bend his own back at that work, and then it's not mint he'll hanker after, no fear! Well, many thanks! . . . And now, good woman, would you tell us where we could lie down to sleep?

SERVANTS' COOK. One of you can lie on the oven, and the others on these benches.

THIRD PEASANT. Christ save you! [*Prays, crossing himself*].

FIRST PEASANT. If only by God's help we get our business settled! [*Lies down*] Then to-morrow, after dinner, we'd be off by the train, and on Tuesday we'd be home again.

SECOND PEASANT. Are you going to put out the light?

SERVANTS' COOK. Put it out? Oh no! They'll keep running down here, first for one thing then another. . . . You lie down, I'll lower it.

SECOND PEASANT. How is one to live, having so little land? Why, this year, I have had to buy corn since Christmas. And the oat-straw is all used up. I'd like to get hold of ten acres, and then I could take Simon back.

THIRD PEASANT. You're a man with a family. You'd get the land cultivated without trouble. If only the business comes off.

SECOND PEASANT. We must pray to the Holy Virgin, maybe she'll help us out. [*Silence, broken by sighs. Then footsteps and voices are heard outside. The door opens. Enter Grossman hurriedly, with his eyes bandaged, holding Sahátov's hand, and followed by the Professor and the Doctor, the Fat Lady and Leoníd Fyódoritch, Betsy and Petrístchef, Vasily Leoníditch and Márya Konstantínovna, Anna Pávlovna and the Baroness, Theodore Ivánitch and Tánya*].

Peasants jump up. Grossman comes forward stepping quickly, then stops.

FAT LADY. You need not trouble yourselves; I have undertaken the task of observing, and am strictly fulfilling my duty! Mr. Sahátov, are you not leading him?

SAHÁTOF. Of course not!

FAT LADY. You must not lead him, but neither must you resist! [*To Leoníd Fyódoritch*] I know these experiments. I have tried them myself. Sometimes I used to feel a certain effluence, and as soon as I felt it . . .

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. May I beg of you to keep perfect silence?

FAT LADY. Oh, I understand so well! I have experienced it myself. As soon as my attention was diverted I could no longer . . .

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Sh . . .!

Grossman goes about, searches near the First and Second Peasants, then approaches the Third, and stumbles over a bench.

BARONESS. *Mais dites-moi, on le paye ?*¹

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. *Je ne saurais vous dire.*

¹ BARONESS. But tell me, please, is he paid for this?

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. I really do not know.

BARONESS. *Mais c'est un monsieur ?*¹

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. *Oh, oui !*

BARONESS. *Ça tient du miraculeux. N'est ce pas ? Comment est-ce qu'il trouve ?*

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. *Je ne saurais vous dire. Mon mari vous l'expliquera. [Noticing Peasants, turns round, and sees the Servants' Cook] Pardon . . . what is this ?*

Baroness goes up to the group.

ANNA PÁVLOVNA [to Servants' Cook] Who let the peasants in ?

SERVANTS' COOK. Jacob brought them in.

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. Who gave Jacob the order ?

SERVANTS' COOK. I can't say. Theodore Ivánitch has seen them.

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. Leoníd !

Leoníd Fyódoritch does not hear, being absorbed in the search, and says, Sh . . .

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. Theodore Ivánitch ! What is the meaning of this ? Did you not see me disinfecting the whole hall, and now the whole kitchen is infected, all the rye bread, the milk . . .

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. I thought there would not be any danger if they came here. The men have come on business. They have far to go, and are from our village.

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. That's the worst of it ! They are from the Kursk village, where people are dying of diphtheria like flies ! But the chief thing is, I ordered them out of the house ! . . . Did I, or did I not ? [*Approaches the others that have gathered round the Peasants*] Be careful ! Don't touch them—they are all infected with

¹ BARONESS. But he is a gentleman ?

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. Oh yes !

BARONESS. It is almost miraculous. Isn't it ? How does he manage to find things ?

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. I really can't tell you. My husband will explain it to you . . . Excuse me. . . .

diphtheria! [*No one heeds her, and she steps aside in a dignified manner and stands quietly waiting*].

PETRÍSTCHEF [*sniffs loudly*] I don't know if it is diphtheria, but there is some kind of infection in the air. Don't you notice it?

BETSY. Stop your nonsense! Vovo, which bag is it in?

VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH. That one, that one. He is getting near, very near!

PETRÍSTCHEF. Is it spirits divine, or spirits of wine?

BETSY. Now your cigarette comes in handy for once. Smoke closer, closer to me.

Petrístchef leans over her and smokes at her.

VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH. He's getting near, I tell you. Eh, what?

GROSSMAN [*searches excitedly round the Third Peasant*] It is here; I feel it is!

FAT LADY. Do you feel an effluence? [*Grossman stoops and finds the spoon in the bag*].

ALL. Bravo! [*General enthusiasm*].

VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH. Ah! So that's where our spoon was. [*To Peasants*] Then that's the sort you are!

THIRD PEASANT. What sort? I didn't take your spoon! What are you making out? I didn't take it, and my soul knows nothing about it. I didn't take it—there! Let him do what he likes. I knew he came here for no good. "Where's your bag?" says he. I didn't take it, the Lord is my witness! [*Crosses himself*] I didn't take it!

The young people group round the Peasant, laughing.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH [*angrily to his son*] Always playing the fool! [*To the Third Peasant*] Never mind, friend! We know you did not take it; it was only an experiment.

GROSSMAN [*removes bandage from his eyes, and pretends to be coming to*] Can I have a little water? [*All fuss round him*].

VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH. Let's go straight from here into the

coachman's room. I've got a bitch there—*épâtante*!¹ Eh, what?

BETSY. What a horrid word. Couldn't you say dog?

VASILY LEONÍDITCH. No. I can't say—Betsy is a man, *épâtant*. I should have to say young woman; it's a parallel case. Eh, what? Márya Konstantínovna, isn't it true? Good, eh? [*Laughs loudly*].

MÁRYA KONSTANTÍNOVNA. Well, let us go. [*Exeunt Márya Konstantínovna, Betsy, Petrístchef, and Vasily Leoníditch*].

FAT LADY [*to Grossman*] Well? how are you? Have you rested? [*Grossman does not answer. To Sahátov*] And you, Mr. Sahátov, did you feel the effluence?

SAHÁTOF. I felt nothing. Yes, it was very fine—very fine. Quite a success!

BARONESS. *Admirable! Ça ne le fait pas souffrir?*²

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. *Pas le moins du monde.*

PROFESSOR [*to Grossman*] May I trouble you? [*Hands him a thermometer*] At the beginning of the experiment it was 37 decimal 2, degrees.³ [*To Doctor*] That's right, I think? Would you mind feeling his pulse? Some loss is inevitable.

DOCTOR [*to Grossman*] Now then, sir, let's have your hand; we'll see, we'll see. [*Takes out his watch, and feels Grossman's pulse*].

FAT LADY [*to Grossman*] One moment! The condition you were in could not be called sleep?

GROSSMAN [*nearly*] It was hypnosis.

SAHÁTOF. In that case, are we to understand that you hypnotised yourself?

GROSSMAN. And why not? An hypnotic state may ensue not only in consequence of association—the sound of the tom-tom, for instance, in Charcot's method—but by merely entering an hypnogenetic zone.

¹ Stunning!

² BARONESS. Capital! Does it not cause him any pain?

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Not the slightest.

³ He uses a Centigrade thermometer.

SAHÁTOF. Granting that, it would still be desirable to define what hypnotism is, more exactly?

PROFESSOR. Hypnotism is a phenomenon resulting from the transmutation of one energy into another.

GROSSMAN. Charcot does not so define it.

SAHÁTOF. A moment, just a moment! That is your definition, but Liébault told me himself . . .

DOCTOR [*lets go of Grossman's pulse*] Ah, that's all right; well now, the temperature?

FAT LADY [*interrupting*] No, allow me! I agree with the Professor. And here's the very best proof. After my illness, when I lay insensible, a desire to speak came over me. In general I am of a silent disposition, but then I was overcome by this desire to speak, and I spoke and spoke, and I was told that I spoke in such a way that every one was astonished! [*To Sahátóf*] But I think I interrupted you?

SAHÁTOF [*with dignity*] Not at all. Pray continue.

DOCTOR. Pulse 82, and the temperature has risen three-tenths of a degree.

PROFESSOR. There you are! That's a proof! That's just as it should be. [*Takes out pocket-book and writes*] 82, yes? And 37 and 5. When the hypnotic state is induced, it invariably produces a heightened action of the heart.

DOCTOR. I can, as a medical man, bear witness that your prognosis was justified by the event.

PROFESSOR [*to Sahátóf*] You were saying? . . .

SAHÁTOF. I wished to say that Liébault told me himself that the hypnotic is only one particular psychical state, increasing susceptibility to suggestion.

PROFESSOR. That is so, but still the law of equivalents is the chief thing.

GROSSMAN. Moreover, Liébault is far from being an authority, while Charcot has studied the subject from all sides, and has proved that hypnotism produced by a blow, a trauma . . .

All talking together. { SAHÁTOF. Yes, but I don't reject Charcot's labour. I know him also, I am only repeating what Liébault told me . . .

GROSSMAN [*excitedly*] There are 3000 patients in the Salpêtrière, and I have gone through the whole course.

PROFESSOR. Excuse me, gentlemen, but that is not the point.

FAT LADY [*interrupting*] One moment, I will explain it to you in two words? When my husband was ill, all the doctors gave him up . . .

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. However, we had better go upstairs again. Baroness, this way!

Exeunt Grossman, Sahátov, Professor, Doctor, the Fat Lady, and Baroness, talking loudly and interrupting each other.

ANNA PÁVLOVNA [*catching hold of Leoníd Fyódoritch's arm*] How often have I asked you not to interfere in household matters! You think of nothing but your nonsense, and the whole house is on my shoulders. You will infect us all!

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. What? How? I don't understand what you mean.

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. How? Why, people ill of diphtheria sleep in the kitchen, which is in constant communication with the whole house.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Yes, but I . . .

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. What, I?

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. I know nothing about it.

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. It's your duty to know, if you are the head of the family. Such things must not be done.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. But I never thought . . . I thought . . .

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. It is sickening to listen to you! [*Leoníd Fyódoritch remains silent*].

ANNA PÁVLOVNA [*to Theodore Ivánitch*] Turn them out at once! They are to leave my kitchen immediately! It is terrible! No one listens to me; they do it out of spite. . . . I turn them out from there, and they bring them in

here! And with my illness . . . [*Gets more and more excited, and at last begins to cry*] Doctor! Doctor! Peter Petróvitch! . . . He's gone too! . . . [*Exit, sobbing, followed by Leoníd Fyódoritch*].

All stand silent for a long time.

THIRD PEASANT. Botheration take them all! If one don't mind, the police will be after one here. And I have never been to law in all my born days. Let's go to some lodging-house, lads!

THEODORE IVÁNITCH [*to Tánya*] What are we to do?

TÁNYA. Never mind, Theodore Ivánitch, let them sleep with the coachman.

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. How can we do that? The coachman was complaining as it is, that his place is full of dogs.

TÁNYA. Well then, the porter's lodge.

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. And supposing it's found out?

TÁNYA. It won't be found out! Don't trouble about that, Theodore Ivánitch. How can one turn them out now, at night? They'll not find anywhere to go to.

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. Well, do as you please. Only they must go away from here. [*Exit*].

Peasants take their bags.

DISCHARGED COOK. Oh those damned fiends! It's all their fat! Fiends!

SERVANTS' COOK. You be quiet there. Thank goodness they didn't see you!

TÁNYA. Well then, daddy, come along to the porter's lodge.

FIRST PEASANT. Well, but how about our business? How, for example, about the applience of his hand to the signature? May we be in hopes?

TÁNYA. We'll see in an hour's time.

SECOND PEASANT. You'll do the trick?

TÁNYA [*laughs*] Yes, God willing!

Curtain.

ACT III

Evening of the same day. The small drawing-room in Leoníd Fyódoritch's house, where the séances are always held. Leoníd Fyódoritch and the Professor.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Well then, shall we risk a séance with our new medium?

PROFESSOR. Yes, certainly. He is a powerful medium, there is no doubt about it. And it is especially desirable that the séance should take place to-day with the same people. Grossman will certainly respond to the influence of the mediumistic energy, and then the connection and identity of the different phenomena will be still more evident. You will see then that, if the medium is as strong as he was just now, Grossman will vibrate.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Then I will send for Simon and ask those who wish to attend to come in.

PROFESSOR. Yes, all right! I will just jot down a few notes. [*Takes out his note-book and writes*].

Enter Sahátov.

SAHÁTOF. They have just settled down to whist in Anna Pávlovna's drawing-room, and as I am not wanted there—and as I am interested in your séance—I have put in an appearance here. But will there be a séance?

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Yes, certainly!

SAHÁTOF. In spite of the absence of Mr. Kaptchitch's mediumistic powers?

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. *Vous avez la main heureuse.*¹ Fancy,

¹ LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. You bring good luck.

that very peasant whom I mentioned to you this morning, turns out to be an undoubted medium.

SAHÁTOF. Dear me ! Yes, that is peculiarly interesting !

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Yes, we tried a few preliminary experiments with him just after dinner.

SAHÁTOF. So you've had time already to experiment, and to convince yourself . . .

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Yes, perfectly ! And he turns out to be an exceptionally powerful medium.

SAHÁTOF [*incredulously*] Dear me !

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. It turns out that it has long been noticed in the servants' hall. When he sits down to table, the spoon springs into his hand of its own accord ! [*To the Professor*] Had you heard about it ?

PROFESSOR. No, I had not heard that detail.

SAHÁTOF [*to the Professor*]. But still, you admit the possibility of such phenomena ?

PROFESSOR. What phenomena ?

SAHÁTOF. Well, spiritualistic, mediumistic, and supernatural phenomena in general.

PROFESSOR. The question is, what do we consider supernatural ? When, not a living man but a piece of stone attracted a nail to itself, how did the phenomena strike the first observers ? As something natural ? Or supernatural ?

SAHÁTOF. Well, of course ; but phenomena such as the magnet attracting iron always repeat themselves.

PROFESSOR. It is just the same in this case. The phenomenon repeats itself and we experiment with it. And not only that, but we apply to the phenomena we are investigating the laws common to other phenomena. These phenomena seem supernatural only because their causes are attributed to the medium himself. But that is where the mistake lies. The phenomena are not caused by the medium, but by psychic energy acting through a medium, and that is a very different thing. The whole matter lies in the law of equivalents.

SAHÁTOF. Yes, certainly, but . . .

Enter Tánya, who hides behind the hangings.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Only remember that we cannot reckon on any results with certainty, with this medium any more than with Home or Kaptchítch. We may not succeed, but on the other hand we may even have perfect materialisation.

SAHÁTOF. Materialisation even? What do you mean by materialisation?

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Why, I mean that some one who is dead—say, your father or your grandfather—may appear, take you by the hand, or give you something; or else some one may suddenly rise into the air, as happened to Alexéy Vladímiritch last time.

PROFESSOR. Of course, of course. But the chief thing is the explanation of the phenomena, and the application to them of general laws.

Enter the Fat Lady.

FAT LADY. Anna Pávlovna has allowed me to join you.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Very pleased.

FAT LADY. Oh, how tired Grossman seems! He could scarcely hold his cup. Did you notice [*to the Professor*] how pale he turned at the moment he approached the hiding-place? I noticed it at once, and was the first to mention it to Anna Pávlovna.

PROFESSOR. Undoubtedly,—loss of vital energy.

FAT LADY. Yes, it's just as I say, one should not abuse that sort of thing. You know, a hypnotist once suggested to a friend of mine, Véra Kónshin (oh, you know her, of course)—well, he suggested that she should leave off smoking,—and her back began to ache!

PROFESSOR [*trying to have his say*] The temperature and the pulse clearly indicate . . .

FAT LADY. One moment! Allow me! Well, I said to her: it's better to smoke than to suffer so with one's nerves. Of course, smoking is injurious; I should like to give it

up myself, but, do what I will, I can't! Once I managed not to smoke for a fortnight, but could hold out no longer.

PROFESSOR [*again trying to speak*] Clearly proves . . .

FAT LADY. Yes, no! Allow me, just one word! You say, "loss of strength." And I was also going to say that, when I travelled with post-horses . . . the roads used to be dreadful in those days—you don't remember—but I have noticed that all our nervousness comes from railways! I, for instance, can't sleep while travelling; I cannot fall asleep to save my life!

PROFESSOR [*makes another attempt, which the Fat Lady baffles*] The loss of strength . . .

SAHÁTOF [*smiling*] Yes; oh yes!

Leoníd Fyódoritch rings.

FAT LADY. I am awake one night, and another, and a third, and still I can't sleep!

Enter Gregory.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Please tell Theodore to get everything ready for the séance, and send Simon here—Simon, the butler's assistant,—do you hear?

GREGORY. Yes, sir. [*Exit*].

PROFESSOR [*to Sahátov*]. The observation of the temperature and the pulse have shown loss of vital energy. The same will happen in consequence of the mediumistic phenomena. The law of the conservation of energy . . .

FAT LADY. Oh yes, yes; I was just going to say that I am very glad that a simple peasant turns out to be a medium. That's very good. I always did say that the Slavophiles . . .

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Let's go into the drawing-room in the meantime.

FAT LADY. Allow me, just one word! The Slavophiles are right; but I always told my husband that one ought never to exaggerate anything! "The golden mean," you

know. What is the use of maintaining that the common people are all perfect, when I have myself seen . . .

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Won't you come into the drawing-room?

FAT LADY. A boy—that high—who drank! I gave him a scolding at once. And he was grateful to me afterwards. They are children, and, as I always say, children need both love and severity!

Exeunt all, all talking together.

Tánya enters from behind the hangings.

TÁNYA. Oh, if it would only succeed! [*Begins fastening some threads*].

Enter Betsy hurriedly.

BETSY. Isn't papa here? [*Looks inquiringly at Tánya*] What are you doing here?

TÁNYA. Oh, Miss Elizabeth, I have only just come; I only wished . . . only came in . . . [*Embarrassed*].

BETSY. But they are going to have a séance here directly. [*Notices Tánya drawing in the threads, looks at her, and suddenly bursts out laughing*] Tánya! Why, it's you who do it all? Now don't deny it. And last time it was you too? Yes, it was, it was!

TÁNYA. Miss Elizabeth, dearest!

BETSY [*delighted*] Oh, that is a joke! Well, I never! But why do you do it?

TÁNYA. Oh miss, dear miss, don't betray me!

BETSY. Not for the world! I'm awfully glad. Only tell me how you manage it?

TÁNYA. Well, I just hide, and then, when it's all dark, I come out and do it. That's how.

BETSY [*pointing to threads*] And what is this for? You needn't tell me. I see; you draw . . .

TÁNYA. Miss Elizabeth, darling! I will confess it, but only to you. I used to do it just for fun, but now I mean business.

BETSY. What? How? What business?

TÁNYA. Well, you see, those peasants that came this morning, you saw them. They want to buy some land, and your father won't sell it; well, and Theodore Ivánitch, he says it's the spirits as forbid him. So I have had a thought as . . .

BETSY. Oh, I see! Well, you are a clever girl! Do it, do it. . . . But how will you manage it?

TÁNYA. Well, I thought, when they put out the lights, I'll at once begin knocking and shying things about, touching their heads with the threads, and at last I'll take the paper about the land and throw it on the table. I've got it here.

BETSY. Well, and then?

TÁNYA. Why, don't you see? They will be astonished. The peasants had the paper, and now it's here. I will teach . . .

BETSY. Why, of course! Simon is the medium to-day!

TÁNYA. Well, I'll teach him . . . [*Laughs so that she can't continue*] I'll tell him to squeeze with his hands any one he can get hold of! Of course, not your father—he'd never dare do that—but any one else; he'll squeeze till it's signed.

BETSY [*laughing*]. But that's not the way it is done. Mediums never do anything themselves.

TÁNYA. Oh, never mind. It's all one; I daresay it'll turn out all right.

Enter Theodore Ivánitch.

Exit Betsy, making signs to Tánya.

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. Why are you here?

TÁNYA. It's you I want, Theodore Ivánitch, dear . . .

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. Well, what is it?

TÁNYA. About that affair of mine as I spoke of.

THEODORE IVÁNITCH [*laughs*]. I've made the match; yes, I've made the match. The matter is settled; we have shaken hands on it, only not had a drink on it.

TÁNYA [*with a shriek*] Never! So it's all right?

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. Don't I tell you so? He says, "I shall consult the missus, and then, God willing . . ."

TÁNYA. Is that what he said? [*Shrieks*] Dear Theodore Ivánitch, I'll pray for you all the days of my life!

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. All right! All right! Now is not the time. I've been ordered to arrange the room for the séance.

TÁNYA. Let me help you. How's it to be arranged?

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. How? Why, the table in the middle of the room—chairs—the guitar—the accordion. The lamp is not wanted, only candles.

TÁNYA [*helps Theodore Ivánitch to place the things*] Is that right? The guitar here, and here the inkstand. [*Places it*] So?

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. Can it be true that they'll make Simon sit here?

TÁNYA. I suppose so; they've done it once.

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. Wonderful! [*Puts on his pince-nez*] But is he clean?

TÁNYA. How should I know?

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. Then, I'll tell you what . . .

TÁNYA. Yes, Theodore Ivánitch?

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. Go and take a nail-brush and some Pears' soap; you may take mine . . . and go and cut his claws and scrub his hands as clean as possible.

TÁNYA. He can do it himself.

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. Well then, tell him to. And tell him to put on a clean shirt as well.

TÁNYA. All right, Theodore Ivánitch. [*Exit*].

THEODORE IVÁNITCH [*sits down in an easy-chair*] They're educated and learned—Alexéy Vladímiritch now, he's a professor—and yet sometimes one can't help doubting very much. The people's rude superstitions are being abolished: hobgoblins, sorcerers, witches. . . . But if one considers it, is not this equally superstitious? How is it

possible that the souls of the dead should come and talk, and play the guitar? No! Some one is fooling them, or they are fooling themselves. And as to this business with Simon—it's simply incomprehensible. [*Looks at an album*] Here's their spiritualistic album. How is it possible to photograph a spirit? But here is the likeness of a Turk and Leoníd Fyódoritch sitting by. . . . Extraordinary human weakness!

Enter Leoníd Fyódoritch.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Is it all ready?

THEODORE IVÁNITCH [*rising leisurely*] Quite ready. [*Smiles*] Only I don't know about your new medium. I hope he won't disgrace you, Leoníd Fyódoritch.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. No, I and Alexéy Vladímiritch have tested him. He is a wonderfully powerful medium!

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. Well, I don't know. But is he clean enough? I don't suppose you have thought of ordering him to wash his hands? It might be rather inconvenient.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. His hands? Oh yes! They're not clean, you think?

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. What can you expect? He's a peasant, and there will be ladies present, and Márya Vasílevna.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. It will be all right.

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. And then I have something to report to you. Timothy, the coachman, complains that he can't keep things clean because of the dogs.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH [*arranging the things on the table absent-mindedly*] What dogs?

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. The three hounds that came for Vasíly Leoníditch to-day.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH [*vexed*] Tell Anna Pávlovna! She can do as she likes about it. I have no time.

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. But you know her weakness . . .

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. 'Tis just as she likes, let her do as

she pleases. As for him,—one never gets anything but unpleasantness from him. Besides, I am busy.

Enter Simon, smiling; he has a sleeveless peasant's coat on.

SIMON. I was ordered to come.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Yes, it's all right. Let me see your hands. That will do, that will do very well! Well then, my good fellow, you must do just as you did before,—sit down, and give way to your mood. But don't think at all.

SIMON. Why should I think? The more one thinks, the worse it is.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Just so, just so, exactly! The less conscious one is, the greater is the power. Don't think, but give in to your mood. If you wish to sleep, sleep; if you wish to walk, walk. Do you understand?

SIMON. How could one help understanding? It's simple enough.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. But above all, don't be frightened. Because you might be surprised yourself. You must understand that just as we live here, so a whole world of invisible spirits live here also.

THEODORE IVÁNITCH [*improving on what Leoníd Fyódoritch has said*] Invisible feelings, do you understand?

SIMON [*laughs*] How can one help understanding! It's very plain as you put it.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. You may rise up in the air, or something of the kind, but don't be frightened.

SIMON. Why should I be frightened? That won't matter at all.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Well then, I'll go and call them all. . . . Is everything ready?

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. I think so.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. But the slates?

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. They are downstairs. I'll bring them. [*Exit*].

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. All right then. So don't be afraid, but be at your ease.

SIMON. Had I not better take off my coat? One would be more easy like.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Your coat? Oh no. Don't take that off. [*Exit*].

SIMON. She tells me to do the same again, and she will again shy things about. How isn't she afraid?

Enter Tánya in her stockings and in a dress of the colour of the wall-paper. Simon laughs.

TÁNYA. Shsh! . . . They'll hear! There, stick these matches on your fingers as before. [*Sticks them on*] Well, do you remember everything?

SIMON [*bending his fingers in, one by one*] First of all, wet the matches and wave my hands about, that's one. Then make my teeth chatter, like this . . . that's two. But I've forgotten the third thing.

TÁNYA. And it's the third as is the chief thing. Don't forget as soon as the paper falls on the table—I shall ring the little bell—then you do like this. . . . Spread your arms out far and catch hold of some one, whoever it is as sits nearest, and catch hold of him. And then squeeze! [*Laughs*] Whether it's a gentleman or a lady, it's all one; you just squeeze 'em, and don't let 'em go,—as if it were in your sleep, and chatter with your teeth, or else howl like this. [*Howls sotto-voce*] And when I begin to play on the guitar, then stretch yourself as if you were waking up, you know. . . . Will you remember everything?

SIMON. Yes, I'll remember, but it is too funny.

TÁNYA. But mind you don't laugh. Still, it won't matter much if you do laugh; they'd think it was in your sleep. Only take care you don't really fall asleep when they put out the lights.

SIMON. No fear, I'll pinch my ears.

TÁNYA. Well then Sim darling, only mind do as I tell you, and don't get frightened. He'll sign the paper, see if he don't! They're coming!

Gets under the sofa,

Enter Grossman and the Professor, Leoníd Fyódoritch and the Fat Lady, the Doctor, Sahátov and Anna Pávlovna. Simon stands near the door.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Please come in, all you doubters! Though we have a new and accidentally discovered medium, I expect very important phenomena to-night.

SAHÁTOF. That's very, very interesting.

FAT LADY [*pointing to Simon*] *Mais il est très bien!*¹

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. Yes, as a butler's assistant, but hardly . . .

SAHÁTOF. Wives never have any faith in their husbands' work. You don't believe in anything of this kind?

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. Of course not. Kaptchítch, it is true, has something exceptional about him, but Heaven knows what all this is about!

FAT LADY. No, Anna Pávlovna, permit me, you can't decide it in such a way. Before I was married, I once had a remarkable dream. Dreams, you know, are often such that you don't know where they begin and where they end; it was just such a dream that I . . .

Enter Vasily Leoníditch and Petrístchef.

FAT LADY. And much was revealed to me by that dream. Nowadays the young people [*points to Petrístchef and Vasily Leoníditch*] deny everything.

VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH. But look here, you know—now I, for instance, never deny anything! Eh, what?

Betsy and Márya Konstantínovna enter, and begin talking to Petrístchef.

FAT LADY. And how can one deny the supernatural? They say it is unreasonable. But what if one's reason is stupid; what then? There now, on Garden Street, you know . . . why, well, it appeared every evening! My husband's brother—what do you call him? Not *beau-frère*—what's the other name for it?—I never can remember the names of these different relationships—well, he went

¹ FAT LADY. But he looks quite nice.

there three nights running, and still he saw nothing ; so I said to him . . .

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Well, who is going to stay here?

FAT LADY. I! I!

SAHÁTOF. I.

ANNA PÁVLOVNA [*to Doctor*] Do you mean to say you are going to stay?

DOCTOR. Yes; I must see, if only once, what it is that Alexéy Vladímiritch has discovered in it. How can we deny anything without proofs?

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. Then I am to take it to-night for certain?

DOCTOR. Take what? . . . Oh, the powder. Yes, it would perhaps be better. Yes, yes, take it. . . . However, I shall come upstairs again.

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. Yes please, do. [*Loud*] When it is over, *mesdames et messieurs*, I shall expect you to come to me upstairs to rest from your emotions, and then we will finish our rubber.

FAT LADY. Oh, certainly.

SAHÁTOF. Yes, thanks!

Exit Anna Pávlovna.

BETSY [*to Petrístchef*] You must stay, I tell you. I promise you something extraordinary. Will you bet?

MÁRYA KONSTANTÍNOVNA. But you don't believe in it?

BETSY. To-day I do.

MÁRYA KONSTANTÍNOVNA [*to Petrístchef*] And do you believe?

PETRÍSTCHEF. "I can't believe, I cannot trust a heart for falsehood framed." Still, if Elizabeth Leonídozna commands . . .

VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH. Let us stay, Márya Konstantínovna. Eh, what? I shall invent something *épátant*.

MÁRYA KONSTANTÍNOVNA. No, you mustn't make me laugh. You know I can't restrain myself.

VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH [*loud*] I remain!

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH [*severely*] But I beg those who remain not to joke about it. It is a serious matter.

PETRÍSTCHEF. Do you hear? Well then, let's stay. Vovo, sit here, and don't be too shy.

BETSY. Yes, it's all very well for you to laugh; but just wait till you see what will happen.

VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH. Oh, but supposing it's true? Won't it be a go! Eh, what?

PETRÍSTCHEF [*trembles*] Oh, I'm afraid, I'm afraid! Márya Konstantínova, I'm afraid! My tootsies tremble.

BETSY [*laughing*] Not so loud.

All sit down.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Take your seats, take your seats. Simon, sit down!

SIMON. Yes, sir. [*Sits down on the edge of the chair*].

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Sit properly.

PROFESSOR. Sit straight in the middle of the chair, and quite at your ease. [*Arranges Simon on his chair*].

Betsy, Márya Konstantínovna and Vasily Leontditch laugh.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH [*raising his voice*] I beg those who are going to remain here not to behave frivolously, but to regard this matter seriously, or bad results might follow. Do you hear, Vovo! If you can't be quiet, go away!

VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH. Quite quiet! [*Hides behind Fat Lady*].

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Alexéy Vladímiritch, will you mesmerise him?

PROFESSOR. No; why should I do it when Antón Borísitch is here? He has had far more practice and has more power in that department than I. . . . Antón Borísitch!

GROSSMAN. Ladies and gentlemen, I am not, strictly speaking, a spiritualist. I have only studied hypnotism. It is true I have studied hypnotism in all its known manifestations; but what is called spiritualism, is entirely unknown to me. When a subject is thrown into a trance, I may expect the hypnotic phenomena known to me: lethargy, abulia, anæsthesia, analgesia, catalepsy, and every kind of

susceptibility to suggestion. Here it is not these but other phenomena we expect to observe. Therefore it would be well to know of what kind are the phenomena we expect to witness, and what is their scientific significance.

SAHÁTOF. I thoroughly agree with Mr. Grossman. Such an explanation would be very interesting.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. I think Alexéy Vladímiritch will not refuse to give us a short explanation.

PROFESSOR. Why not? I can give an explanation if it is desired. [*To the Doctor*] Will you kindly note his temperature and pulse? My explanation must, of necessity, be cursory and brief.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Yes, please; briefly, quite briefly.

DOCTOR. All right. [*Takes out thermometer*] Now then, my lad . . . [*Places the thermometer*].

SIMON. Yes, sir!

PROFESSOR [*rising and addressing the Fat Lady—then reseating himself*] Ladies and gentlemen! The phenomenon we are investigating to-night is regarded, on the one hand, as something new; and, on the other, as something transcending the limits of natural conditions. Neither view is correct. This phenomenon is not new but is as old as the world; and it is not supernatural but is subject to the eternal laws that govern all that exists. This phenomenon has been usually defined as “intercourse with the spirit world.” That definition is inexact. Under such a definition the spirit world is contrasted with the material world. But this is erroneous; there is no such contrast! Both worlds are so closely connected that it is impossible to draw a line of demarcation, separating the one from the other. We say, matter is composed of molecules . . .

PETRÍSTCHEF. Prosy matter! [*Whispering and laughter*].

PROFESSOR [*pauses, then continues*] Molecules are composed of atoms, but the atoms, having no extension, are

in reality nothing but the points of application of forces. Strictly speaking, not of forces but of energy, that same energy which is as much a unity and just as indestructible as matter. But matter, though one, has many different aspects, and the same is true of energy. Till recently only four forms of energy, convertible into one another, have been known to us: energies known as the dynamic, the thermal, the electric, and the chemic. But these four aspects of energy are far from exhausting all the varieties of its manifestation. The forms in which energy may manifest itself are very diverse, and it is one of these new and as yet but little known phases of energy, that we are investigating to-night. I refer to mediumistic energy.

Renewed whispering and laughter among the young people.

PROFESSOR [*stops and casts a severe look round*] Mediumistic energy has been known to mankind for ages: prophecy, presentiments, visions and so on, are nothing but manifestations of mediumistic energy. The manifestations produced by it have, I say, been known to mankind for ages. But the energy itself has not been recognised as such till quite recently—not till that medium, the vibrations of which cause the manifestations of mediumistic energy, was recognised. In the same way that the phenomena of light were inexplicable until the existence of an imponderable substance—an ether—was recognised, so mediumistic phenomena seemed mysterious until the now fully established fact was recognised, that between the particles of ether there exists another still more rarified imponderable substance not subject to the law of the three dimensions . . .

Renewed laughter, whispers, and giggling.

PROFESSOR [*again looks round severely*] And just as mathematical calculations have irrefutably proved the existence of imponderable ether which gives rise to the phenomena of light and electricity, so the successive investigations of the ingenious Hermann, of Schmidt, and of Joseph

Schmatzhofen, have confirmed beyond a doubt the existence of a substance which fills the universe and may be called spiritual ether.

FAT LADY. Ah, now I understand. I am so grateful . . .

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Yes, but Alexéy Vladímiritch, could you not . . . condense it a little ?

PROFESSOR [*not heeding the remark*] And so, as I have just had the honour of mentioning to you, a succession of strictly scientific experiments have made plain to us the laws of mediumistic phenomena. These experiments have proved that, when certain individuals are plunged into a hypnotic state (a state differing from ordinary sleep only by the fact that man's physiological activity is not lowered by the hypnotic influence but, on the contrary, is always heightened—as we have recently witnessed) when, I say, any individual is plunged into such a state, this always produces certain perturbations in the spiritual ether—perturbations quite similar to those produced by plunging a solid body into liquid matter. These perturbations are what we call mediumistic phenomena . . .

Laughter, and whispers.

SAHÁTOF. That is quite comprehensible and correct ; but if, as you are kind enough to inform us, the plunging of the medium into a trance produces perturbations of the spiritual ether, allow me to ask why (as is usually supposed to be the case in spiritualistic séances) these perturbations result in an activity on the part of the souls of dead people ?

PROFESSOR. It is because the molecules of this spiritual ether are nothing but the souls of the living, the dead, and the unborn, and any vibration of the spiritual ether must inevitably cause a certain vibration of its atoms. These atoms are nothing but human souls, which enter into communication with one another by means of these movements.

FAT LADY [*to Sahátóf*] What is it that puzzles you? It is so simple. . . . Thank you so, so much!

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. I think everything has now been explained, and that we may commence.

DOCTOR. The fellow is in a perfectly normal condition : temperature 37 decimal 2, pulse 74.

PROFESSOR [*takes out his pocket-book and notes this down*] What I have just had the honour of explaining will be confirmed by the fact, which we shall presently have an opportunity of observing, that after the medium has been thrown into a trance his temperature and pulse will inevitably rise, just as occurs in cases of hypnotism.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Yes, yes. But excuse me a moment. I should like to reply to Sergéy Ivánitch's question : How do we know we are in communication with the souls of the dead? We know it because the spirit that appears, plainly tells us—as simply as I am speaking to you—who he is, and why he has come, and whether all is well with him! At our last séance a Spaniard, Don Castillos, came to us, and he told us everything. He told us who he was, and when he died, and that he was suffering for having taken part in the Inquisition. He even told us what was happening to him at the very time that he was speaking to us, namely, that at the very time he was talking to us he had to be born again on earth, and, therefore, could not continue his conversation with us. . . . But you'll see for yourselves . . .

FAT LADY [*interrupting*] Oh, how interesting! Perhaps the Spaniard was born in one of our houses and is a baby now!

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Quite possibly.

PROFESSOR. I think it is time we began.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. I was only going to say . . .

PROFESSOR. It is getting late.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Very well. Then we will commence. Antón Borísitch, be so good as to hypnotise the medium.

GROSSMAN. What method would you like me to use? There are several methods. There is Braid's system, there is the Egyptian symbol, and there is Charcot's system.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH [*to the Professor*] I think it is quite immaterial.

PROFESSOR. Quite.

GROSSMAN. Then I will make use of my own method, which I showed in Odessa.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. If you please!

Grossman waves his arms above Simon. Simon closes his eyes and stretches himself.

GROSSMAN [*looking closely at him*] He is falling asleep! He is asleep! A remarkably rapid occurrence of hypnosis. The subject has evidently already reached a state of anæsthesia. He is remarkable,—an unusually impressionable subject, and might be subjected to interesting experiments! . . . [*Sits down, rises, sits down again*] Now one might run a needle into his arm. If you like . . .

PROFESSOR [*to Leoníd Fyódoritch*] Do you notice how the medium's trance acts on Grossman? He is beginning to vibrate.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Yes, yes . . . can the lights be extinguished now?

SAHÁTOF. But why is darkness necessary?

PROFESSOR. Darkness? Because it is a condition of the manifestation of mediumistic energy, just as a given temperature is a condition necessary for certain manifestations of chemical or dynamic energy.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. But not always. Manifestations have been observed by me, and by many others, both by candlelight and daylight.

PROFESSOR [*interrupting*] May the lights be put out?

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Yes, certainly. [*Puts out candles*] Ladies and gentlemen! attention, if you please.

Tánya gets from under the sofa and takes hold of a thread tied to a chandelier.

PETRÍSTCHEF. I like that Spaniard! Just in the midst of a conversation—off he goes head downwards . . . as the French say : *piquer une tête*.¹

BETSY. You just wait a bit, and see what will happen!

PETRÍSTCHEF. I have only one fear, and that is that Vovo may be moved by the spirit to grunt like a pig!

VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH. Would you like me to? I will . . .

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Gentlemen! Silence, if you please! *Silence. Simon licks the matches on his fingers and rubs his knuckles with them.*

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. A light! Do you see the light?

SAHÁTOF. A light? Yes, yes, I see; but allow me . . .

FAT LADY. Where? Where? Oh dear, I did not see it! Ah, there it is. Oh! . . .

PROFESSOR [*whispers to Leoníd Fyódoritch, and points to Grossman, who is moving*] Do you notice how he vibrates? It is the dual influence. [*The light appears again*].

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH [*to the Professor*] It must be he—you know!

SAHÁTOF. Who?

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. A Greek, Nicholas. It is his light. Don't you think so, Alexéy Vladímiritch?

SAHÁTOF. Who is this Greek, Nicholas?

PROFESSOR. A certain Greek, who was a monk at Constantinople under Constantine and who has been visiting us lately.

FAT LADY. Where is he? Where is he? I don't see him.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. He is not yet visible . . . Alexéy Vladímiritch, he is particularly well disposed towards you. You question him.

PROFESSOR [*in a peculiar voice*] Nicholas! Is that you?

Tánya raps twice on the wall.

¹ To take a header.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH [*joyfully*] It is he! It is he!

FAT LADY. Oh dear! Oh! I shall go away!

SAHÁTOF. Why do you suppose it is he?

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Why, the two knocks. It is an affirmative answer; else all would have been silence.

Silence. Suppressed giggling in the young people's corner. Tanya throws a lampshade, pencil and penwiper upon the table.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH [*whispers*] Do you notice, gentlemen, here is a lamp-shade, and something else—a pencil! . . . Alexéy Vladímiritch, it is a pencil!

PROFESSOR. All right, all right! I am watching both him and Grossman!

Grossman rises and feels the things that have fallen on the table.

SAHÁTOF. Excuse me, excuse me! I should like to see whether it is not the medium who is doing it all himself?

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Do you think so? Well, sit by him and hold his hands. But you may be sure he is asleep.

SAHÁTOF [*approaches. Tanya lets a thread touch his head. He is frightened, and stoops*]. Ye . . . ye . . . yes! Strange, very strange! [*Takes hold of Simon's elbow. Simon howls*].

PROFESSOR [*to Leoníd Fyódoritch*] Do you notice the effect of Grossman's presence? It is a new phenomenon—I must note it . . . [*Runs out to note it down, and returns again*].

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Yes. . . . But we cannot leave Nicholas without an answer. We must begin . . .

GROSSMAN [*rises, approaches Simon and raises and lowers his arm*] It would be interesting to produce contraction! The subject is in profound hypnosis.

PROFESSOR [*to Leoníd Fyódoritch*] Do you see? Do you see?

GROSSMAN. If you like . . .

DOCTOR. Now then, my dear sir, leave the management to Alexéy Vladímiritch, the affair is turning out serious.

PROFESSOR. Leave him alone, he [*referring to Grossman*] is talking in his sleep!

FAT LADY. How glad I now am that I resolved to be present! It is frightening, but all the same I am glad, for I always said to my husband . . .

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Silence, if you please.

Tánya draws a thread over the Fat Lady's head.

FAT LADY. Aie!

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. What? What is it?

FAT LADY. He took hold of my hair!

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH [*whispers*] Never mind, don't be afraid, give him your hand. His hand will be cold, but I like it.

FAT LADY [*hides her hands*] Not for the world!

SAHÁTOF. Yes, it is strange, very strange!

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. He is here and is seeking for intercourse. Who wishes to put a question to him?

SAHÁTOF. I should like to put a question, if I may.

PROFESSOR. Please do.

SAHÁTOF. Do I believe or not?

Tánya knocks twice.

PROFESSOR. The answer is affirmative.

SAHÁTOF. Allow me to ask again. Have I a ten rouble note in my pocket?

Tánya knocks several times and passes a thread over Sahátóf's head.

SAHÁTOF. Ah! [*Seizes the thread and breaks it*].

PROFESSOR. I should ask those present not to ask indefinite or trivial questions. It is unpleasant to *him*!

SAHÁTOF. No, but allow me! Here I have a thread in my hand!

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. A thread? Hold it fast; that happens often, and not only threads but sometimes even silk cords—very ancient ones!

SAHÁTOF. No—but where did this thread come from?

Tánya throws a cushion at him,

SAHÁTOF. Wait a bit; wait! Something soft has hit me on the head. Light a candle—there is something . . .

PROFESSOR. We beg of you not to interrupt the manifestations.

FAT LADY. For goodness' sake don't interrupt! I should also like to ask something. May I?

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Yes, if you like.

FAT LADY. I should like to ask about my digestion." May I? I want to know what to take: aconite or belladonna?

Silence, whispers among the young people; suddenly Vasily Leoníditch begins to cry like a baby: "ou-a, ou-a!" [Laughter.] Holding their mouths and noses, the girls and Petrístchef run away bursting with laughter.

FAT LADY. Ah, that must be the monk who's been born again!

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH [*beside himself with anger, whispers*] One gets nothing but tomfoolery from you! If you don't know how to behave decently, go away!

Exit Vasily Leoníditch. Darkness and silence.

FAT LADY. Oh, what a pity! Now one can't ask any more! He is born!

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Not at all. It is only Vovo's nonsense. But *he* is here. Ask him.

PROFESSOR. That often happens. These jokes and ridicule are quite usual occurrences. I expect *he* is still here. But we may ask. Leoníd Fyódoritch, will you?

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. No, you, if you please. This has upset me. So unpleasant! Such want of tact! . . .

PROFESSOR. Very well. . . . Nicholas, are you here?

Tánya raps twice and rings. Simon roars, spreads his arms out, seizes Sahátóf and the Professor—squeezing them.

PROFESSOR. What an unexpected phenomenon! The medium himself reacted upon! This never happened before! Leoníd Fyódoritch, will you watch? It is difficult for me to do so. He squeezes me so! Mind you observe Grossman! This needs the very greatest attention!

Tánya throws the peasants' paper on the table.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Something has fallen upon the table.

PROFESSOR. See what it is!

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Paper! A folded paper!

Tánya throws a travelling inkstand on the table.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. An inkstand!

Tánya throws a pen.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. A pen!

Simon roars and squeezes.

PROFESSOR [*crushed*] Wait a bit, wait: a totally new manifestation! The action proceeding not from the mediumistic energy produced, but from the medium himself! However, open the inkstand, and put the pen on the table, and he will write!

Tánya goes behind Leoníd Fyódoritch and strikes him on the head with the guitar.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. He has struck me on the head! [*Examining table*] The pen is not writing yet and the paper remains folded.

PROFESSOR. See what the paper is, and quickly; evidently the dual influence—his and Grossman's—has produced a perturbation!

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH [*goes out and returns at once*] Extraordinary! This paper is an agreement with some peasants that I refused to sign this morning and returned to the peasants. Probably *he* wants me to sign it?

PROFESSOR. Of course! Of course! But ask him.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Nicholas, do you wish . . .

Tánya knocks twice.

PROFESSOR. Do you hear? It is quite evident!

Leoníd Fyódoritch takes the paper and pen and goes out. Tánya knocks, plays on the guitar and the accordion, and then creeps under the sofa. Leoníd Fyódoritch returns. Simon stretches himself and coughs.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. He is waking up. We can light the candles.

PROFESSOR [*hurriedly*] Doctor, Doctor, please, his pulse and temperature! You will see that a rise of both will be apparent.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH [*lights the candles*] Well, what do you gentlemen who were sceptical think of it now?

DOCTOR [*goes up to Simon and places thermometer*] Now then my lad. Well, have you had a nap? There, put that in there, and give me your hand. [*Looks at his watch*].

SAHÁTOF [*shrugging his shoulders*] I must admit that all that has occurred cannot have been done by the medium. But the thread? . . . I should like the thread explained.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. A thread! A thread! We have been witnessing manifestations more important than a thread.

SAHÁTOF. I don't know. At all events, *je réserve mon opinion*.

FAT LADY [*to Sahátóf*] Oh no, how can you say: "*je réserve mon opinion*?" And the infant with the little wings? Didn't you see? At first I thought it was only an illusion, but afterwards it became clearer and clearer, like a live . . .

SAHÁTOF. I can only speak of what I have seen. I did not see that—nothing of the kind.

FAT LADY. You don't mean to say so? Why, it was quite plainly visible! And to the left there was a monk clothed in black bending over it . . .

SAHÁTOF [*moves away. Aside*] What exaggeration!

FAT LADY [*addressing the Doctor*] You must have seen it! It rose up from your side.

Doctor goes on counting pulse without heeding her.

FAT LADY [*to Grossman*] And that light, the light around it, especially around its little face! And the expression so mild and tender, something so heavenly! [*Smiles tenderly herself*].

GROSSMAN. I saw phosphorescent light, and objects

changed their places, but I saw nothing more than that.

FAT LADY. Don't tell me! You don't mean it! It is simply that you scientists of Charcot's school do not believe in a life beyond the grave! As for me, no one could now make me disbelieve in a future life—no one in the world!

Grossman moves away from her.

FAT LADY. No, no, whatever you may say, this is one of the happiest moments of my life! When I heard Sarasate play, and now. . . . Yes! [*No one listens to her. She goes up to Simon*] Now tell me, my friend, what did you feel? Was it very trying?

SIMON [*laughs*] Yes, ma'm, just so.

FAT LADY. Still not unendurable?

SIMON. Just so, ma'm. [*To Leoníd Fyódoritch*] Am I to go?

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Yes, you may go.

DOCTOR [*to the Professor*] The pulse is the same, but the temperature is lower.

PROFESSOR. Lower! [*Considers awhile, then suddenly divines the conclusion*] It had to be so—it had to descend! The dual influence crossing had to produce some kind of reflex action. Yes, that's it!

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. I'm only sorry we had no complete materialisation. But still. . . . Come, gentlemen, let us go to the drawing-room?

FAT LADY. What specially struck me was when he flapped his wings, and one saw how he rose!

GROSSMAN [*to Sahátov*] If we had kept to hypnotism, we might have produced a thorough state of epilepsy. The success might have been complete!

SAHÁTOF. It is very interesting, but not entirely convincing. That is all I can say.

Enter Theodorc Ivánitch.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH [*with paper in his hand*] Ah, Theo-

Exeunt, all talking at once.

dore, what a remarkable séance we have had! It turns out that the peasants must have the land on their own terms.

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. Dear me!

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Yes, indeed. [*Showing paper*] Fancy, this paper that I returned to them, suddenly appeared on the table! I have signed it.

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. How did it get there?

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Well, it did get there! [*Exit Theodore Ivánitch follows him out*].

TÁNYA [*gets from under the sofa and laughs*] Oh dear, oh dear! Well, I did get a fright when he got hold of the thread! [*Shrieks*] Well, anyhow, it's all right—he has signed it!

Enter Gregory.

GREGORY. So it was you that was fooling them?

TÁNYA. What business is it of yours?

GREGORY. And do you think the missis will be pleased with you for it? No, you bet; you're caught now! I'll tell them what tricks you're up to, if you don't let me have my way!

TÁNYA. And you'll not get your way, and you'll not do me any harm!

Curtain.

ACT IV

The same scene as in Act I. The next day. Two liveried footmen, Theodore Ivánitch and Gregory.

FIRST FOOTMAN [*with grey whiskers*] Yours is the third house to-day. Thank goodness that all the at-homes are in this direction. Yours used to be on Thursdays.

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. Yes, we changed to Saturday so as to be on the same day as the Golóvkins and Grade von Grabes . . .

SECOND FOOTMAN. The Stcherbákofs do the thing well. There's refreshments for the footmen every time they've a ball.

The two Princesses, mother and daughter, come down the stairs accompanied by Betsy. The old Princess looks in her note-book and at her watch, and sits down on the settle. Gregory puts on her overshoes.

YOUNG PRINCESS. Now, do come. Because, if you refuse, and Dodo refuses, the whole thing will be spoilt.

BETSY. I don't know. I must certainly go to the Shóubins. And then there is the rehearsal.

YOUNG PRINCESS. You'll have plenty of time. Do, please. *Ne nous fais pas faux bond.*¹ Fédyá and Koko will come.

BETSY. *J'en ai par-dessus la tête de votre Koko.*²

YOUNG PRINCESS. I thought I should see him here. *Ordinairement il est d'une exactitude . . .*³

BETSY. He is sure to come.

¹ Do not disappoint us.

² BETSY. I have more than enough of your Koko.

³ YOUNG PRINCESS. . . . He is usually so very punctual . . .

YOUNG PRINCESS. When I see you together, it always seems to me that he has either just proposed or is just going to propose.

BETSY. Yes, I don't suppose it can be avoided. I shall have to go through with it. And it is so unpleasant!

YOUNG PRINCESS. Poor Koko! He is head over ears in love.

BETSY. *Cessez, les gens!*¹

Young Princess sits down, talking in whispers. Gregory puts on her overshoes.

YOUNG PRINCESS. Well then, good-bye till this evening.

BETSY. I'll try to come.

OLD PRINCESS. Then tell your papa that I don't believe in anything of the kind, but will come to see his new medium. Only he must let me know when. Good afternoon, *ma toute belle*. [*Kisses Betsy, and exit, followed by her daughter. Betsy goes upstairs*].

GREGORY. I don't like putting on an old woman's overshoes for her; she can't stoop, can't see her shoe for her stomach, and keeps poking her foot in the wrong place. It's different with a young one; it's pleasant to take her foot in one's hand.

SECOND FOOTMAN. Hear him! Making distinctions!

FIRST FOOTMAN. It's not for us footmen to make such distinctions.

GREGORY. Why shouldn't one make distinctions; are we not men? It's they think we don't understand! Just now they were deep in their talk, then they look at me, and at once it's "lay zhon!"

SECOND FOOTMAN. And what's that?

GREGORY. Oh, that means, "Don't talk, they understand!" It's the same at table. But I understand! You say, there's a difference? I say there is none.

FIRST FOOTMAN. There is a great difference for those who understand.

¹ BETSY. Cease; mind the servants!

GREGORY. There is none at all. To-day I am a footman, and to-morrow I may be living no worse than they are. Has it never happened that they've married footmen? I'll go and have a smoke. [*Exit*].

SECOND FOOTMAN. That's a bold young man you've got.

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. A worthless fellow, not fit for service. He used to be an office boy and has got spoilt. I advised them not to take him, but the mistress liked him. He looks well on the carriage when they drive out.

FIRST FOOTMAN. I should like to send him to our Count; he'd put him in his place! Oh, he don't like those scatterbrains. "If you're a footman, be a footman and fulfil your calling." Such pride is not befitting.

Petrístchef comes running downstairs, and takes out a cigarette.

PETRÍSTCHEF [*deep in thought*] Let's see, my second is the same as my first. Echo, a-co, co-coa. [*Enter Koko Klíngen, wearing his pince-nez*] Ko-ko, co-coa. Cocoa tin, where do you spring from?

KOKO KLÍNGEN. From the Stcherbákofs. You are always playing the fool . . .

PETRÍSTCHEF. No, listen to my charade. My first is the same as my second, my third may be cracked, my whole is like your pate.

KOKO KLÍNGEN. I give it up. I've no time.

PETRÍSTCHEF. Where else are you going?

KOKO KLÍNGEN. Where? Of course to the Ívins, to practise for the concert. Then to the Shoubins, and then to the rehearsal. You'll be there too, won't you?

PETRÍSTCHEF. Most certainly. At the re-her-Sall and also at the re-her-Sarah. Why, at first I was a savage, and now I am both a savage and a general.

KOKO KLÍNGEN. How did yesterday's séance go off?

PETRÍSTCHEF. Screamingly funny! There was a peasant, and above all, it was all in the dark. Vovo cried like an

infant, the Professor defined, and Márya Vasílevna refined. Such a lark! You ought to have been there.

KOKO KLÍNGEN. I'm afraid, *mon cher*. You have a way of getting off with a jest, but I always feel that if I say a word, they'll construe it into a proposal. *Et ça ne m'arrange pas du tout, du tout. Mais du tout, du tout!*¹

PETRÍSTCHEF. Instead of a proposal, make a proposition, and receive a sentence! Well, I shall go in to Vovo's. If you'll call for me, we can go to the re-her-Sarah together.

KOKO KLÍNGEN. I can't think how you can be friends with such a fool. He is so stupid,—a regular blockhead!

PETRÍSTCHEF. And I am fond of him. I love Vovo, but . . . "with a love so strange, ne'er towards him the path untrod shall be" . . . [*Exit into Vovo's room*].

Betsy comes down with a Lady. Koko bows significantly to Betsy.

BETSY [*shaking Koko's hand without turning towards him. To Lady*] You are acquainted?

LADY. No.

BETSY. Baron Klíngen. . . . Why were you not here last night?

KOKO KLÍNGEN. I could not come, I was engaged.

BETSY. What a pity, it was so interesting! [*Laughs*] You should have seen what manifestations we had! Well, how is our charade getting on?

KOKO KLÍNGEN. Oh, the verses for *mon second* are ready. Nick composed the verses, and I the music.

BETSY. What are they? What are they? Do tell me!

KOKO KLÍNGEN. Wait a minute; how does it go? . . . Oh, the knight sings:

"Oh, *naught* so beautiful as nature:

The *Nautilus* sails by.

Oh, *naughty* lass, oh, *naughty* lass!

Oh, *nought*, oh *nought*! Oh fie!"

¹ And that won't suit me at all, at all! Not at all, at all!

LADY. I see, my second is "nought," and what is my first?

KOKO KLÍNGEN. My first is *Aero*, the name of a girl savage.

BETSY. *Aero*, you see, is a savage who wished to devour the object of her love. [*Laughs*] She goes about lamenting, and sings—

"My appetite,"

KOKO KLÍNGEN [*interrupts*]

"How can I fight," . . .

BETSY [*chimes in*]

"Some one to chew I long.
I seeking go . . ."

KOKO KLÍNGEN—

"But even so . . ."

BETSY—

"No one to chew can find."

KOKO KLÍNGEN—

"A raft sails by,"

BETSY—

"It cometh nigh;
Two generals upon it . . ."

KOKO KLÍNGEN—

"Two generals are we:
By fate's hard decree,
To this island we flee."

And then, the refrain—

"By fate's hard decree,
To this island we flee."

LADY. *Charmant!*

BETSY. But just think how silly!

KOKO KLÍNGEN. Yes, that's the charm of it!

LADY. And who is to be *Aero*?

BETSY. I am. And I have had a costume made, but mamma says it's "not decent." And it is not a bit less decent than a ball dress. [*To Theodore Ivánitch*] Is Bourdier's man here?

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. Yes, he is waiting in the kitchen.

LADY. Well, and how will you represent Aeronaut?

BETSY. Oh, you'll see. I don't want to spoil the pleasure for you. *Au revoir.*

LADY. Good-bye! [*They bow. Exit Lady.*]

BETSY [*to Koko Klíngen*] Come up to mamma.

Betsy and Koko go upstairs. Jacob enters from servants' quarters, carrying a tray with teacups, cakes, &c., and goes panting across the stage.

JACOB [*to the Footmen*] How d'you do? How d'you do? [*Footmen bow.*]

JACOB [*to Theodore Ivánitch*] Couldn't you tell Gregory to help a bit! I'm ready to drop. . . . [*Exit up the stairs.*]

FIRST FOOTMAN. That is a hard-working chap you've got there.

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. Yes, a good fellow. But there now—he doesn't satisfy the mistress, she says his appearance is ungainly. And now they've gone and told tales about him for letting some peasants into the kitchen yesterday. It is a bad look-out: they may dismiss him. And he is a good fellow.

SECOND FOOTMAN. What peasants were they?

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. Peasants that had come from our Kursk village to buy some land. It was night, and they were our fellow-countrymen, one of them the father of the butler's assistant. Well, so they were asked into the kitchen. It so happened that there was thought-reading going on. Something was hidden in the kitchen, and all the gentlefolk came down, and the mistress saw the peasants. There was such a row! "How is this," she says; "these people may be infected, and they are let into the kitchen!" . . . She is terribly afraid of this infection.

Enter Gregory.

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. Gregory, you go and help Jacob. I'll stay here. He can't manage alone.

GREGORY. He's awkward, that's why he can't manage.
[Exit].

FIRST FOOTMAN. And what is this new mania they have got? This infection! . . . So yours also is afraid of it?

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. She fears it worse than fire! Our chief business, nowadays, is fumigating, washing, and sprinkling.

FIRST FOOTMAN. I see. That's why there is such a stuffy smell here. [*With animation*] I don't know what we're coming to with these infection notions. It's just detestable! They seem to have forgotten the Lord. There's our master's sister, Princess Mosolóva, her daughter was dying and, will you believe it, neither father nor mother would come near her! So she died without their having taken leave of her. And the daughter cried, and called them to say good-bye—but they didn't go! The doctor had discovered some infection or other! And yet their own maid and a trained nurse were with her, and nothing happened to them; they're still alive!

Enter Vasily Leoníditch and Petrístchef from Vasily Leoníditch's room, smoking cigarettes.

PETRÍSTCHEF. Come along then, only I must take Koko—Cocoanut, with me.

VASILY LEONÍDITCH. Your Koko is a regular dolt; I can't bear him. A hare-brained fellow, a regular gad-about! Without any kind of occupation, eternally loafing around! Eh, what?

PETRÍSTCHEF. Well, anyhow, wait a bit, I must say good-bye.

VASILY LEONÍDITCH. All right. And I will go and look at my dogs in the coachman's room. I've got a dog there that's so savage, the coachman said, he nearly ate him.

PETRÍSTCHEF. Who ate whom? Did the coachman really eat the dog?

VASILY LEONÍDITCH. You are always at it! [*Puts on outdoor things and goes out*].

PETRÍSTCHEF [*thoughtfully*] Ma-kin-tosh, Co-co-tin. . . .
Let's see. [*Goes upstairs*].

Jacob runs across the stage.

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. What's the matter?

JACOB. There is no more thin bread and butter. I said . . . [*Exit*].

SECOND FOOTMAN. And then our master's little son fell ill, and they sent him at once to an hotel with his nurse, and there he died without his mother.

FIRST FOOTMAN. They don't seem to fear sin! I think you cannot escape from God anywhere.

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. That's what I think.

Jacob runs upstairs with bread and butter.

FIRST FOOTMAN. One should consider too, that if we are to be afraid of everybody like that, we'd better shut ourselves up within four walls, as in a prison, and stick there!

Enter Tánya; she bows to the Footmen.

TÁNYA. Good afternoon.

Footmen bow.

TÁNYA. Theodore Ivánitch, I have a word to say to you.

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. Well, what?

TÁNYA. The peasants have come again, Theodore Ivánitch . . .

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. Well? I gave the paper to Simon.

TÁNYA. I have given them the paper. They were that grateful! I can't say how! Now they only ask you to take the money.

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. But where are they?

TÁNYA. Here, by the porch.

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. All right, I'll tell the master.

TÁNYA. I have another request to you, dear Theodore Ivánitch.

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. What now?

TÁNYA. Why, don't you see, Theodore Ivánitch, I can't remain here any longer. Ask them to let me go.

Enter Jacob, running.

THEODORE IVÁNITCH [*to Jacob*] What d'you want?

JACOB. Another samovár, and oranges.

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. Ask the housekeeper.

Exit Jacob.

THEODORE IVÁNITCH [*to Tánya*] How is that?

TÁNYA. Why, don't you see, my position is such . . .

JACOB [*runs in*] There are not enough oranges.

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. Serve up as many as you've got [*Exit Jacob*]. Now's not the time! Just see what a bustle we are in.

TÁNYA. But you know yourself, Theodore Ivánitch, there is no end to this bustle; one might wait for ever—you know yourself—and my affair is for life. . . . Dear Theodore Ivánitch, you have done me a good turn, be a father to me now, choose the right moment and tell her, or else she'll get angry and won't let me have my passport.¹

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. Where's the hurry?

TÁNYA. Why, Theodore Ivánitch, it's all settled now. . . . And I could go to my godmother's and get ready, and then after Easter we'd get married.² Do tell her, dear Theodore Ivánitch!

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. Go away—this is not the place.

An elderly Gentleman comes downstairs, puts on overcoat, and goes out followed by the Second Footman.

Exit Tánya. Enter Jacob.

JACOB. Just fancy, Theodore Ivánitch, it's too bad! She wants to discharge me now! She says, "You break everything, and forget Frisk, and you let the peasants into the kitchen against my orders!" And you know very well that I knew nothing about it. Tatyána told me, "Take them into the kitchen"; how could I tell whose order it was?

¹ Employers have charge of the servants' passports, and in this way have a hold on them in case of misconduct.

² See footnote, p. 28. It is customary for peasants to marry just after Easter, but when spring has come and the field work begun, no marriages take place among them till autumn.

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. Did the mistress speak to you?

JACOB. She's just spoken. Do speak up for me, Theodore Ivánitch! You see, my people in the country are only just getting on their feet, and suppose I lose my place, when shall I get another? Theodore Ivánitch, do, please!

Anna Pávlovna comes down with the old Countess, whom she is seeing off. The Countess has false teeth and hair. The First Footman helps the Countess into her outdoor things.

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. Oh, most certainly, of course! I am so deeply touched.

COUNTESS. If it were not for my illness, I should come oftener to see you.

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. You should really consult Peter Petróvitch. He is rough, but nobody can soothe one as he does. He is so clear, so simple.

COUNTESS. Oh no, I shall keep to the one I am used to.

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. Pray, take care of yourself.

COUNTESS. *Merci, mille fois merci.*¹

Gregory, dishevelled and excited, jumps out from the servants quarters. Simon appears behind him in the doorway.

SIMON. You'd better leave her alone!

GREGORY. You rascal! I'll teach you how to fight, you scamp, you!

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. What do you mean? Do you think you are in a public-house?

GREGORY. This coarse peasant makes life impossible for me.

ANNA PÁVLOVNA [*provoked*]. You've lost your senses. Don't you see? [*To Countess*] *Merci, mille fois merci. A mardi!*²

Exeunt Countess and First Footman.

ANNA PÁVLOVNA [*to Gregory*]. What is the meaning of this?

¹ COUNTESS. Thank you (for your hospitality), a thousand thanks.

² ANNA PÁVLOVNA. Thank you (for coming to see us), a thousand thanks. Till next Tuesday!

GREGORY. Though I do occupy the position of a footman, still I won't allow every peasant to hit me; I have my pride too.

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. Why, what has happened?

GREGORY. Why, this Simon of yours has got so brave, sitting with the gentlemen, that he wants to fight!

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. Why? What for?

GREGORY. Heaven only knows!

ANNA PÁVLOVNA [*to Simon*] What is the meaning of it?

SIMON. Why does he bother her?

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. What has happened?

SIMON [*smiles*] Well, you see, he is always catching hold of Tánya, the lady's-maid, and she won't have it. Well, so I just moved him aside a bit, just so, with my hand.

GREGORY. A nice little bit! He's almost caved my ribs in, and has torn my dress-coat, and he says, "The same power as came over me yesterday comes on me again," and he begins to squeeze me.

ANNA PÁVLOVNA [*to Simon*] How dare you fight in my house?

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. May I explain it to you, ma'am? I must tell you Simon is not indifferent to Tánya, and is engaged to her. And Gregory—one must admit the truth—does not behave properly, nor honestly, to her. Well, so I suppose Simon got angry with him.

GREGORY. Not at all! It is all his spite, because I have discovered their trickery.

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. What trickery?

GREGORY. Why, at the séance. All those things, last night,—it was not Simon but Tánya who did them! I saw her getting out from under the sofa with my own eyes.

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. What is that? From under the sofa?

GREGORY. I give you my word of honour. And it was she who threw the paper on the table. If it had not been for her the paper would not have been signed, nor the land sold to the peasants.

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. And you saw it yourself?

GREGORY. With my own eyes. Shall I call her? She'll not deny it.

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. Yes, call her.

Exit Gregory.

Noise behind the scenes. The voice of the Doorkeeper, "No, no, you cannot." Doorkeeper is seen at the front door, the three Peasants rush in past him, the Second Peasant first; the Third one stumbles, falls on his nose, and catches hold of it.

DOORKEEPER. You must not go in!

SECOND PEASANT. Where's the harm? We are not doing anything wrong. We only wish to pay the money!

FIRST PEASANT. That's just it; as by laying on the signature the affair is come to a conclusion, we only wish to make payment with thanks.

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. Wait a bit with your thanks. It was all done by fraud! It is not settled yet. Not sold yet. . . . Leoníd. . . . Call Leoníd Fyódoritch. [*Exit Doorkeeper*].

Leoníd Fyódoritch enters, but, seeing his wife and the Peasants, wishes to retreat.

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. No, no, come here, please! I told you the land must not be sold on credit, and everybody told you so, but you let yourself be deceived like the veriest blockhead.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. How? I don't understand who is deceiving?

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. You ought to be ashamed of yourself! You have grey hair, and you let yourself be deceived and laughed at like a silly boy. You grudge your son some three hundred roubles which his social position demands, and let yourself be tricked of thousands—like a fool!

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Now come, Annette, try to be calm.

FIRST PEASANT. We are only come about the acceptance of the sum, for example . . .



FRUITS OF CULTURE. ACT IV.

ANNA PAVLOVNA. There, you see! You are being made a fool of.

THIRD PEASANT [*taking out the money*] Let us finish the matter, for Christ's sake!

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. Wait, wait!

Enter Tánya and Gregory.

ANNA PÁVLOVNA [*angrily*] You were in the small drawing-room during the séance last night?

Tánya looks round at Theodore Ivánitch, Leoníd Fyódoritch, and Simon, and sighs.

GREGORY. It's no use beating about the bush; I saw you myself . . .

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. Tell me, were you there? I know all about it, so you'd better confess! I'll not do anything to you. I only want to expose him [*pointing to Leoníd Fyódoritch*] your master. . . . Did you throw the paper on the table?

TÁNYA. I don't know how to answer. Only one thing,—let me go home.

Enter Betsy unobserved.

ANNA PÁVLOVNA [*to Leoníd Fyódoritch*] There, you see! You are being made a fool of.

TÁNYA. Let me go home, Anna Pávlovna!

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. No, my dear! You may have caused us a loss of thousands of roubles. Land has been sold that ought not to be sold!

TÁNYA. Let me go, Anna Pávlovna!

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. No; you'll have to answer for it! Such tricks won't do. We'll have you up before the Justice of the Peace!

BETSY [*comes forward*] Let her go, mamma. Or, if you wish to have her tried, you must have me tried too! She and I did it together.

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. Well, of course, if *you* have a hand in anything, what can one expect but the very worst results!

Enter the Professor.

PROFESSOR. How do you do, Anna Pávlovna? How do you do, Miss Betsy? Leoníd Fyódoritch, I have brought

you a report of the Thirteenth Congress of Spiritualists at Chicago. An amazing speech by Schmidt!

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Oh, that is interesting!

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. I will tell you something much more interesting! It turns out that both you and my husband were fooled by this girl! Betsy takes it on herself, but that is only to annoy me. It was an illiterate peasant girl who fooled you, and you believed it all. There were no mediumistic phenomena last night; it was she [*pointing to Tánya*] who did it!

PROFESSOR [*taking off his overcoat*] What do you mean?

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. I mean that it was she who, in the dark, played on the guitar and beat my husband on the head and performed all your idiotic tricks—and she has just confessed!

PROFESSOR [*smiling*] What does that prove?

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. It proves that your mediumism is—tomfoolery; that's what it proves!

PROFESSOR. Because this young girl wished to deceive, we are to conclude that mediumism is "tomfoolery," as you are pleased to express it? [*Smiles*] A curious conclusion! Very possibly this young girl may have wished to deceive: that often occurs. She may even have done something; but then, what she did—*she* did. But the manifestations of mediumistic energy still remain manifestations of *mediumistic* energy! It is even very probable that what this young girl did, evoked (and so to say solicited) the manifestation of mediumistic energy,—giving it a definite form.

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. Another lecture!

PROFESSOR [*sternly*] You say, Anna Pávlovna, that this girl, and perhaps this dear young lady also, did something; but the light we all saw, and, in the first case the fall, and in the second the rise of temperature, and Grossman's excitement and vibration—were those things also done by this girl? And these are facts, Anna Pávlovna,

facts! No! Anna Pávlovna, there are things which must be investigated and fully understood before they can be talked about, things too serious, too serious . . .

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. And the child that Márya Vasílevna distinctly saw? Why, I saw it too. . . . That could not have been done by this girl.

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. You think yourself wise, but you are—a fool.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Well, I'm going. . . . Alexéy Vladímiritch, will you come? [*Exit into his study*].

PROFESSOR [*shrugging his shoulders, follows*] Oh, how far, how far, we still lag behind Western Europe!

Enter Jacob.

ANNA PÁVLOVNA [*following Leoníd Fyódoritch with her eyes*] He has been tricked like a fool, and he sees nothing! [*To Jacob*] What do you want?

JACOB. How many persons am I to lay the table for?

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. For how many? . . . Theodore Ivánitch! Let him give up the silver plate to you. Be off, at once! It is all his fault! This man will bring me to my grave. Last night he nearly starved the dog that had done him no harm! And, as if that were not enough, he lets the infected peasants into the kitchen, and now they are here again! It is all his fault! Be off at once! Discharge him, discharge him! [*To Simon*] And you, horrid peasant, if you dare to have rows in my house again, I'll teach you!

SECOND PEASANT. All right, if he is a horrid peasant there's no good keeping him; you'd better discharge him too, and there's an end of it.

ANNA PÁVLOVNA [*while listening to him looks at Third Peasant*] Only look! Why, he has a rash on his nose—a rash! He is ill; he is a hotbed of infection!! Did I not give orders, yesterday, that they were not to be allowed into the house, and here they are again? Drive them out!

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. Then are we not to accept their money?

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. Their money? Oh yes, take their money; but they must be turned out at once, especially this one! He is quite rotten!

THIRD PEASANT. That's not just, lady. God's my witness, it's not just! You'd better ask my old woman, let's say, whether I am rotten! I'm clear as crystal, let's say.

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. He talks! . . . Off, off with him! It's all to spite me! . . . Oh, I can't bear it, I can't! . . . Send for the doctor! [*Runs away, sobbing. Exit also Jacob and Gregory.*]

TÁNYA [*to Betsy*] Miss Elizabeth, darling, what am I to do now?

BETSY. Never mind, you go with them and I'll arrange it all. [*Exit.*]

FIRST PEASANT. Well, your reverence, how about the reception of the sum now?

SECOND PEASANT. Let us settle up, and go.

THIRD PEASANT [*fumbling with the packet of bank-notes*] Had I known, I'd not have come for the world. It's worse than a fever!

THEODORE IVÁNITCH [*to Doorkeeper*] Show them into my room. There's a counting-board there. I'll receive their money. Now go.

DOORKEEPER. Come along.

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. And it's Tánya you have to thank for it. But for her you'd not have had the land.

FIRST PEASANT. That's just it. As she made the proposal, so she put it into effect.

THIRD PEASANT. She's made men of us. Else what were we? We had so little land, no room to let a hen out, let's say, not to mention the cattle. Good-bye, dear! When you get to the village, come to us and eat honey.

SECOND PEASANT. Let me get home and I'll start brewing the beer for the wedding! You will come?

TÁNYA. Yes, I'll come, I'll come! [*Shrieks*] Simon, this is fine, isn't it? [*Exeunt Peasants*].

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. Well, Tánya, when you have your house I'll come to visit you. Will you welcome me?

TÁNYA. Dear Theodore Ivánitch, just the same as we would our own father! [*Embraces and kisses him*].

Curtain.

END OF "FRUITS OF CULTURE."

THE LIVE CORPSE

A PLAY IN SIX ACTS

CHARACTERS

THEODORE VASÍLYEVICH PROTÁSOV (FÉDYA).

ELISABETH ANDRÉYEVNA PROTÁSOVA (LISA). *His wife*

MÍSHA. *Their son.*

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. *Lisa's mother.*

SÁSHA. *Lisa's younger, unmarried sister.*

VICTOR MIHÁYLOVICH KARÉNIN.

ANNA DMÍTRIEVNA KARÉNINA.

PRINCE SERGIUS DMÍTRIEVICH ABRÉZKOV.

MÁSHA. *A gipsy girl.*

IVÁN MAKÁROVICH. *An old gipsy man.*

NASTÁSIA IVÁNOVNA. *An old gipsy woman.* } *Másha's parents.*

OFFICER.

MUSICIAN.

FIRST GIPSY MAN.

SECOND GIPSY MAN.

GIPSY WOMAN.

GIPSY CHOIR.

DOCTOR.

MICHAEL ALEXÁNDROVICH AFRÉMOV.

STÁKHOV.

BUTKÉVICH. } *Fédyá's boon companions.*

KOROTKÓV.

IVÁN PETRÓVICH ALEXÁNDROV.

VOZNESEŇSKY. *Karénin's secretary.*

PETUSHKÓV. *An artist.*

ARTÉMYEV.

WAITER IN THE PRIVATE ROOM AT THE RESTAURANT.

WAITER IN A LOW-CLASS RESTAURANT.

MANAGER OF THE SAME.

POLICEMAN.

INVESTIGATING MAGISTRATE

MÉLNIKOV.

CLERK.

USHER.

YOUNG LAWYER.

PETRÚSHIN. *A lawyer.*

LADY.

ANOTHER OFFICER.

ATTENDANT AT LAW COURTS.

PROTÁSOVS' NURSE.

PROTÁSOVS' MAID.

AFRÉMOV'S FOOTMAN.

KARÉNIN'S FOOTMAN.

THE LIVE CORPSE

ACT I

SCENE 1

Protásov's¹ flat in Moscow. The scene represents a small dining-room.

Anna Pávlovna, a stout grey-haired lady, lightly laced, is sitting alone at the tea-table on which is a samovár. Enter nurse, carrying a teapot.

NURSE. May I have a little hot water, ma'am?

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. Yes. How's Baby?

NURSE. He's restless. . . . There's nothing worse than for a lady to nurse her baby herself! She has her troubles, and the child must suffer. What can her milk be like, when she lies awake crying all night?

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. But she seems quieter now.

NURSE. Quiet, indeed! It makes one ill to see her. She's been writing something, and crying.

Enter Sáscha.

SÁSHA [to Nurse] Lisa is looking for you.

NURSE. I'm coming, I'm coming. [*Exit*].

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. Nurse says she keeps on crying. . . . Why can't she control herself?

SÁSHA. Well really, mother, you are amazing! . . . A

¹ Protásov is his family name, but the name by which he is usually addressed is Fédya, an abbreviation of his Christian name—Theodore. The ceremonious form of address would be Theodore Vaslyevich.

woman has left her husband, her child's father, and you expect her to be calm!

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. Well, not calm . . . But what's done is done! If I, her mother, not only allowed my daughter to leave her husband, but am even glad she has done it, that shows he deserved it. One ought to rejoice, not to grieve, at the chance of freeing oneself from such a bad man!

SÁSHA. Mother, why say such things? You know it's not true! He's not bad—but on the contrary, he's a wonderful man, in spite of his weaknesses.

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. Yes indeed, a "wonderful" man—as soon as he has money in his pocket—his own or other people's. . . .

SÁSHA. Mother! He has never taken other people's!

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. Yes he has—his wife's! Where's the difference?

SÁSHA. But he gave all his property to his wife!

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. Of course, when he knew that otherwise he was sure to squander it all!

SÁSHA. Squander or not, I only know that a wife must not separate from her husband, especially from such a one as Fédyá.

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. Then, in your opinion she ought to wait till he has squandered everything, and brought his gipsy mistresses into the house?

SÁSHA. He has no mistresses!

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. That's the misfortune—he seems to have bewitched you all! But not me—no! He won't come over me! I see through him, and he knows it. Had I been in Lisa's place I should have left him a year ago.

SÁSHA. How lightly you say it!

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. Not lightly at all. It's not a light thing for me, as a mother, to see my daughter divorced. Believe me it's not! But yet it is better than ruining a

young life. . . . No, I'm thankful to God that she has at last made up her mind, and that it is all over.

SÁSHA. Perhaps it's not all over!

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. Oh! If he only consents to a divorce. . . .

SÁSHA. What good will that do?

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. This good; that she is young, and may again be happy.

SÁSHA. Oh mother! It's dreadful to hear you speak so! Lisa can't love another.

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. Why not, when she's free? Many a man a thousand times better than your Fédyá might turn up who would be only too happy to marry Lisa.

SÁSHA. Mother, it's not right! I know you're thinking of Victor Karénin. . . .

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. And why shouldn't I? He has loved her these ten years, and she loves him.

SÁSHA. Yes, but not as a husband! They have been friends from childhood.

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. We know those friendships! If only the obstacles were out of the way!

Enter Maid.

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. What is it?

MAID. The mistress has sent the porter with a note for Mr. Karénin.

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. What mistress?

MAID. *Our* mistress—Mrs. Protásova.

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. Well?

MAID. Mr. Karénin has sent back word that he will come round at once.

ANNA PÁVLOVNA [*surprised*] We were just speaking of him! Only I can't think why . . . [*to Sáscha*] Do you know?

SÁSHA. Perhaps I do, and perhaps I don't!

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. You always have secrets!

SÁSHA. Lisa will tell you herself when she comes.

ANNA PÁVLOVNA [*shakes her head. To Maid*] The

samovár must be made to boil again. Take it, Doun-yásha.

Maid takes samovár, and exit.

ANNA PÁVLOVNA [*to Sáscha who has risen and is going out*] It turns out just as I told you! She sent for him at once. . . .

SÁSHA. She may have sent for him for quite a different reason.

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. What for, then?

SÁSHA. Now, at this moment, Karénin is the same to her as old Nurse Trífonovna.

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. Well, you'll see. . . . Don't I know her? She has sent for him to comfort her.

SÁSHA. Oh mother, how little you know her, to be able to suppose . . . !

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. Well, we'll see! . . . And I am very, very glad.

SÁSHA. We *shall* see! [*Exit, humming a tune*].

ANNA PÁVLOVNA [*alone, shakes her head and mutters*] It's all right, it's all right!

Enter Maid.

MAID. Mr. Karénin has come.

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. Well then, show him in, and tell your mistress.

Maid exit by inner door. Enter Karénin, who bows to Anna Pávlovna.

KARÉNIN. Your daughter wrote to me to come. I meant to come and see you to-night, anyhow. So I was very pleased . . . Is Elisabeth Andréyevna¹ well?

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. Yes, she is well, but Baby is a bit restless. She will be here directly. [*In a melancholy voice*] Ah yes! It is a sad time. . . . But you know all about it, don't you?

KARÉNIN. I do. I was here, you know, the day before

¹ Elisabeth Andréyevna is the polite way of speaking of Mrs. Protásova, otherwise Lisa.

yesterday, when his letter came. But is it possible that everything is irrevocably settled?

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. Why of course! Naturally! To go through it all again would be intolerable.

KARÉNIN. This is a case where the proverb applies: "Measure ten times before you cut once." . . . It is very painful to cut into the quick.

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. Of course it is; but then their marriage has long had a rift in it, so that the tearing asunder was easier than one would have thought. He himself sees that, after what has occurred, it is impossible for him to return.

KARÉNIN. Why so?

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. How can you expect it, after all his horrid goings-on—after he swore it should not happen again, and that if it did he would renounce all rights as a husband and set her perfectly free?

KARÉNIN. Yes, but how can a woman be free when she is bound by marriage?

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. By divorce. He promised her a divorce, and we shall insist on it.

KARÉNIN. Yes, but Elisabeth Andréyevna loved him so. . . .

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. Ah, but her love has suffered such trials that there can hardly be anything left of it! Drunkenness, deception, and infidelity . . . Can one love such a husband?

KARÉNIN. Nothing is impossible to love.

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. You talk of love! But how can one love such a man—a broken reed, whom one can never depend on? Don't you know what it came to . . .? [*Looks round at the door, and continues hurriedly*] All his affairs in a muddle, everything pawned, nothing to pay with! Then their uncle sends 2,000 roubles to pay the interest on their mortgaged estates, and he takes the money and disappears. His wife is left at home, with a

sick baby, waiting for him—and at last gets a note asking her to send him his clothes and things!

KARÉNIN. Yes, yes ; I know.

Enter Lisa and Sásha.

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. Well, here is Victor Miháylovich,¹ obedient to your summons.

KARÉNIN. Yes, but I am sorry I was delayed for a few minutes.

LISA. Thank you. I have a great favour to ask of you, and I have no one to turn to but you.

KARÉNIN. Anything in my power . . .

LISA. You know all about . . . ?

KARÉNIN. I do.

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. Well then, I shall leave you [*To Sásha*] Come, we'll leave them alone. [*Exit with Sásha*].

LISA. Yes, he wrote to me saying that he considers everything at an end . . . [*struggling with her tears*] . . . and I was hurt! . . . and so . . . In a word, I consented to break—I answered, accepting his renunciation.

KARÉNIN. And now you repent?

LISA. Yes. I feel that I was wrong, and that I cannot do it. Anything is better than to be separated from him. In short—I want you to give him this letter. . . . Please, Victor, give him the letter, and tell him . . . and bring him back!

KARÉNIN [*surprised*] Yes, but how?

LISA. Tell him I ask him to forget everything, and to return. I might simply send the letter, but I know him: his first impulse, as always, will be the right one—but then someone will influence him, and he'll change his mind and not do what he really wants to. . . .

KARÉNIN. I will do what I can.

LISA. You're surprised at my asking *you*?

KARÉNIN. No. . . . Yet, to tell you the truth—yes, I am surprised.

¹ The polite way of naming Mr. Karénin.

LISA. But you are not angry?

KARÉNIN. As if I could be angry with you!

LISA. I asked you because I know you care for him.

KARÉNIN. Him, and you too! You know that. I am thinking not of myself, but of you. Thank you for trusting me! I will do what I can.

LISA. I know. . . . I will tell you everything. To-day I went to Afrémov's to find out where he was. I was told he had gone to the gipsies—which is what I feared most of all. I know he will get carried away if he is not stopped in time—and that's what has to be done. . . . So you'll go?

KARÉNIN. Of course, and at once.

LISA. Go! . . . Find him, and tell him all is forgotten and I am waiting for him.

KARÉNIN. But where am I to look for him?

LISA. He is with the gipsies. I went there myself. . . . I went as far as the porch, and wished to send in the letter, but changed my mind and decided to ask you. Here is the address. . . . Well, then, tell him to return: tell him nothing has happened . . . all is forgotten. Do it for love of him, and for the sake of our friendship!

KARÉNIN. I will do all in my power! [*Bows, and exit*].

LISA. I can't, I can't! Anything rather than . . . I can't!

Enter Sáscha.

SÁSHA. Well, have you sent?

Lisa nods affirmatively.

SÁSHA. And he agreed?

LISA. Of course.

SÁSHA. But why just *him*? I don't understand.

LISA. But who else?

SÁSHA. Don't you know he is in love with you?

LISA. That's dead and gone. Whom would you have had me send? . . . Do you think he *will* come back?

SÁSHA. I am sure of it, because . . .

Enter Anna Pávlovna. Sáscha is silent.

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. And where is Victor Miháylovich?

LISA. He's gone.

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. Gone! How's that?

LISA. I asked him to do something for me.

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. "Do something?" Another secret!

LISA. It's not a secret. I simply asked him to give a letter into Fédya's own hands.

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. Fédya? What—to Theodore Vasílyevich?

LISA. Yes, to Fédya.

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. I thought all relations between you were over!

LISA. I can't part from him.

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. What? Are you going to begin all over again?

LISA. I wanted to, and tried . . . but I can't! Anything you like—only I can't part from him!

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. Then do you want to have him back again?

LISA. Yes.

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. To let that skunk into the house again?

LISA. Mother, I beg you not to speak so of my husband!

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. He *was* your husband.

LISA. No, he is my husband still.

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. A spendthrift, a drunkard, a rake . . . and you can't part from him?

LISA. Why do you torment me! You seem to want to do it. . . . It's hard enough for me without that.

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. I torment you! Well then, I'll go. I can't stand by and see it. . . .

Lisa is silent.

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. I see! That's just what you want—I'm in your way. . . . I can't live so. I can't make you out at all! It's all so new-fangled—first you make up

your mind to separate, then you suddenly send for a man who is in love with you . . .

LISA. Nothing of the kind.

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. Karénin proposed to you . . . and you send him to fetch your husband! Why? To arouse jealousy?

LISA. Mother, what you are saying is terrible! Leave me alone!

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. Very well! Turn your mother out of the house, and let in your rake of a husband! . . . Yes, I will not remain here! Good-bye, then—I leave you to your fate; you can do as you please! [*Exit slamming door*].

LISA [*drops into a chair*] That's the last straw!

SÁSHA. Never mind. . . . It will be all right; we'll soon pacify Mother.

ANNA PÁVLOVNA [*passing through*] Dunyásha! My trunk!

SÁSHA. Mother, listen! . . . [*follows her out with a significant glance to Lisa*].

Curtain.

SCENE 2

A room in the gipsies' house. The choir is singing "Kana-vela." Fédyá in his shirt-sleeves is lying prone on the sofa. Afrémov sits astride a chair in front of the leader of the choir. An officer sits at a table, on which are bottles of champagne and glasses. A musician is taking notes.

AFRÉMOV. Fédyá, are you asleep?

FÉDYA [*rising*] Don't talk. . . . Now let's have "Not at Eve."

GIPSY LEADER. That won't do, Theodore Vasilyevich! Let Másha sing a solo now.

FÉDYA. All right! And then, "Not at Eve." [*Lies down again*].

OFFICER. Sing "Fateful Hour."

GIPSY. All agreed?

AFRÉMOV. Go on!

OFFICER [*to musician*] Have you taken it down?

MUSICIAN. Quite impossible! It's different every time. . . And the scale is somehow different. Look here! [*Beckons to a gipsy woman who is looking on*] Is this right? [*Hums*].

GIPSY. That's it, that's splendid!

FÉDYA. He'll never get it; and if he does take it down and shoves it into an opera, he'll only spoil it! . . . Now, Másha, start off! Let's have "Fateful Hour"—take your guitar. [*Rises, sits down opposite her, and gazes into her eyes*].

Másha sings.

FÉDYA. That's good too! Másha, you're a brick! . . . Now then, "Not at Eve"!

AFRÉMOV. No, wait! First, my burial song. . .

OFFICER. Why burial?

AFRÉMOV. Because, when I'm dead . . . you know, dead and laid in my coffin, the gipsies will come (you know I shall leave instructions with my wife) and they will begin to sing "I Walked a Mile" . . . and then I'll jump out of my coffin! . . . Do you understand? [*To the musician*] You just write this down. [*To the gipsies*] Well, rattle along!

Gipsies sing.

AFRÉMOV. What do you think of that? . . . Now then, "My Brave Lads"!

Gipsies sing.

Afrémov gesticulates and dances. The gipsies smile and continue singing, clapping their hands. Afrémov sits down and the song ends.

GIPSIES. Bravo! Michael Andréyevich!¹ He's a real gipsy!

FÉDYA. Well, *now* "Not at Eve"!

Gipsies sing.

FÉDYA. That's it! It's wonderful . . . And where does it all happen—all that this music expresses? Ah, it's fine! . . . And how is it man can reach such ecstasy, and cannot keep it?

MUSICIAN [*taking notes*] Yes, it's most original.

FÉDYA. Not original—but the real thing!

AFRÉMOV [*to gipsies*] Well, have a rest now.

[*Takes the guitar and sits down beside Kátya, one of the gipsies*].

MUSICIAN. It's really simple, except the rhythm. . . .

FÉDYA [*waves his hand, goes to Másha, and sits down on sofa beside her*] Oh, Másha, Másha! How you do turn me inside-out!

MÁSHA. And how about what I asked you for?

FÉDYA. What? Money? . . . [*Takes some out of his trouser-pocket*] Here, take it!

Másha laughs, takes it, and hides it in her bosom.

FÉDYA [*to the gipsies*] Who can make it out? She opens heaven for me, and then asks for money to buy scents with! [*To Másha*] Why, you don't in the least understand what you're doing!

MÁSHA. Not understand indeed! I understand that when I am in love, I try to please my man, and sing all the better.

FÉDYA. Do you love me?

MÁSHA. Looks like it!

FÉDYA. Wonderful! [*Kisses her*].

Exeunt most of the gipsies. Some couples remain: Fédyá with Másha, Afrémov with Kátya, and the officer with Gásha. The musician writes. A gipsy man strums a valse tune on the guitar.

¹ The polite way of addressing Mr. Afrémov.

FÉDYA. But I'm married, and your choir won't allow it. . . .

MÁSHA. The choir is one thing, one's heart's another! I love those I love, and hate those I hate.

FÉDYA. Ah! This is good! Isn't it?

MÁSHA. Of course it's good—we've jolly visitors, and are all merry.

Enter gipsy man.

GIPSY [to Fédyá] A gentleman is asking for you.

FÉDYA. What gentleman?

GIPSY. I don't know. . . . Well dressed, wears a sable overcoat—

FÉDYA. A swell? Well, ask him in. [*Exit Gipsy*].

AFRÉMOV. Who has come to see you here?

FÉDYA. The devil knows! Who can want me?

Enter Karénin. Looks round.

FÉDYA. Ah, Victor! I never expected *you*! . . . Take off your coat! . . . What wind has blown you here? Come, sit down and listen to "Not at Eve."

KARÉNIN. *Je voudrais vous parler sans témoins.*¹

FÉDYA. What about?

KARÉNIN. *Je viens de chez vous. Votre femme m'a chargé de cette lettre et puis . . .*²

FÉDYA [*takes letter, reads, frowns, then smiles affectionately*] I say, Karénin, of course you know what is in this letter?

KARÉNIN. I know . . . and I want to say . . .

FÉDYA. Wait, wait a bit! Please don't imagine that I am drunk and my words irresponsible. . . . I mean, that I am irresponsible! I am drunk, but in this matter I see quite clearly. . . . Well, what were you commissioned to say?

KARÉNIN. I was commissioned to find you, and to tell

¹ I wanted to speak to you alone.

² I have come from your home. Your wife has entrusted me with this letter, and besides . . .

you . . . that . . . she . . . is waiting for you. She asks you to forget everything and come back.

FÉDYA [*listens in silence, gazing into Karénin's eyes*] Still, I don't understand why *you* . . .

KARÉNIN. Elisabeth Andréyevna sent for me, and asked me . . .

FÉDYA. So . . .

KARÉNIN. But I ask you, not so much in your wife's name as from myself. . . . Come home!

FÉDYA. You are a better man than I. (What nonsense! It is easy enough to be better than I) . . . I am a scoundrel, and you are a good—yes, a good man. . . . And that is the very reason why I won't alter my decision. . . . No! Not on that account either—but simply because I can't and won't. . . . How could I return?

KARÉNIN. Let us go to my rooms now, and I'll tell her that you will return to-morrow.

FÉDYA. And to-morrow, what? . . . I shall still be I, and she—she. [*Goes to the table and drinks*] It's best to have the tooth out at one go. . . . Didn't I say that if I broke my word she was to throw me over? Well, I have broken it, and that's the end of it.

KARÉNIN. For you, but not for her!

FÉDYA. It is extraordinary that *you* should take pains to prevent our marriage being broken up!

KARÉNIN [*is about to speak, but Másha comes up*] . . .

FÉDYA [*interrupting him*] Just hear her sing "The Flax"! . . . Másha!

The gipsies re-enter.

MÁSHA [*whispers*] An ovation, eh?

FÉDYA [*laughs*] An ovation! . . . "Victor, my Lord! Son of Michael!" . . .

Gipsies sing a song of greeting and laudation.

KARÉNIN [*listens in confusion then asks*] How much shall I give them?

FÉDYA. Well, give them twenty-five roubles.*

Karénin gives the money.

FÉDYA. Splendid! And now, "The Flax!"

Gipsies sing.

FÉDYA [*looks round*] Karénin's bunked! . . . Well, devil take him!

Gipsy group breaks up.

FÉDYA [*sits down by Másha*] Do you know who that was?

MÁSHA. I heard his name.

FÉDYA. He's an excellent fellow! He came to take me home to my wife. She loves a fool like me, and see what I am doing here . . . !

MÁSHA. Well, and it's wrong! You ought to go back to her. . . . You ought to pity her.

FÉDYA. You think I ought to? Well, I think I ought not.

MÁSHA. Of course, if you don't love her you need not. Only love counts.

FÉDYA. And how do you know that?

MÁSHA. Seems I do!

FÉDYA. Well, kiss me then! . . . Now, let's have "The Flax" once more, and then finish up.

Gipsies sing.

FÉDYA. Ah, how good it is! If only one hadn't to wake up! . . . If one could die so!

* About £2, 10s.

Curtain.

ACT II

SCENE 1

Two weeks have passed since Act 1. Anna Pávlovna and Karénin are discovered sitting in Lisa's dining-room. Enter Sáscha.

KARÉNIN. Well, what news?

SÁSHA. The doctor says there is no danger at present, as long as he does not catch cold.

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. Yes, but Lisa is quite worn out.

SÁSHA. He says it's false croup, and a very mild attack. [*Points to a basket*]. What's that?

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. Grapes. Victor brought them.

KARÉNIN. Won't you have some?

SÁSHA. Yes, she likes grapes. She has become terribly nervous.

KARÉNIN. Naturally—after not sleeping for two nights, and not eating.

SÁSHA. And how about you.

KARÉNIN. That's quite another matter.

Enter doctor and Lisa.

DOCTOR [*impressively*]. Yes, that's it. Change it every half-hour if he's awake, but if he's asleep don't disturb him. You need not paint the throat. The room must be kept at its present temperature . . .

LISA. But if he again begins to choke?

DOCTOR. He probably won't, but if he should, use the spray. And give him the powders: one in the morning and the other at night. I will give you the prescription now.

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. Have a cup of tea, doctor?

DOCTOR. No thanks. . . . My patients are expecting me.

Sits down to the table. Sásha brings him paper and ink.

LISA. So you're sure it is not croup?

DOCTOR [*smiling*] Perfectly certain!

KARÉNIN [*to Lisa*] And now have some tea, or, better still, go and lie down! . . . Just see what you look like. . . .

LISA. Oh, now I am alive again. Thank you, you are a true friend! [*Presses his hand. Sásha moves away angrily*] I am so grateful to you, dear friend! At such times one recog . . .

KARÉNIN. What have I done? There's really no cause at all to thank me.

LISA. And who stopped up all night? Who fetched the very best doctor?

KARÉNIN. I am already fully rewarded by the fact that Mísha is out of danger; and above all by your kindness.

LISA [*presses his hand again and laughs, showing him some money in her hand*] That's for the doctor; but I never know how to give it. . . .

KARÉNIN. Neither do I.

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. Don't know what?

LISA. How to give money to a doctor. . . . He has saved more than my life, and I give him money! It seems so unpleasant.

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. Let me give it. I know how. It's quite simple.

DOCTOR [*rises and hands the prescription to Lisa*] These powders are to be well mixed in a tablespoonful of boiled water . . . [*goes on talking*].

Karénin sits at the table drinking tea; Sásha and Anna Pávlovna come forward.

SÁSHA. I can't bear the way they go on! It's just as if she were in love with him.

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. Well, can it be wondered at?

SÁSHA. It's disgusting!

Doctor takes leave of everybody, and exit. Anna Pávlovna goes with him.

LISA [*to Karénin*] He's so sweet now! As soon as ever he was a little better he at once began to smile and crow. I must go to him, but I don't like leaving you.

KARÉNIN. You had better have a cup of tea, and eat something.

LISA. I don't want anything now. I am so happy after all that anxiety! . . . [*Sobs*].

KARÉNIN. There! You see how worn out you are!

LISA. I'm so happy! . . . Would you like to have a look at him?

KARÉNIN. Of course.

LISA. Then come with me. [*Exeunt*].

ANNA PÁVLOVNA [*returning to Sáscha*] What are you looking so glum about? . . . I gave him the money quite well, and he took it.

SÁSHA. It's disgusting! She has taken him with her to the nursery. It's just as if he were her *fiancé* or her husband. . . .

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. Whatever does it matter to you? Why need you get excited about it? Did you mean to marry him yourself?

SÁSHA. I? Marry that pikestaff? I'd rather marry I don't know whom, than him! Such a thing never entered my head. . . . I am only disgusted that, after Fédyá, Lisa can be so attracted by a stranger.

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. Not a stranger, but an old playfellow!

SÁSHA. Don't I see by their smiles and looks that they are in love?

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. Well, what is there to be surprised at in that? He shares her anxiety about her baby, shows sympathy and helps her . . . and she feels grateful. Besides, why should she not love and marry Victor?

SÁSHA. That would be disgusting—disgusting. . . .

Enter Karénin and Lisa. Karénin silently takes leave.

Sásha goes off angrily.

LISA [*to Anna Pávlovna*] What's the matter with her?

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. I really don't know.

Lisa sighs, and is silent.

Curtain.

SCENE 2

Afrémov's sitting-room. Glasses of wine on the table. Afrémov, Fédyá Stákhov (shaggy), Butkévich (close-shaven), and Korotkóv (a tuft-hunter).

KOROTKÓV. And I tell you that he'll be out of the running! La Belle Bois is the best horse in Europe. . . . Will you bet?

STÁKHOV. Don't, my dear fellow. . . . You know very well that nobody believes you, or will bet with you.

KOROTKÓV. I tell you your Cartouche won't be in it!

AFRÉMOV. Stop quarrelling! Let me settle it . . . ask Fédyá—he'll give you the right tip.

FÉDYA. Both horses are good. All depends on the jockey.

STÁKHOV. Gúsev is a rascal, and needs a firm hand on him.

KOROTKÓV [*shouts*] No!

FÉDYA. Wait a bit—I'll settle your differences. . . . Who won the Moscow Derby?

KOROTKÓV. He did—but what of that? It was only chance. If Crakus had not fallen ill. . . . [*Enter footman*].

AFRÉMOV. What is it?

FOOTMAN. A lady has come, and is asking for Mr. Protásov.

AFRÉMOV. What is she like? A real lady?

FOOTMAN. I don't know her name, but she's a real lady.

AFRÉMOV. Fédya! a lady to see you!

FÉDYA [*startled*] Who is it?

AFRÉMOV. He doesn't know.

FOOTMAN. Shall I ask her into the dining-room?

FÉDYA. No, wait . . . I'll go myself and see.

Exeunt Fédya and footman.

KOROTKÓV. Who can it be? It must be Másha.

STÁKHOV. Which Másha?

KOROTKÓV. The gipsy. She's in love with him, like a cat.

STÁKHOV. What a darling she is . . .! And how she sings!

AFRÉMOV. Charming! Tanyúsha and she! They sang with Peter yesterday.

STÁKHOV. What a lucky fellow that is!

AFRÉMOV. Why? Because the girls are all sweet on him? Not much luck in that!

KOROTKÓV. I can't bear gipsies—nothing refined about them.

BUTKÉVICH. No, you can't say that!

KOROTKÓV. I'd give the whole lot for one French woman!

AFRÉMOV. Yes, we know you—and your æsthetics! . . . I'll go and see who it is. [*Exit*].

STÁKHOV. If it's Másha, bring her in here! We'll make her sing. . . . No, the gipsies aren't what they used to be. Tanyúsha, now—by Gad!

BUTKÉVICH. And I believe they're just the same.

STÁKHOV. Just the same? When instead of their own pieces they sing empty drawing-room songs?

BUTKÉVICH. Some drawing-room songs are very good.

KOROTKÓV. Will you bet I don't get them to sing a drawing-room song so that you won't know it from one of their own?

STÁKHOV. Korotkóv always wants to bet!

Enter Afrémov.

AFRÉMOV. I say, you fellows, it's not Másha—and there's no room he can ask her into but this. Let us clear out to the billiard room. [*Exeunt*].

Enter Fédyá and Sásha.

SÁSHA [*confused*] Fédyá, forgive me if it's unpleasant—but for God's sake hear me! . . . [*Her voice trembles*].

Fédyá walks up and down the room. Sásha sits down, and follows him with her eyes.

SÁSHA. Fédyá! Come home!

FÉDYA. Just listen to me, Sásha . . . I quite understand you, Sásha dear, and in your place I should do the same—I should try to find some way to bring back the old state of affairs. But if you were me, if—strange as it sounds—you, dear sensitive girl, were in my place . . . you would certainly have done as I did, and have gone away and ceased to spoil someone else's life.

SÁSHA. Spoil? How? As if Lisa could live without you!

FÉDYA. Oh, Sásha dear! Dear heart! . . . She can, she can! And she will yet be happy—far happier than with me.

SÁSHA. Never!

FÉDYA. It seems so to you [*Takes her hand*] . . . But that's not the point. The chief thing is, that *I can't*! . . . You know, one folds a piece of thick paper this way and that a hundred times and still it holds together; but fold it once more, and it comes in half. . . . So it was with Lisa and me. It hurts me too much to look into her eyes—and she feels the same, believe me!

SÁSHA. No, no!

FÉDYA. You say "No," but you yourself know that it is "Yes"!

SÁSHA. I can only judge by myself. If I were in her place, and you answered as you are doing, it would be dreadful!

FÉDYA. Yes, for you . . . [*Pause ; both are agitated*].

SÁSHA [*rises*] Must things really remain so?

FÉDYA. I suppose . . .

SÁSHA. Fédyà come back!

FÉDYA. Thank you, Sásha dear! You will always remain a precious memory to me. . . . But good-bye, dear heart! . . . Let me kiss you. [*Kisses her forehead*].

SÁSHA [*agitated*] No, I don't say good-bye, and I don't believe, and won't believe . . . Fédyà!

FÉDYA. Well then, listen! But give me your word that what I tell you, you won't repeat to anybody—do you promise?

SÁSHA. Of course!

FÉDYA. Well then, listen, Sásha. . . . It's true that I am her husband and the father of her child, but I am—superfluous! Wait, wait—don't reply. . . . You think I'm jealous? Not at all! In the first place, I have no right; secondly, I have no cause. Victor Karénin is her old friend and mine too. He loves her, and she him.

SÁSHA. No!

FÉDYA. She does—as an honest, moral woman can, who does not allow herself to love anyone but her husband. But she loves, and will love him when this obstacle [*points to himself*] is removed; and I will remove it, and they shall be happy! [*His voice trembles*].

SÁSHA. Fédyà, don't talk like that!

FÉDYA. Why, you know very well that it's true! And I shall be glad of their happiness, and it's the best I can do. I shall not return, but shall give them their freedom. . . . Tell them so. . . . Don't answer—and good-bye!

Kisses her on the forehead, and opens the door for her.

SÁSHA. Fédyà—you are wonderful!

FÉDYA. Good-bye, good-bye! . . . [*Exit Sásha*].

FÉDYA. Yes, yes. . . . That's the thing . . . that's the thing! . . . [*Rings*].

Enter footman.

FÉDYA. Call your master. . . . [*Exit footman*]. . . . And it's true—it's true.

Enter Afrémov.

FÉDYA. Come along!

AFRÉMOV. Have you settled matters?

FÉDYA. Splendidly! [*Sings*]

“ And she swore by ev'ry power . . . ”

Splendidly! . . . Where are they all?

AFRÉMOV. They're playing billiards.

FÉDYA. That's right—we will too [*Sings*]

“ Rest here, just an hour . . . ”

Come along!

Curtain.

ACT III

SCENE 1

Prince Abrézkov, a sixty-year-old bachelor with moustaches, a retired army man, elegant, very dignified and melancholy-looking. Anna Dmítrievna Karénina (Victor's mother), a fifty-year-old "grande dame" who tries to appear younger, and intersperses her remarks with French expressions.

Anna Dmítrievna's sitting-room, furnished with expensive simplicity, and filled with souvenirs.

Anna Dmítrievna is writing. Footman enters.

FOOTMAN. Prince Abrézkov . . .

ANNA DMÍTRIEVNA. Yes, certainly . . . [*Turns round and touches herself up before the looking-glass.*]

Enter Abrézkov.

PRINCE ABRÉZKOV. *J'espère que je ne force pas la consigne.* . . .¹ [*Kisses her hand.*]

ANNA DMÍTRIEVNA. You know that *vous êtes toujours le bienvenu*²—and to-day especially! You got my note?

PRINCE ABRÉZKOV. I did, and this is my answer.

ANNA DMÍTRIEVNA. Ah, my friend! I begin quite to despair. *Il est positivement ensorcelé!*³ I never before knew him so insistent, so obstinate, so pitiless, and so indifferent to me. He has quite changed since that woman dismissed her husband!

¹ I hope I am not forcing myself on you.

² You are always welcome.

³ He is positively bewitched!

PRINCE ABRÉZKOV. What are the facts? How do matters actually stand?

ANNA DMÍTRIEVNA. He wants to marry her come what may.

PRINCE ABRÉZKOV. And how about the husband?

ANNA DMÍTRIEVNA. He agrees to a divorce.

PRINCE ABRÉZKOV. Dear me!

ANNA DMÍTRIEVNA. And he, Victor, lends himself to it, with all the abominations—lawyers, proofs of guilt—*tout ça est dégoûtant!*¹ And it doesn't seem to repel him. I don't understand him—he was always so sensitive, so reserved . . .

PRINCE ABRÉZKOV. He is in love! Ah, when a man really loves . . .

ANNA DMÍTRIEVNA. Yes, but how is it that in our day love could be pure—could be a loving friendship, lasting through life? That kind of love I understand and value.

PRINCE ABRÉZKOV. Nowadays the young generation no longer contents itself with those ideal relations. *La possession de l'âme ne leur suffit plus.*² It can't be helped! . . . What can one do with him?

ANNA DMÍTRIEVNA. You must not say that of *him*—but it's as if he were under a spell. It's just as if he were someone else. . . . You know, I called on her. He begged me so. I went there, did not find her in, and left my card. *Elle m'a fait demander si je ne pourrais la recevoir;*³ and to-day [looks at the clock] at two o'clock, that is in a few minutes' time, she will be here. I promised Victor I would receive her, but you understand how I am placed! I am not myself at all; and so, from old habit, I sent for you. I need your help!

PRINCE ABRÉZKOV. Thank you.

ANNA DMÍTRIEVNA. This visit of hers, you understand,

¹ It is all disgusting!

² For them, to possess the soul is no longer enough.

³ She inquired whether I would receive her.

will decide the whole matter—Victor's fate! I must either refuse my consent—but how can I?

PRINCE ABRÉZKOV. Don't you know her at all?

ANNA DMÍTRIEVNA. I have never seen her. But I'm afraid of her. A good woman could not consent to leave her husband, and he a good man, too! As a fellow-student of Victor's he used to visit us, you know, and was very nice. But whatever he may be, *quels-que soient les torts qu'il a eu vis-à-vis d'elle*,¹ one must not leave one's husband. She ought to bear her cross. What I don't understand is how Victor, with the convictions he holds, can think of marrying a divorced woman! How often—quite lately—he has argued warmly with Spítsin in my presence, that divorce was incompatible with true Christianity; and now he himself is going in for it! *Si elle a pu le charmer à un tel point*² . . . I am afraid of her! But I sent for you to know what *you* have to say to it all, and instead of that I have been doing all the talking myself! What do you think of it? Tell me your opinion. What ought I to do? You have spoken with Victor?

PRINCE ABRÉZKOV. I have: and I think he loves her. He has grown used to loving her; and love has got a great hold on him. He is a man who takes things slowly but firmly. What has once entered his heart will never leave it again; and he will never love anyone but her; and he can never be happy without her, or with anyone else.

ANNA DMÍTRIEVNA. And how willingly Vára Kazántseva would have married him! What a girl she is, and how she loves him!

PRINCE ABRÉZKOV [*smiling*]. *C'est compter sans son hôte!*³ That is quite out of the question now. I think it's best to submit, and help him to get married.

¹ However he may have wronged her.

² If she has been able to charm him to such a degree . . .

³ That's reckoning without your host!

ANNA DMÍTRIEVNA. To a divorced woman—and have him meet his wife's husband? . . . I can't think how you can speak of it so calmly. Is she a woman a mother could wish to see as the wife of her only son—and such a son?

PRINCE ABRÉZKOV. But what is to be done, my dear friend? Of course it would be better if he married a girl whom you knew and liked; but since that's impossible . . . Besides it's not as if he were going to marry a gipsy, or goodness knows who . . .! Lisa Protásova is a very nice good woman. I know her, through my niece Nelly, and know her to be a modest, kind-hearted, affectionate and moral woman.

ANNA DMÍTRIEVNA. A moral woman—who makes up her mind to leave her husband!

PRINCE ABRÉZKOV. This is not like you! You're unkind and harsh! Her husband is the kind of man of whom one says that they are their own worst enemies; but he is an even greater enemy to his wife. He is a weak, fallen, drunken fellow. He has squandered all his property and hers too. She has a child. . . . How can you condemn her for leaving such a man? Nor has she left him: he left her.

ANNA DMÍTRIEVNA. Oh, what mud! What mud! And I have to soil my hands with it!

PRINCE ABRÉZKOV. And how about your religion?

ANNA DMÍTRIEVNA. Of course, of course! To forgive, "As we forgive them that trespass against us." *Mais, c'est plus fort qui moi!*

PRINCE ABRÉZKOV. How could she live with such a man? If she had not loved anyone else she would have had to leave him. She would have had to, for her child's sake. The husband himself—an intelligent kind-hearted man when he is in his senses—advises her to do it. . . .

Enter Victor, who kisses his mother's hand and greets Prince Abrézkov.

VICTOR. Mother, I have come to say this: Elisabeth Andréyevna will be here in a minute, and I beg, I implore you—if you still refuse your consent to my marriage . . .

ANNA DMÍTRIEVNA [*interrupting him*] Of course I still refuse my consent . . .

VICTOR [*continues his speech and frowns*] In that case I beg, I implore you, not to speak to her of your refusal! Don't settle matters negatively . . .

ANNA DMÍTRIEVNA. I don't expect we shall mention the subject. For my part, I certainly won't begin.

VICTOR. And she is even less likely to. I only want you to make her acquaintance.

ANNA DMÍTRIEVNA. The one thing I can't understand is how you reconcile your desire to marry Mrs. Protásova, who has a husband living, with your religious conviction that divorce is contrary to Christianity.

VICTOR. Mother, this is cruel of you! Are we really so immaculate that we must always be perfectly consistent when life is so complex? Mother, why are you so cruel to me?

ANNA DMÍTRIEVNA. I love you. I desire your happiness.

VICTOR [*to Prince Abrézkov*] Prince!

PRINCE ABRÉZKOV. Of course you desire his happiness. But it is not easy for you and me, with our grey hairs, to understand the young; and it is particularly difficult for a mother grown accustomed to her own idea of how her son is to be happy. Women are all like that.

ANNA DMÍTRIEVNA. Yes, yes indeed! You are all against me! You may do it, of course. *Vous êtes majeur*.¹ . . . But you will kill me!

VICTOR. You are not yourself. This is worse than cruelty!

PRINCE ABRÉZKOV [*to Victor*] Be quiet, Victor. Your mother's words are always worse than her deeds.

¹ You are of age.

ANNA DMÍTRIEVNA. I shall tell her how I think and feel, but I will do it without offending her.

PRINCE ABRÉZKOV. Of that I am sure.

Enter footman.

PRINCE ABRÉZKOV. Here she is.

VICTOR. I'll go.

FOOTMAN. Elisabeth Andréyevna Protásova.

VICTOR. I am going. *Please, Mother!* [Exit.

Prince Abrézkov also rises.

ANNA DMÍTRIEVNA. Ask her in. *[To Prince Abrézkov]*
No, you must please stay here!

PRINCE ABRÉZKOV. I thought you'd find a *tête-à-tête* easier.

ANNA DMÍTRIEVNA. No, I'm afraid . . . *[Is restless]* If I want to be left *tête-à-tête* with her, I will nod to you. *Cela dépendra.*¹ . . . To be left alone with her may make it difficult for me. But I'll do like that if . . . *[Makes a sign].*

PRINCE ABRÉZKOV. I shall understand. I feel sure you will like her. Only be just.

ANNA DMÍTRIEVNA. How you are all against me!

Enter Lisa, in visiting dress and hat.

ANNA DMÍTRIEVNA *[rising]* I was sorry not to find you in, and it is kind of you to call.

LISA. I never dreamed that you'd be so good as to call. . . . I am so grateful to you for wishing to see me.

ANNA DMÍTRIEVNA *[pointing to Prince Abrézkov]* You are acquainted?

PRINCE ABRÉZKOV. Yes, certainly. I have had the pleasure of being introduced. *[They shake hands and sit down]* My niece Nelly has often mentioned you to me.

LISA. Yes, she and I were great friends *[glancing timidly at Anna Dmítrievna]*, and we are still friendly. *[To Anna Dmítrievna]* I never expected that you would wish to see me.

ANNA DMÍTRIEVNA. I knew your husband well. He was

¹ It will depend.

friendly with Victor, and used to come to our house before he left for Tambóv. I think it was there you married?

LISA. Yes, it was there we married.

ANNA DMÍTRIEVNA. But after his return to Moscow he never visited us.

LISA. Yes, he hardly went out anywhere.

ANNA DMÍTRIEVNA. And he never introduced you to me.

[*Awkward silence.*]

PRINCE ABRÉZKOV. The last time I met you was at the theatricals at the Denísovs'. They went off very well; and you were acting.

LISA. No . . . Yes . . . Of course . . . I did act. [*Silence again*]. Anna Dmítrievna, forgive me if what I am going to say displeases you, but I can't and don't know how to dissemble! I have come because Victor Miháylovich said . . . because he—I mean, because you wished to see me. . . . But it is best to speak out [*with a catch in her voice*] . . . It is very hard for me. . . . But you are kind.

PRINCE ABRÉZKOV. I'd better go.

ANNA DMÍTRIEVNA. Yes, do.

Prince Abrézkov takes leave of both women, and exit.

ANNA DMÍTRIEVNA. Listen, Lisa . . . I am very sorry for you, and I like you. But I love Victor. He is the one being I love in the world. I know his soul as I know my own. It is a proud soul. He was proud as a boy of seven. . . . Not proud of his name or wealth, but proud of his character and innocence, which he has guarded. He is as pure as a maiden.

LISA. I know.

ANNA DMÍTRIEVNA. He has never loved any woman. You are the first. I do not say I am not jealous. I am jealous. But we mothers—your son is still a baby, and it is too soon for you—we are prepared for that. I was

prepared to give him up to his wife and not to be jealous—but to a wife as pure as himself . . .

LISA. I . . . have I . . .

ANNA DMÍTRIEVNA. Forgive me! I know it was not your fault, but you are unfortunate. And I know him. Now he is ready to bear—and will bear—anything, and he would never mention it, but he would suffer. His wounded pride would suffer, and he would not be happy.

LISA. I have thought of that.

ANNA DMÍTRIEVNA. Lisa, my dear, you are a wise and good woman. If you love him you must desire his happiness more than your own. And if that is so, you will not wish to bind him and give him cause to repent—though he would never *say* a word.

LISA. I know he wouldn't! I have thought about it, and have asked myself that question. I have thought of it, and have spoken of it to him. But what can I do, when he says he does not wish to live without me? I said to him: "Let us be friends, but do not spoil your life; do not bind your pure life to my unfortunate one!" But he does not wish for that.

ANNA DMÍTRIEVNA. No, not at present. . . .

LISA. Persuade him to leave me, and I will agree. I love him for his own happiness and not for mine. Only help me! Do not hate me! Let us lovingly work together for his happiness!

ANNA DMÍTRIEVNA. Yes, yes! I have grown fond of you. [*Kisses her. Lisa cries*] And yet, and yet it is dreadful! If only he had loved you before you married . . .

LISA. He says he did love me then, but did not wish to prevent a friend's happiness.

ANNA DMÍTRIEVNA. Ah, how hard it all is! Still, we will love one another, and God will help us to find what we want.

VICTOR [*entering*] Mother, dear! I have heard every-

thing! I expected this: you are fond of her, and all will be well!

LISA. I am sorry you heard. I should not have said it if . . .

ANNA DMÍTRIEVNA. Still, nothing is settled. All I can say is, that if it were not for all these unfortunate circumstances, I should have been glad. [*Kisses her*].

VICTOR. Only, please don't change!

Curtain.

SCENE 2

A plainly furnished room; bed, table, sofa. Fédyá alone.

A knock at the door. A woman's voice outside. Why have you locked yourself in, Theodore Vasilyevich? Fédyá! Open . . .!

FÉDYA [*gets up and unlocks door*] That's right! Thank you for coming. It's dull, terribly dull!

MÁSHA. Why didn't you come to us? Been drinking again? Eh, eh! And after you'd promised!

FÉDYA. D'you know, I've no money!

MÁSHA. And why have I taken it into my head to care for you!

FÉDYA. Másha!

MÁSHA. Well, what about "Másha, Másha"? If you were really in love, you'd have got a divorce long ago. They themselves asked you to. You say you don't love her, but all the same you keep to her! I see you don't wish . . .

FÉDYA. But you know why I don't wish!

MÁSHA. That's all rubbish. People say quite truly that you're an empty fellow.

FÉDYA. What can I say to you? That your words hurt me, you know without being told!

MÁSHA. Nothing hurts you!

FÉDYA. You know that the one joy I have in life is your love.

MÁSHA. *My love—yes; but yours doesn't exist.*

FÉDYA. All right. I'm not going to assure you. Besides, what's the good? You know!

MÁSHA. Fédyá; why torment me?

FÉDYA. Which of us torments?

MÁSHA [*cries*] You are unkind!

FÉDYA [*goes up and embraces her*] Másha! What's it all about? Stop that. One must live, and not whine. It doesn't suit you at all, my lovely one!

MÁSHA. You do love me?

FÉDYA. Whom else could I love?

MÁSHA. Only me? Well then, read what you have been writing.

FÉDYA. It will bore you.

MÁSHA. It's you who wrote it, so it's sure to be good.

FÉDYA. Well then listen. [*Reads*] "One day, late in autumn, my friend and I agreed to meet on the Murýgin fields, where there was a close thicket with many young birds in it. The day was dull, warm, and quiet. The mist . . ."

Enter two old gipsies, Másha's parents, Iván Makárovich and Nastásia Ivánovna.

NASTÁSIA [*stepping up to her daughter*] Here you are then, you damned runaway sheep! [*To Fédyá*] My respects to you, sir! [*To Másha*] Is that how you treat us, eh?

IVÁN [*to Fédyá*] It's wrong, sir, what you're doing! You're ruining the wench! Oh, but it's wrong . . . You're doing a dirty deed.

NASTÁSIA. Put on your shawl! March at once! . . . Running away like this! What can I say to the choir?

Gallivanting with a beggar—what can you get out of him?

MÁSHA. I don't gallivant! I love this gentleman, that's all. I've not left the choir. I'll go on singing, and what . . .

IVÁN. Say another word, and I'll pull the hair off your head! . . . Slut! . . . Who behaves like that? Not your father, nor your mother, nor your aunt! . . . It's bad, sir! We were fond of you—often and often we sang to you without pay. We pitied you, and what have you done?

NASTÁSIA. You've ruined our daughter for nothing . . . our own, our only daughter, the light of our eyes, our priceless jewel—you've trodden her into the mire, that's what you've done! You've no conscience.

FÉDYA. Nastásia Ivánovna, you suspect me falsely. Your daughter is like a sister to me. I care for her honour. You must think no evil . . . but I love her! What is one to do?

IVÁN. But you didn't love her when you had money! If you'd then subscribed ten thousand roubles or so to the choir, you might have had her honourably. But now you've squandered everything, and carry her off by stealth! It's a shame, sir, a shame!

MÁSHA. He has not carried me off! I came to him myself, and if you take me away now, I shall come back again. I love him, and there's an end of it! My love is stronger than all your locks . . . I won't!

NASTÁSIA. Come, Másha dearest! Come, my own! Don't sulk. You've done wrong, and now come along.

IVÁN. Now then, you've talked enough! March! [Seizes her hand] Excuse us, sir! [Exit the three gipsies].

Enter Prince Abrézkov.

PRINCE ABRÉZKOV. Excuse me. I have been an unwilling witness of an unpleasant scene. . . .

FÉDYA. Whom have I the honour? . . . [*Recognises the Prince*] Ah, Prince Abrézkov! [*They shake hands*].

PRINCE ABRÉZKOV. An unwilling witness of an unpleasant scene. I should have been glad not to hear, but having overheard it, I consider it my duty to tell you so. I was directed here, and had to wait at the door for those people to come out—more particularly as their very loud voices rendered my knocking inaudible.

FÉDYA. Yes, yes—please take a seat. Thank you for telling me: it gives me the right to explain that scene to you. I don't mind what you may think of me, but I should like to tell you that the reproaches you heard addressed to that girl, that gipsy singer, were unjust. That girl is as morally pure as a dove; and my relations with her are those of a friend. There may be a tinge of romance in them, but it does not destroy the purity—the honour—of the girl. That is what I wished to tell you; but what is it you want of me? In what way can I be of service?

PRINCE ABRÉZKOV. In the first place, I . . .

FÉDYA. Forgive me, Prince. My present social standing is such, that my former slight acquaintance with you does not entitle me to a visit from you, unless you have some business with me. What is it?

PRINCE ABRÉZKOV. I won't deny it. You have guessed right. I have business with you; but I beg you to believe that the alteration in your position in no wise affects my attitude towards you.

FÉDYA. I am sure of it.

PRINCE ABRÉZKOV. My business is this. The son of my old friend, Anna Dmítrievna Karénina, and she herself, have asked me to ascertain directly from you what are your relations . . . May I speak out? . . . your relations with your wife, Elisabeth Andréyevna Protásova.

FÉDYA. My relations with my wife, or rather with her who *was* my wife, are entirely at an end.

PRINCE ABRÉZKOV. So I understood, and that is why I accepted this difficult mission.

FÉDYA. At an end, and, I hasten to add, not by her fault, but by mine—by my innumerable faults. She is, as she always was, quite irreproachable.

PRINCE ABRÉZKOV. Well then, Victor Karénin, or rather his mother, asked me to find out what your intentions are.

FÉDYA [*growing excited*] What intentions? I have none. I set her quite free! Moreover, I will never disturb her peace. I know she loves Victor Karénin. Well, let her! I consider him a very dull, but very good and honourable man, and I think that she will, as the phrase goes, be happy with him; and—*que le bon Dieu les bénisse!*¹ That's all. . .

PRINCE ABRÉZKOV. Yes, but we . . .

FÉDYA [*interrupting*] And don't suppose that I feel the least bit jealous. If I said that Victor is dull, I withdraw the remark. He is an excellent, honourable, moral man: almost the direct opposite of myself. And he has loved her from childhood. Perhaps she too may have loved him when she married me—that happens sometimes! The very best love is unconscious love. I believe she always did love him; but as an honest woman she did not confess it even to herself. But . . . a shadow of some kind always lay across our family life—but why am I confessing to you?

PRINCE ABRÉZKOV. Please do! Believe me, my chief reason for coming to you was my desire to understand the situation fully. . . . I understand you. I understand that the shadow, as you so well express it, may have been . . .

FÉDYA. Yes, it was; and that perhaps is why I could not find satisfaction in the family life she provided for me, but was always seeking something, and being carried

¹ May God bless them!

away. However, that sounds like excusing myself. I don't want to, and can't, excuse myself. I was (I say with assurance, *was*) a bad husband. I say *was*, because in my consciousness I am not, and have long not been, her husband. I consider her perfectly free. So there you have my answer to your question.

PRINCE ABRÉZKOV. Yes, but you know Victor's family, and himself too. His relation to Elisabeth Andréyevna is, and has been all through, most respectful and distant. He assisted her when she was in trouble . . .

FÉDYA. Yes, I by my dissipation helped to draw them together. What's to be done? It had to be so!

PRINCE ABRÉZKOV. You know the strictly Orthodox convictions of that family. Having myself a broader outlook on things, I do not share them; but I respect and understand them. I understand that for him, and especially for his mother, union with a woman without a Church marriage is unthinkable.

FÉDYA. Yes, I know his stu . . . his strictness, his conservatism in these matters. But what do they want? A divorce? I told them long ago that I am quite willing; but the business of taking the blame on myself, and all the lies connected with it, are very trying. . . .¹

PRINCE ABRÉZKOV. I quite understand you, and sympathise. But how can it be avoided? I think it might be arranged that way—but you are right. It is dreadful, and I quite understand you.

FÉDYA [*pressing the Prince's hand*] Thank you, dear Prince! I always knew you were a kind and honourable man. Tell me what to do. How am I to act? Put yourself in my place. I am not trying to improve. I am a good-for-nothing; but there are things I cannot do quietly. I cannot quietly tell lies.

¹ Under the Russian law divorce was only obtainable if ocular evidence of adultery was forthcoming, and a great deal of perjury was usually involved in such cases.

PRINCE ABRÉZKOV. I don't understand you! You, a capable, intelligent man, so sensitive to what is good—how can you let yourself be so carried away—so forget what you expect of yourself? How have you ruined your life and come to this?

FÉDYA [*forcing back tears of emotion*] I have led this disorderly life for ten years, and this is the first time a man like you has pitied me! I have been pitied by my boon-companions, by rakes and by women; but a reasonable, good man like you . . . Thank you! How did I come to my ruin? First, through drink. It is not that drink tastes nice; but do what I will, I always feel I am not doing the right thing, and I feel ashamed. I talk to you now, and feel ashamed. As for being a *Maréchal de la noblesse*, or a Bank Director—I should feel ashamed, so ashamed! It is only when I drink that I do not feel this shame. And music: not operas or Beethoven, but gipsies! . . . That is life! Energy flows into one's veins! And then those dear black eyes, and those smiles! And the more delicious it is, the more ashamed one feels afterwards.

PRINCE ABRÉZKOV. How about work?

FÉDYA. I have tried it, but it's no good. I am always dissatisfied with it—but what's the use of talking about myself! I thank you.

PRINCE ABRÉZKOV. Then what am I to say?

FÉDYA. Tell them I will do what they wish. They want to get married, and that there should be no obstacle to their marriage?

PRINCE ABRÉZKOV. Of course.

FÉDYA. I'll do it! Tell them I will certainly do it.

PRINCE ABRÉZKOV. But when?

FÉDYA. Wait a bit. Well, say in a fortnight. Will that do?

PRINCE ABRÉZKOV. Then I may tell them so?

FÉDYA. You may. Good-bye, Prince! Thank you once again!

[*Exit Prince*].

FÉDYA [*sits for a long time and smiles silently*] That's the way, that's the way! It must be so, must be, must be! Splendid!

Curtain.

ACT IV

SCENE 1

A private room in a restaurant. A waiter shows in Fédyá and Iván Petróvich Alexándrov.

WAITER. Here, please. No one will disturb you here. I'll bring some paper directly.

IVÁN PETRÓVICH. Protásov, I'll come in too.

FÉDYA [*seriously*] If you like, but I'm busy and . . . All right, come in.

IVÁN PETRÓVICH. You wish to reply to their demands? I'll tell you what to say. I should not do it that way—I always speak straight out, and act with decision.

FÉDYA [*to waiter*] A bottle of champagne!

Exit waiter.

FÉDYA [*taking out a revolver and putting it on the table*] Wait a bit!

IVÁN PETRÓVICH. What's that? Do you want to shoot yourself? You can if you like. I understand you! They wish to humiliate you, and you will show them the sort of man you are! You will kill yourself with a revolver, and them with magnanimity. I understand you. I understand everything, because I am a genius.

FÉDYA. Of course—of course. Only . . . [*Enter waiter with paper and ink*].

FÉDYA [*covers the revolver with a napkin*] Uncork it—let's have a drink. [*They drink. Fédyá writes*] Wait a bit!

IVÁN PETRÓVICH. Here's to your . . . great journey! You know I'm above all this. I'm not going to restrain

you! Life and death are alike to Genius. I die in life, and live in death. You will kill yourself that two people should pity you; and I—I shall kill myself that the whole world may understand what it has lost. I won't hesitate, or think about it! I seize it [*snatches revolver*]*—now!* And all is over. But it is too soon yet. [*Lays down revolver*] Nor shall I write anything; they must understand it themselves. . . . Oh, you . . .

FÉDYA [*writing*] Wait a bit.

IVÁN PETRÓVICH. Pitiful people! They fuss, they bustle, and don't understand—don't understand anything at all. . . . I'm not talking to you, I am only expressing my thoughts. And, after all, what does humanity need? Very little—only to value its geniuses. But they always are executed, persecuted, tortured. . . . No! I'm not going to be your toy! I will drag you out into the open! No-o-o! Hypocrites!

FÉDYA [*having finished writing, drinks and reads over his letter*] Go away, please!

IVÁN PETRÓVICH. Go away? Well, good-bye then! I am not going to restrain you. I shall do the same. But not yet. I only want to tell you . . .

FÉDYA. All right! You'll tell me afterwards. And now, dear chap, just one thing: give this to the manager [*gives him money*] and ask if a parcel and a letter have come for me. . . . Please do!

IVÁN PETRÓVICH. All right—then you'll wait for me? I have still something important to tell you—something that you will not hear in this world nor in the next, at any rate not till I come there. . . . Am I to let him have *all* of this?

FÉDYA. As much as is necessary. [*Exit Iván Petróvich.*]

Fédya sighs with relief; locks the door behind Iván Petróvich; takes up the revolver, cocks it, puts it to his temple; shudders, and carefully lowers it again. Groans.

FÉDYA. No; I can't! I can't! I can't! [*Knock at the door*] Who's there?

[*Másha's voice from outside*] It's me!

FÉDYA. Who's "me"? Oh, Másha . . . [*opens door*].

MÁSHA. I've been to your place, to Popóv's, to Afrémov's, and guessed that you must be here. [*Sees revolver*] That's a nice thing! There's a fool! A regular fool! Is it possible you really meant to?

FÉDYA. No, I couldn't.

MÁSHA. Do I count for nothing at all? You heathen! You had no pity for me? Oh, Theodore Vasílyevich, it's a sin, a sin! In return for my love . . .

FÉDYA. I wished to release them. I promised to, and I can't lie.

MÁSHA. And what about me?

FÉDYA. What about you? It would have set you free too. Is it better for you to be tormented by me?

MÁSHA. Seems it's better. I can't live without you.

FÉDYA. What sort of life could you have with me? You'd have cried a bit, and then gone on living your own life.

MÁSHA. I shouldn't have cried at all! Go to the devil, if you don't pity me! [*Cries*].

FÉDYA. Másha, dearest! I meant to do it for the best.

MÁSHA. Best for yourself!

FÉDYA [*smiles*] How's that, when I meant to kill myself?

MÁSHA. Of course, best for yourself! But what is it you want? Tell me.

FÉDYA. What I want? I want a great deal.

MÁSHA. Well, what? What?

FÉDYA. First of all, to keep my promise. That is the first thing, and quite sufficient. To lie, and do all the dirty work necessary to get a divorce . . . I can't!

MÁSHA. Granted that it's horrid—I myself . . .

FÉDYA. Next, they must really be free—my wife and he. After all, they are good people; and why should they suffer? That's the second thing.

MÁSHA. Well, there isn't much good in her, if she's thrown you over.

FÉDYA. She didn't—I threw her over.

MÁSHA. All right, all right! It's always you. She is an angel! What else!

FÉDYA. This—that you are a good, dear girlie—and that I love you, and if I live I shall ruin you.

MÁSHA. That's not your business. I know quite well what will ruin me.

FÉDYA [*sighs*] But above all, above all . . . What use is my life? Don't I know that I am a lost good-for-nothing? I am a burden to myself and to everybody—as your father said. I'm worthless. . . .

MÁSHA. What rubbish! I shall stick to you. I've stuck to you already, and there's an end of it! As to your leading a bad life, drinking and going on the spree—well, you're a living soul! Give it up, and have done with it!

FÉDYA. That's easily said.

MÁSHA. Well, then, do it.

FÉDYA. Yes, when I look at you I feel as if I could really do anything.

MÁSHA. And so you shall! Yes, you'll do it! [*Sees the letter*] What's that? You've written to them? What have you written?

FÉDYA. What have I written? . . . [*Takes the letter and is about to tear it up*] It's no longer wanted now.

MÁSHA [*snatches the letter*] You've said you would kill yourself? Yes? You did not mention the revolver—only said that you'd kill yourself?

FÉDYA. Yes, that I should be no more.

MÁSHA. Give it me—give it, give it! . . . Have you read *What to Do*?

FÉDYA. I think I have.

MÁSHA. It's a tiresome novel, but there's one very, very good thing in it. That what's his name?—Rakhmánov—

goes and pretends he has drowned himself. And you—can you swim?

FÉDYA. No.

MÁSHA. That's all right. Let me have your clothes—everything, and your pocket-book too.

FÉDYA. How can I?

MÁSHA. Wait a bit, wait, wait! Let's go home; then you'll change your clothes.

FÉDYA. But it will be a fraud.

MÁSHA. All right! You go to bathe, your clothes remain on the bank, in the pocket is your pocket-book and this letter.

FÉDYA. Yes, and then?

MÁSHA. And then? Why, then we'll go off together and live gloriously.

Enter Iván Petróvich.

IVÁN PETRÓVICH. There now! And the revolver? I'll take it.

MÁSHA. Take it; take it! We're off.

Curtain.

SCENE 2

The Protasovs' drawing-room.

KARÉNIN. He promised so definitely, that I am sure he will keep his word.

LISA. I am ashamed to say it, but I must confess that what I heard about that gipsy girl makes me feel quite free. Don't think it is jealousy; it isn't, but you know—it sets me free. I hardly know how to tell you. . . .

KARÉNIN. You don't know how to tell me . . . Why?

LISA [*smiling*]. Never mind! Only let me explain what

I feel. The chief thing that tormented me was, that I felt I loved two men; and that meant that I was an immoral woman.

KARÉNIN. *You immoral?*

LISA. But since I knew that he had got someone else, and that he therefore did not need me, I felt free, and felt that I might truthfully say that I love you. Now things are clear within me, and only my position torments me. This divorce! It is such torture—and then this waiting!

KARÉNIN. It will soon, very soon, be settled. Besides his promise, I sent my secretary to him with the petition ready for signature, and told him not to leave till it is signed. If I did not know him so well, I should think he was purposely behaving as he does.

LISA. He? No, it is the result both of his weakness and his honesty. He doesn't want to say what is not true. Only you were wrong to send him money.

KARÉNIN. I had to. The want of it might be the cause of the delay.

LISA. No, there is something bad about money.

KARÉNIN. Well, anyhow, *he* need not have been so punctilious . . .

LISA. How selfish we are becoming!

KARÉNIN. Yes, I confess it. It's your own fault. After all that waiting, that hopelessness, I am now so happy! And happiness makes one selfish. It's your fault!

LISA. Do you think it's you only? I too—I feel full of happiness, bathed in bliss! I have everything—Misha has recovered, your mother likes me, and you—and above all, I, I love!

KARÉNIN. Yes? And no repenting? No turning back?

LISA. Since that day everything has changed in me.

KARÉNIN. And will not change again?

LISA. Never! I only wish you to have done with it all as completely as I have.

Enter nurse, with baby. Lisa takes the baby on her lap.

KARÉNIN. What wretched people we are !

LISA [*kissing baby*] Why ?

KARÉNIN. When yon married, and I heard of it on my return from abroad, and was wretched because I felt that I had lost yon, it was a relief to me to find that you still remembered me. I was content even with that. Then when our friendship was established and I felt your kindness to me, and even a little gleam of something in our friendship that was more than friendship, I was almost happy. I was only tormented by a fear that I was not being honest towards Fédyà. But no ! I was always so firmly conscious that any other relation than one of purest friendship with my friend's wife was impossible—besides which, I knew you—that I was not really troubled about that. Afterwards, when Fédyà began to cause you anxiety, and I felt that I was of some use to you, and that my friendship was beginning to alarm you—I was quite happy, and a sort of vague hope awoke in me. Still later, when he became altogether impossible and you decided to leave him, and I spoke to you plainly for the first time, and you did not say "No," but went away in tears—then I was perfectly happy; and had I then been asked what more I wanted, I should have answered "Nothing" ! But later on, when there came the possibility of uniting our lives : when my mother grew fond of you and the possibility began to be realised ; when you told me that you loved and had loved me, and then (as you did just now) that he no longer existed for you and that you love only me—what more, one would think, could I wish for ? But no ! Now the past torments me ! I wish that past had not existed, and that there were nothing to remind me of it.

LISA [*reproachfully*] Victor !

KARÉNIN. Lisa, forgive me ! If I tell you this, it is only because I don't want a single thought of mine about

you to be hidden from you. I have purposely told you, to show how bad I am, and how well I know that I must struggle with and conquer myself. . . . And now I've done it! I love him.

LISA. That's as it should be. I did all I could, but it was not I that did what you desired : it happened in my heart, from which everything but you has vanished.

KARÉNIN. Everything?

LISA. Everything, everything—or I would not say so.

Enter footman.

FOOTMAN. Mr. Voznesénsky.

KARÉNIN. He's come with Fédyá's answer.

LISA [*to Karénin*] Ask him in here.

KARÉNIN [*rising and going to the door*] Well, here is the answer!

LISA [*gives baby to nurse; exit nurse*] Is it possible, Victor, that everything will now be decided? [*Kisses Karénin*].

Enter Voznesénsky.

KARÉNIN. Well?

VOZNESÉNSKY. He has gone.

KARÉNIN. Gone! And without signing the petition?

VOZNESÉNSKY. The petition is not signed, but a letter was left for you and Elisabeth Andréyevna [*Takes letter out of his pocket and gives it to Karénin*] I went to his lodgings, and was told he was at the restaurant. I went there, and Mr. Protásov told me to return in an hour and I should then have his answer. I went back, and then . . .

KARÉNIN. Is it possible that this means another delay? More excuses! No, that would be downright wicked. How he has fallen!

LISA. But do read the letter! [*Karénin opens letter*].

VOZNESÉNSKY. You do not require me any longer?

KARÉNIN. Well, no. Good-bye! Thank you . . .
[*Pauses in astonishment as he reads*].

Exit Voznesénsky.

LISA. What—what is it?

KARÉNIN. This is awful!

LISA [*takes hold of letter*] Read!

KARÉNIN [*reads*] "Lisa and Victor, I address myself to you both. I won't lie and call you 'dear' or anything else. I cannot master the feeling of bitterness and reproach (I reproach myself, but all the same it is painful) when I think of you and of your love and happiness. I know everything. I know that though I was the husband, I have—by a series of accidents—been in your way. *C'est moi qui suis l'intrus*.¹ But all the same, I cannot restrain a feeling of bitterness and coldness towards you. I love you both in theory, especially Lisa, Lisette! But actually I am more than cold towards you. I know I am wrong, but cannot change.

LISA. How can he . . .

KARÉNIN [*continues reading*] "But to business! This very feeling of discord within me forces me to fulfil your desire not in the way you wish. Lying, acting so disgusting a comedy, bribing the Consistorium, and all those horrors, are intolerably repulsive to me. Vile as I may be, I am vile in a different way, and cannot take part in those abominations—simply cannot! The solution at which I have arrived is the simplest: to be happy, you must marry. I am in the way; consequently I must destroy myself. . . ."

LISA [*seizes Victor's hand*] Victor!

KARÉNIN [*reads*] ". . . must destroy myself. And I will do it. When you get this letter, I shall be no more.

"P.S. What a pity you sent me money to pay for the divorce proceedings! It is unpleasant, and unlike you! But it can't be helped. I have so often made mistakes, why shouldn't you make one? I return the money. My

¹ It is I who am the intruder.

way of escape is shorter, cheaper, and surer. All I ask is, don't be angry with me, and think kindly of me. And, one thing more—there is a clockmaker, Evgénjev, here. Can't you help him, and set him on his feet? He's a good man, though weak.—Good-bye,

“FÉDYA.”

LISA. He has taken his life! Yes . . .

KARÉNIN [*rings, and runs out to the hall*] Call Mr. Voznesénsky back!

LISA. I knew it! I knew it! Fédyá, dear Fédyá!

KARÉNIN. Lisa!

LISA. It's not true, not true that I didn't love him and don't love him! I love only him! I love him! And I've killed him. Leave me!

Enter Voznesénsky.

KARÉNIN. Where is Mr. Protásov? What did they tell you?

VOZNESÉNSKY. They told me he went out this morning, left this letter, and had not returned.

KARÉNIN. We shall have to find out about it, Lisa. I must leave you.

LISA. Forgive me, but I too can't lie! Go now—go, and find out . . .

Curtain.

ACT V

SCENE 1

A dirty room in a low-class restaurant. A table, at which people sit drinking tea and vodka. In the foreground a small table, at which sits Fédya, tattered, and much come down in the world. With him is Petushkóv, a gentle, mild man with long hair, of clerical appearance. Both are slightly drunk.

PETUSHKÓV. I understand, I understand. That is true love! Yes? Go on.

FÉDYA. Well, you know, if a woman of our class showed such feeling and sacrificed everything for the man she loved. . . . But she was a gipsy, brought up to money-hunting, and yet she had this self-sacrificing love! Gave everything, and wanted nothing herself! The contrast was so wonderful!

PETUSHKÓV. Yes, in art we call it "value." You can only get quite bright red by putting green round it. But that's not to the point. I understand, quite understand.

FÉDYA. Yes, and I believe the one good action of my life is that I never took advantage of her love. And do you know why?

PETUSHKÓV. Pity.

FÉDYA. Oh no! I never felt pity for her. What I felt for her was always rapturous admiration—and when she sang! Ah, how she sang—and perhaps still sings! I always regarded her as far above me. I did not ruin her, simply because I loved her; loved her truly. And now she's a good, happy memory! [*Drinks*].

PETUSHKÓV. Yes, I understand, I understand. It's ideal.

FÉDYA. I'll tell you something. I have had my passions, and once I was in love with a lady—very handsome—and I loved her nastily, like a dog. She gave me a *rendezvous*. And I did not go, because I thought it was treating the husband shabbily. And it is strange that, even now, when I remember it I want to feel pleased and to approve of myself for having acted honourably, but I always repent as if I had committed a sin! But in the case of Másha, on the contrary, I am always pleased—pleased that I did not pollute that feeling of mine. . . . I may fall lower still, sell all I have on me, be covered with lice and sores—but this jewel . . . no, not jewel, but ray of sunshine, is still with me and in me.

PETUSHKÓV. I understand, I understand! And where is she now?

FÉDYA. I don't know! And I'd rather not know. All *that* belonged to a different life; and I don't want to mix it up with this. . . .

A woman is heard screaming at a table behind. The manager and a policeman come in and take her out. Fédyá and Petushkóv listen, and look on in silence. When all is quiet again,

PETUSHKÓV. Yes, your life is astonishing.

FÉDYA. No, it's most simple! You know, in the society in which I was born there are only three careers open to a man—only three. The first is to enter the civil or military service, to earn money and increase the abominations amid which we live. That was repulsive to me. Perhaps I had not the capacity for it; but above all it repelled me. Then the second is to destroy those abominations. To do that you must be a hero; and I am not a hero. And the third is to forget it all by going on the spree, drinking and singing. That is what

I did. And this is what my singing has brought me to! [*Drinks*].

PETUSHKÓV. And what about family life? I should be happy if I had a wife. My wife ruined me.

FÉDYA. Family life? Yes, my wife was an ideal woman. She is still living. But how shall I tell you? There was no yeast in it—you know, the yeast that makes the beer froth! Well, there was nothing of that in our life: it was flat, and I wanted something to help me to forget—and one can't forget when there's no sparkle in life. Then I began to do all sorts of nasty things. And you know, we love people for the good we do them, and dislike them for the harm we do them; and I did her much harm. She seemed to love me . . .

PETUSHKÓV. Why do you say "seemed"?

FÉDYA. I say it because there was never anything about her that made her creep into my soul as Másha did. But that's not what I meant to say. When she was pregnant, or nursing her baby, I used to vanish, and come home drunk; and of course, just because of that, I loved her less and less. Yes, yes! [*in ecstasy*] I have it! The reason I love Másha is that I did her good and not harm. That's why I love her. The other one I tormented, and therefore I don't like her. . . . No, after all, I simply don't like her! Was I jealous? Yes, but that too is past. . . .

Enter Artémyev, with a cockade on his cap, dyed moustaches, and old renovated clothes.

ARTÉMYEV. Wish you a good appetite! [*Bows to Fédyá*] I see you've made acquaintance with our painter, our artist.

FÉDYA [*coldly*] Yes, we are acquainted.

ARTÉMYEV [*to Petushkóv*] And have you finished the portrait?

PETUSHKÓV. No, I lost the order.

ARTÉMYEV [*sits down*] I'm not in your way?

Fédyá and Petushkóv do not answer.

PETUSHKÓV. Theodore Vasilyevich was telling me about his life.

ARTÉMYEV. Secrets? Then I won't disturb you—go on? I'm sure I don't want you. Swine! [*Goes to next table and calls for beer. He listens all the time to Fédyá's conversation with Petushkóv, and leans towards them without their noticing it.*]

FÉDYA. I don't like that gentleman.

PETUSHKÓV. He was offended.

FÉDYA. Well, let him be! I can't stand him. He is such a fellow, my words won't come when he is there. Now with you I feel at ease, and comfortable. Well, what was I saying?

PETUSHKÓV. You were speaking about your jealousy. And how was it you parted from your wife?

FÉDYA. Ah! [*Pauses and considers*] It's a curious story. My wife is married . . .

PETUSHKÓV. How's that? Are you divorced?

FÉDYA [*smiles*] No, I left her a widow.

PETUSHKÓV. What do you mean?

FÉDYA. I mean that she's a widow! I don't exist.

PETUSHKÓV. Don't exist?

FÉDYA. No, I'm a corpse! Yes . . . [*Arténýev leans over, listening*] Well, you see—I *can* tell *you* about it; and besides, it happened long ago; and you don't know my real name. It was this way. When I had tired out my wife and had squandered everything I could lay my hands on, and had become unbearable, a protector turned up for her. Don't imagine that there was anything dirty or bad about it—no, he was my friend and a very good fellow—only in everything my exact opposite! And as there is far more evil than good in me, it follows that he was a good—a very good man: honourable, firm, self-restrained and, in a word, virtuous. He had known my wife from her childhood, and loved her. When she married me he resigned himself to his fate. But later,

when I became horrid and tormented her, he began to come oftener to our house. I myself wished it. They fell in love with one another, and meanwhile I went altogether to the bad, and abandoned my wife of my own accord. And besides, there was Másha. I myself advised them to marry. They did not want to, but I became more and more impossible, and it ended in . . .

PETUSHKÓV. The usual thing?

FÉDYA. No. I am sure; I know for certain that they remained pure. He is a religious man, and considers marriage without the Church's blessing a sin. So they began asking me to agree to a divorce. I should have had to take the blame on myself. It would have been necessary to tell all sorts of lies . . . and I couldn't! Believe me, it would have been easier for me to take my life than to tell such lies—and I wished to do so. But then a kind friend came and said, "Why do it?" and arranged it all for me. I wrote a farewell letter, and next day my clothes, pocket-book and letters were found on the river bank. I can't swim.

PETUSHKÓV. Yes, but how about the body? They did not find that!

FÉDYA. They did! Fancy! A week later somebody's body was found. My wife was called to identify the decomposing body. She just glanced at it. "Is it he?" "It is." And so it was left. I was buried, and they married and are living in this town, happily. And I—here I am, living and drinking! Yesterday I passed their house. The windows were lit up, and someone's shadow crossed the blind. Sometimes it's horrid, and sometimes not. It's horrid when I've no money . . . [Drinks].

ARTÉMYEV [*approaches*] Excuse me, but I heard your story. It's a very good story, and more than that—a very useful one! You say it's horrid when one has no money? There's nothing more horrid. But you, in your

position, should always have money. Aren't you a corpse? Well then . . .

FÉDYA. Excuse me! I did not speak to you and don't want your advice.

ARTÉMYEV. But I want to give it! You are a corpse; but suppose you come to life again? Then they, your wife and that gentleman, who are so happy—they would be bigamists, and at best would be sent to the less distant parts of Siberia. So why should you lack money?

FÉDYA. I beg you to leave me alone.

ARTÉMYEV. Simply write a letter. I'll write it for you if you like; only give me their address, and you'll be grateful to me.

FÉDYA. Be off, I tell you! I have told you nothing!

ARTÉMYEV. Yes, you have! Here's my witness. The waiter heard you say you were a corpse.

WAITER. I know nothing about it.

FÉDYA. You scoundrel!

ARTÉMYEV. Am I a scoundrel? Eh, police! I'll give him in charge!

Fédya rises to go, but Artémyev holds him. Enter policeman.

Curtain.

SCENE 2

The ivy-covered verandah of a bungalow in the country. Anna Dmítrievna Karénina. Lisa (pregnant), nurse, and boy.

LISA. Now he's on his way from the station.

BOY. Who is?

LISA. Papa.

BOY. Papa's coming from the station?

LISA. *C'est étonnant comme il l'aime, tout-à-fait comme son père.*¹

ANNA DMÍTRIEVNA. *Tant mieux ! Se souvient-il de son père véritable ?*²

LISA [*sighs*] I never speak to him about it. I say to myself, "Why confuse him?" Sometimes I think I ought to tell him. What is your opinion, *Maman*?

ANNA DMÍTRIEVNA. I think it is a matter of feeling, Lisa, and if you obey your feelings your heart will tell you what to say and when to say it. What a wonderful conciliator death is ! I confess there was a time when Fédya—whom I had known from a child—was repulsive to me; but now I only remember him as that nice lad, Victor's friend, and as the passionate man who sacrificed himself—illegally and irreligiously, but still sacrificed himself—for those he loved. *On aura beau dire, l'action est belle.*³ . . . I hope Victor will not forget to bring the wool: I've hardly any left. [*Knits*].

LISA. I hear him coming.

The sound of wheels and bells is heard. Lisa rises, and goes to the edge of the veranda.

LISA. There's someone with him, a lady in a bonnet—It's Mother ! I have not seen her for an age. [*Goes to the door*].

Enter Karénin and Anna Pávlovna.

ANNA PÁVLOVNA [*kisses Lisa and Anna Dmítrievna*] Victor met me, and has brought me here.

ANNA DMÍTRIEVNA. He has done well.

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. Yes, certainly. I thought to myself, "When shall I see her again?" and kept putting it off. But now I've come, and if you don't turn me out I will stay till the last train.

¹ It is surprising how he loves him—just as if he were his father.

² So much the better ! Does he remember his real father ?

³ Say what one likes—it is a fine action.

KARÉNIN [*kisses his wife, mother, and the boy*] D'you know what a piece of luck! Congratulate me—I have two days' holiday. They'll be able to get on without me to-morrow.

LISA. Splendid! Two days! It's long since we had that! We'll drive to the Hermitage, shall we?

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. What a likeness! Isn't he a strapping fellow? If only he has not inherited everything—his father's heart . . .

ANNA DMÍTRIEVNA. But not his weakness.

LISA. No, everything! Victor agrees with me that if only he had been rightly guided in childhood . . .

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. Well, I don't know about that; but I simply can't think of him without tears.

LISA. No more can we. How much higher he stands now in our recollection!

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. Yes, I am sure of it.

LISA. How it all seemed insoluble at one time—and then everything suddenly came right.

ANNA DMÍTRIEVNA. Well, Victor, did you get the wool?

KARÉNIN. Yes, I did. [*Brings a bag, and takes out parcels*]. Here is the wool, and this is the eau-de-Cologne; and here are letters—one "On Government Service" for you, Lisa [*hands her a letter*]. Well Anna Pávlovna, if you want to wash your hands I will show you your room. I must make myself tidy too; it is almost dinner time. Lisa, Anna Pávlovna's room is the corner one downstairs, isn't it?

Lisa is pale; holds the letter in trembling hands, and reads it.

KARÉNIN. What's the matter? Lisa, what is it?

LISA. He is alive! . . . Oh God! When will he release me! Victor, what does this mean? [*Sobs*].

KARÉNIN [*Takes letter and reads*] This is dreadful!

ANNA DMÍTRIEVNA. What is it? Why don't you tell me?

KARÉNIN. It is dreadful! He's alive, she's a bigamist,

and I a criminal! It's a notice from the Examining Magistrate—a summons for Lisa to appear before him.

ANNA DMÍTRIEVNA. What a dreadful man! Why has he done this?

KARÉNIN. All lies, lies!

LISA. Oh, how I hate him! I don't know what I am saying . . . [*Exit in tears. Karénin follows her*].

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. How is it he's alive?

ANNA DMÍTRIEVNA. All I know is, that as soon as Victor came in contact with this world of mud—they were sure to draw him in too! And so they have. It's all fraud—all lies!

Curtain.

ACT VI

SCENE 1

The room of an Examining Magistrate, who sits at a table talking to Mélnikov. At a side table a clerk is sorting papers.

EXAMINING MAGISTRATE. But I never said anything of the kind to her. She invented it, and now reproaches me.

MÉLNIKOV. She does not reproach you, but is grieved.

EXAMINING MAGISTRATE. All right, I'll come to dinner. But now I have a very interesting case on. [*To Clerk*] Ask her in.

CLERK. Shall I ask them both?

EXAMINING MAGISTRATE [*finishes his cigarette and hides it*] No, only Mrs. Karénina, or rather—by her first husband—Protásova.

MÉLNIKOV [*going out*] Ah, Karénina!

EXAMINING MAGISTRATE. Yes, it's a nasty affair. It's true I am only beginning to look into it, but it's a bad business. Well, good-bye! [*Exit Mélnikov*].

Enter Lisa, in black and veiled.

EXAMINING MAGISTRATE. Take a seat, please. [*Points to a chair*] Believe me, I much regret to have to question you, but we are under the necessity . . . Please be calm, and remember that you need not answer my questions. Only, in my opinion, for your own sake—and in fact for everybody's sake—the truth is best. It is always best, even practically.

LISA. I have nothing to conceal.

EXAMINING MAGISTRATE. Well then [*looks at paper*—your

name, position, religion—all that I have put down. Is it correct?

LISA. Yes.

EXAMINING MAGISTRATE. You are accused of contracting a marriage with another man, knowing your husband to be alive.

LISA. I did not know it.

EXAMINING MAGISTRATE. And also of having persuaded your husband, and bribed him with money, to commit a fraud—a pretended suicide—in order to free yourself of him.

LISA. That is all untrue.

EXAMINING MAGISTRATE. Well then, allow me to put a few questions. Did you send him 1,200 roubles in July of last year?

LISA. It was his own money, the proceeds of the sale of some things of his. At the time I parted from him, and when I was expecting a divorce, I sent him the money.

EXAMINING MAGISTRATE. Just so! Very well. That money was sent to him on the 17th of July, two days before his disappearance?

LISA. I think it was on the 17th, but I don't remember.

EXAMINING MAGISTRATE. And why was the application to the Consistorium for a divorce withdrawn, just at that time—and the lawyer told not to proceed with the case?

LISA. I don't know.

EXAMINING MAGISTRATE. Well, and when the police asked you to identify the body, how was it you recognised it as your husband's?

LISA. I was so excited that I did not look at the body, and I felt so sure it was he, that when they asked me I answered, "I think it is he."

EXAMINING MAGISTRATE. Yes, you did not see well, in consequence of a very natural excitement. And now may I ask why you have sent a monthly remittance to Sarátov, the very town where your first husband was living?

LISA. My husband sent that money, and I cannot say what it was for, as that is not my secret. But it was not sent to Theodore Vasilyevich, for we were firmly convinced of his death. That I can say for certain.¹

EXAMINING MAGISTRATE. Very well. Only allow me to remark, madam, that the fact of our being servants of the law does not prevent our being men; and believe me I quite understand your position and sympathise with you! You were tied to a man who squandered your property, was unfaithful—in short, brought misfortune. . . .

LISA. I loved him.

EXAMINING MAGISTRATE. Yes; but still the desire to free yourself was natural, and you chose this simpler way, without realising that it would lead you into what is considered a crime—bigamy! I quite understand it. The judges will understand too; and therefore I advise you to confess everything.

LISA. I have nothing to confess. I have never lied. [Cries] Do you want me any longer?

EXAMINING MAGISTRATE. I must ask you to remain here. I will not trouble you with any more questions. Only kindly read this over and sign it. It is your deposition. See whether your answers have been correctly taken down. Please take that seat. [*Points to an armchair by the window.* To Clerk] Ask Mr. Karénin to come in.

Enter Karénin, stern and solemn.

EXAMINING MAGISTRATE. Please take a seat.

KARÉNIN. Thank you! [*Remains standing*] What do you want of me?

EXAMINING MAGISTRATE. I have to take your deposition.

KARÉNIN. In what capacity?

¹ Had Tolstoy lived to give a final revision to this play, he would probably have made it clearer that Karénin sent a monthly payment to the clockmaker Evgénjev, in response to the request contained in the last letter Fédya addressed to Lisa and himself; and that this money found its way to Fédya.

EXAMINING MAGISTRATE [*smiling*] I, in the capacity of Examining Magistrate, am obliged to question you in the capacity of an accused person.

KARÉNIN. Indeed! Accused of what?

EXAMINING MAGISTRATE. Of marrying a woman whose husband was alive. However, allow me to question you properly. Kindly sit down.

KARÉNIN. Thank you.

EXAMINING MAGISTRATE. Your name?

KARÉNIN. Victor Karénin.

EXAMINING MAGISTRATE. Your calling?

KARÉNIN. Chamberlain and Member of Council.

EXAMINING MAGISTRATE. Age?

KARÉNIN. Thirty-eight.

EXAMINING MAGISTRATE. Religion?

KARÉNIN. Orthodox; and I have never before been tried or questioned! Well?

EXAMINING MAGISTRATE. Did you know that Theodore Vasílyevich Protásov was alive when you married his wife?

KARÉNIN. I did not know it. We were both convinced that he was drowned.

EXAMINING MAGISTRATE. After Protásov's alleged death, to whom in Sarátov did you send a monthly remittance?

KARÉNIN. I do not wish to reply to that question.

EXAMINING MAGISTRATE. Very well. Why did you send money—1,200 roubles—to Mr. Protásov just before his pretended death on 17th July?

KARÉNIN. That money was given to me by my wife . . .

EXAMINING MAGISTRATE. By Mrs. Protásova?

KARÉNIN. . . . by my wife, to send to her husband. She considered that money to be his, and having severed all connection with him, considered it unfair to keep it.

EXAMINING MAGISTRATE. One more question—why did you withdraw the application for divorce?

KARÉNIN. Because Theodore Vasílyevich undertook to apply for a divorce, and wrote me about it.

EXAMINING MAGISTRATE. Have you got his letter?

KARÉNIN. It has been lost.¹

EXAMINING MAGISTRATE. It is strange that everything which might convince the Court of the truth of your evidence should either be lost or non-existent.

KARÉNIN. Do you want anything more?

EXAMINING MAGISTRATE. I want nothing, except to do my duty; but you'll have to exonerate yourselves, and I have just advised Mrs. Protásova, and I advise you also, not to try to hide what everyone can see, but to say what really happened. Especially as Mr. Protásov is in such a condition that he has already told everything just as it happened, and will probably do the same in Court, I should advise . . .

KARÉNIN. I request you to keep within the limits of your duty, and not to give me your advice! May we go? [*Approaches Lisa, who rises and takes his arm*].

EXAMINING MAGISTRATE. I am very sorry to be obliged to detain you . . . [*Karénin looks round in astonishment*] Oh, I don't mean that I arrest you. Though that would make it easier to get at the truth, I shall not resort to such a measure. I only want to take Protásov's deposition in your presence, and to confront him with you—which will make it easier for you to detect any falsehood in what he says. Please take a seat. Call in Mr. Protásov!

Enter Fédya, dirty and shabby.

FÉDYA [*addresses Lisa and Karénin*] Lisa! Elisabeth Andréyevna! Victor! I am not guilty! I wished to act for the best. But if I am guilty . . . forgive me, forgive me! [*Bows low to them*].

EXAMINING MAGISTRATE. Please to answer my questions.

FÉDYA. Ask, then.

EXAMINING MAGISTRATE. Your name?

¹ Karénin does not produce Fédya's letter because it would have proved connivance in the divorce proceedings.

FÉDYA. Why, you know it!

EXAMINING MAGISTRATE. Please answer.

FÉDYA. Well then, Theodore Protásov.

EXAMINING MAGISTRATE. Your calling, age and religion?

FÉDYA [*after a pause*] Aren't you ashamed to ask such nonsense? Ask what you want to know, and not such rubbish!

EXAMINING MAGISTRATE. I beg you to be more careful in your expressions, and to answer my questions!

FÉDYA. Well, if you're not ashamed of it, here you are: Calling, graduate; age, forty; religion, Orthodox. What next!

EXAMINING MAGISTRATE. Did Mr. Karénin and your wife know that you were alive when you left your clothes on the river bank and disappeared?

FÉDYA. Certainly not! I wished really to commit suicide, but afterwards—but there's no need to go into that. The thing is, that they knew nothing about it.

EXAMINING MAGISTRATE. How is it that you gave a different account to the police officer?

FÉDYA. What police officer? Oh, when he came to see me at the doss-house? I was drunk, and was romancing. I don't remember what I said. All that was rubbish. Now I am not drunk, and am telling the whole truth! They knew nothing. They believed that I was no longer alive, and I was glad of it. And everything would have gone on as it was, but for that rascal, Artémeyev! If anyone is guilty, it is I alone.

EXAMINING MAGISTRATE. I understand your wish to be magnanimous, but the law demands the truth. Why was money sent to you?

Fédya is silent.

You received through Semyónov the money sent to you in Sarátov?

Fédya is silent.

Why don't you answer? It will be put down in the

depositions that the accused did not answer these questions, and this may harm you and them very much. Well then, how was it?

FÉDYA [*after a pause*] Oh, Mr. Magistrate, how is it you are not ashamed! Why do you pry into other people's lives? You are glad to have power, and to show it, you torment not physically but morally—torment people a thousand times better than yourself!

EXAMINING MAGISTRATE. I beg . . .

FÉDYA. You've nothing to beg! I shall say what I think, and you [*to Clerk*] write it down! At least for once there will be sensible human words in a police report! [*Raises his voice*] There are three people: I, he, and she. Our relations to one another are complex—a spiritual struggle such as you know nothing of, a struggle between good and evil goes on. That struggle ends in a manner which sets them free. They were all at peace. They were happy, and remembered me with affection. I, fallen as I was, was glad that I had acted as I ought, and that I, a good-for-nothing, had gone out of their lives, so as not to stand in the way of people who were good and who had life before them. And so we were all living, when suddenly a blackmailing scoundrel appears who wants me to take part in his rascality, and I send him about his business. Then he comes to you, to the champion of Justice! The guardian of Morality! And you, who receive each month a few pounds for doing your dirty work, put on your uniform, and calmly bully these people—bully people whose little finger is worth more than your whole body and soul! People who would not admit you to their anteroom! But you have got so far, and are pleased . . .

EXAMINING MAGISTRATE. I shall have you turned out!

FÉDYA. I'm not afraid of anyone, because I'm a corpse and you can't do me any harm. No position could be worse than mine! So turn me out!

KARÉNIN. May we go?

EXAMINING MAGISTRATE. Immediately, but first sign your deposition.

FÉDYA. You'd be quite comic, if you weren't so vile!

EXAMINING MAGISTRATE. Take him away! I arrest you.

FÉDYA [*to Lisa and Karénin*] Forgive me!

KARÉNIN [*approaches and holds out his hand*] It had to happen!

Lisa passes by. Fédyà bows low to her.

Curtain.

SCENE 2

A corridor of the Law Courts. In the background a door with glass panels, beside which stands an usher. Further to the right another door through which the accused are led.

Iván Petróvich Alexándrov comes to the first door and wishes to enter.

USHER. Where are you going? You mustn't! Shoving in like that!

IVÁN PETRÓVICH. Why mustn't I? The law says the proceedings are public. [*Applause is heard from inside the Court*].

USHER. Anyhow, you mustn't, and that's all about it.

IVÁN PETRÓVICH. Ignorant fellow! You don't know whom you are speaking to!

A Young Lawyer in a dress-suit enters from the Court.

YOUNG LAWYER. Are you concerned in this case?

IVÁN PETRÓVICH. No, I am the public, and this ignoramus—this Cerberus—won't let me in!

YOUNG LAWYER. But this door is not for the public.

IVÁN PETRÓVICH. I know, but I am a man who should be admitted.

YOUNG LAWYER. Wait a bit—they'll adjourn in a minute. [*Is just going, when he meets Prince Abrézkov*].

PRINCE ABRÉZKOV. May I ask how the case stands?

YOUNG LAWYER. The Counsel are speaking—Petrúshin is addressing the Court.

Applause from within.

PRINCE ABRÉZKOV. And how do the defendants bear their position?

YOUNG LAWYER. With great dignity, especially Karénin and Elisabeth Andréyevna. It is as if not they were being indicted, but they were indicting society! That's what is felt, and on that Petrúshin is working.

PRINCE ABRÉZKOV. Well, and Protásov?

YOUNG LAWYER. He is terribly excited. He trembles all over; but that is natural, considering the life he leads. He is particularly irritable, and interrupted the Public Prosecutor and Counsel several times . . .

PRINCE ABRÉZKOV. What do you think the result will be?

YOUNG LAWYER. It is hard to say. In any case they won't be found guilty of premeditation; but still . . . [*A gentleman comes out, and Prince Abrézkov moves towards the door*] You wish to go in?

PRINCE ABRÉZKOV. I should like to.

YOUNG LAWYER. You are Prince Abrézkov?

PRINCE ABRÉZKOV. I am.

YOUNG LAWYER [*to Usher*]. Let this gentleman pass. There is an empty chair just to the left.

Usher lets Prince Abrézkov pass. As the door opens, Counsel is seen speaking.

IVÁN PETRÓVICH. Aristocrats! I am an aristocrat of the soul, and that is higher!

YOUNG LAWYER. Well, excuse me . . . [*Exit*].

Petushkóv enters hurriedly, and approaches Iván Petróvich.

PETUSHKÓV. Ah, how are you, Iván Petróvich? How are things going?

IVÁN PETRÓVICH. Counsel are still speaking, but this fellow won't let me in.

USHER. Don't make a noise here! This is not a public-house!

Applause. The doors open. Lanyers, and the public—men and women—come out.

A LADY. Splendid! He really moved me to tears.

OFFICER. It's better than any novel. Only I don't understand how she could love him so. Dreadful object!

The other door opens. The accused come out: first Lisa, then Karénin. They pass along the corridor. Fédyá follows alone.

LADY. Hush—here he is! Look how excited he seems!

Lady and Officer pass on.

FÉDYA [*approaches Iván Petróvich*] Have you brought it?

IVÁN PETRÓVICH. Here it is. [*Hands Fédyá something*].

FÉDYA [*Hides it in his pocket, and wishes to pass out, but sees Petushkóv*] Stupid! Vile! Dreary, dreary! Senseless. [*Wishes to pass*].

Enter Counsel Petrúshin; stout, red, and animated. He approaches Fédyá.

PETRÚSHIN. Well, friend! Our affairs are going well—only don't you go and spoil things for me in your last speech!

FÉDYA. I won't speak. What is the use? I shan't do it.

PETRÚSHIN. Yes, you must speak. But don't be excited. The whole matter is now in a nutshell! Only tell them what you told me—that if you are being tried, it is only for *not* having committed suicide: that is, for not doing what is considered a crime both by civil and ecclesiastical law.

FÉDYA. I shan't say anything!

PETRÚSHIN. Why not?

FÉDYA. I don't want to, and shan't. Tell me only, at the worst, what will it be?

PETRÚSHIN. I have already told you—at worst, exile to Siberia.

FÉDYA. Who will be exiled?

PETRÚSHIN. You and your wife.

FÉDYA. And at best?

PETRÚSHIN. Church penance, and of course annulment of the second marriage.

FÉDYA. Then they will again tie me to her—or rather, her to me?

PETRÚSHIN. Yes, that must be so. But don't excite yourself, and please say what I told you, and above all, don't say anything superfluous. However [*noticing that a circle of listeners has formed round them*] I am tired, and will go and sit down; and you'd better take a rest. The chief thing is, not to lose courage!

FÉDYA. No other sentence is possible?

PETRÚSHIN [*going*] No other.

Enter Attendant.

ATTENDANT. Pass on! Pass on! No loitering in the corridor!

FÉDYA. Directly! [*Takes out revolver and shoots himself in the heart. Falls. All rush on him*] All right, I think it is done. . . . Lisa! . . .

The audience, judges, accused, and witnesses rush out from all the doors.

In front of all is Lisa. Behind her Másha, Karénin, Iván Petróvich and Prince Abrézkov.

LISA. Fédyá, what have you done! Why?

FÉDYA. Forgive me that I could not . . . free you any other way. . . . It's not for you . . . it's best for me. I have long . . . been ready . . .

LISA. You will live!

A Doctor bends over Fédya and listens.

FÉDYA. I need no doctor to tell me . . . Good-bye, Victor . . . Ah, Másha! . . . it's too late this time . . . [Weeps] How good . . . how good! [Dies].

Curtain.

END OF "THE LIVE CORPSE."

THE CAUSE OF IT ALL
A PLAY IN TWO ACTS

CHARACTERS

AKULÍNA. *An old woman of seventy, brisk, dignified, old-fashioned.*

MICHAEL. *Her son, thirty-five years old, passionate, self-satisfied, vain and strong.*

MARTHA. *Her daughter-in-law, a grumbler, speaks much and rapidly.*

PARÁSHKA. *Ten years old, daughter of Martha and Michael.*

TARÁS. *The village elder's assistant, speaks slowly and gives himself airs.*

A TRAMP. *Forty years old, restless, thin, speaks impressively; when drunk is particularly free and easy.*

IGNÁT. *Forty years old, a buffoon, merry and stupid.*

THE CAUSE OF IT ALL

ACT I

Autumn. A peasant's hut, with a small room partitioned off. Akulína sits spinning; Martha the housewife is kneading bread; little Paráshka is rocking a cradle.

MARTHA. Oh dear, my heart feels heavy! I know it means trouble; there's nothing to keep him there. It will again be like the other day, when he went to town to sell the firewood and drank nearly half of it. And he blames me for everything.

AKULÍNA. Why look for trouble? It is still early, and the town is a long way off. For the present . . .

MARTHA. What do you mean by early? Akímych is back already. He started after Michael but Michael's not back yet! It's worry worry all day long; that's all the pleasure one gets.

AKULÍNA. Akímych took his load straight to a customer; but our man took his to sell at the market.

MARTHA. If he were alone I shouldn't worry, but Ignát is with him; and when he's with that lousey hound (God forgive me!), he's sure to get drunk. Early and late one toils and moils. Everything is on our shoulders! If one only got anything by it! But no! hustling about all day long is all the pleasure one gets.

Door opens and Tarás enters with a ragged Tramp.

TARÁS. Good day to you! I've brought a man who wants a night's lodging.¹

TRAMP [*bows*] My respects to you.

MARTHA. Why do you bring them to us so often? We put up a tramp last Wednesday night; you always bring them to us. You should make Stepanída put them up; there are no children there. It's more than I can do to look after my own family, and you always bring these people to us.

TARÁS. Everyone in turn has to put them up.

MARTHA. It's all very well to say "everyone in turn," but I have children, and besides, the master is not at home to-day.

TARÁS. Never mind, let the fellow sleep here to-night; he'll not wear out the place he lies on.

AKULÍNA [*to Tramp*] Come in and sit down, and be our guest.

TRAMP. I tender my gratitude. I should like a bite of something, if possible.

MARTHA. You haven't had time to look round, and want to eat already. Didn't you beg anything in the village?

TRAMP [*sighs*] I'm not in the habit of begging because of my position, and having no products of my own . . .

Akulína rises, goes to the table, takes a loaf of bread, cuts a slice, and gives it to the Tramp.

TRAMP [*taking the bread*] Merci.² [*Sits down on the bench and eats greedily*].

TARÁS. And where is Michael?

MARTHA. Why, he took hay to the town. It's time he

¹ It is customary for the village authorities to quarter tramps on each peasant household in a village in turn, or in such order as appears convenient.

² The tramp, who has had some acquaintance with educated Revolutionaries, tries to introduce foreign words, or words not generally used by workmen, into his talk. In this instance he used the French word *merci* instead of the plain "thank you."

was back, but he's not here. Something must have happened.

TARÁS. Why, what should happen?

MARTHA. What indeed? Not anything good; it's only bad one has to expect. As soon as he's out of the house he forgets all about us! I expect he'll come back tipsy!

AKULÍNA [*sitting down to spin, points at Martha and says to Tarás*] It's not in her to be quiet. As I always say, we women must find something to grumble about.

MARTHA. If he were alone I should not be afraid, but he went with Ignát.

TARÁS [*smiling*] Ah well, Ignát Ivánovich certainly is fond of a drop of vodka.

AKULÍNA. Doesn't he know what Ignát is like! Ignát is one man, and our Michael's another.

MARTHA. It's all very well for you to talk, mother; but I'm sick of his drinking. While he is sober it would be a sin to complain of him, but when he's drunk, you know what he is like. One can't say a word; everything is wrong.

TARÁS. Yes, but look at you women too; a man has a drink. Well, he swaggers about a bit, and sleeps it off, and everything goes on all right; but then the likes of you keep on nagging at him.

MARTHA. When he's drunk there's no pleasing him, do what you will.

TARÁS. But you should understand that we can't help having a drop now and then. Your woman's business is at home, but the likes of us must have a drop when we're on business, or for company's sake. Well, so one drinks, and where is the harm?

MARTHA. You may talk, but it's hard on us women. Oh, how hard it is! If one harnessed you men to our work just for a week, you would sing a different tune. Kneading, cooking, baking, spinning, weaving, and the

cattle to look after, and all the rest of it, and the brats to keep washed and clothed and fed; it's all on our shoulders, and if anything is the least bit not to his fancy, there you are, especially when he's drunk. Oh dear, what a life ours is!

TRAMP [*chewing*] That's quite correct. It's the cause of it all; I mean all the catastrophes of life proceed from alcoholic liquors.

TARÁS. It seems to have bowled you over too!

TRAMP. No, not exactly that, though I have suffered from that too. The career of my life might have been different but for the drink.

TARÁS. Now, to my thinking, if you drink reasonably, there's no manner of harm in it.

TRAMP. But I say that it is so strong that it may completely ruin a man.

MARTHA. That's what I say: you worry and do your best, and the only comfort you get is to be scolded and beaten like a dog.

TRAMP. And that's not all. There are some people, persons I mean, that are quite deprived of their reason through it and commit entirely inappropriate actions. While he does not drink, give him anything you like and he won't take what is not his; but when drunk, he grabs whatever comes handy. Many a time one gets beaten and put in prison. As long as I don't drink, all goes honestly and honourably, but as soon as I drink, I mean as soon as that same person drinks, he at once begins grabbing whatever comes his way.

AKULÍNA. And I think it's all in oneself.

TRAMP. Of course it's in oneself as long as one is well, but this is a kind of disease.

TARÁS. A nice kind of disease. A good hiding would soon cure that disease. Well, goodbye for the present. [*Exit*].

MARTHA [*wipes her hands and turns to go*].

AKULÍNA [*sees that the Tramp has finished his bread*] Martha, I say, Martha! Cut him another piece.

MARTHA. Bother him, I must get the samovár to boil.
[*Exit*].

Akulína rises, goes to the table, cuts a chunk of bread and gives it to the Tramp.

TRAMP. *Merci*, I have acquired a great appetite.

AKULÍNA. Are you a workman?

TRAMP. Who? I? I was a mechanic.

AKULÍNA. And what wages did you get?

TRAMP. I used to get fifty, and even seventy roubles, a month.

AKULÍNA. That's a good lot! Then how have you come down so low?

TRAMP. Come down! I'm not the only one. I've come down because the times are such that it is impossible for an honest man to live.

MARTHA [*brings in the samovár*] Oh Lord! it's certain sure he'll come home drunk. I feel it in my heart.

AKULÍNA. I'm afraid he must really have gone on the spree.

MARTHA. There it is. One struggles and struggles and kneads and bakes and cooks and spins and weaves and tends the cattle; everything on one's own shoulders. [*The baby in the cradle cries*] Paráshka, rock the boy. Oh dear, what a life it is for us women. And when he is drunk, nothing is right! . . . If one only says a word he doesn't like . . .

AKULÍNA [*making the tea*] And this is the last of the tea. Did you tell him to get some?

MARTHA. Of course. He said he would, but he'll have forgotten all about his home! . . . [*She puts the samovár on the table*].

The Tramp moves away.

AKULÍNA. Why do you leave the table? We are going to drink tea.

TRAMP. I tender my gratitude for the hearty hospitality. [*Throws away the cheap cigar¹ he was smoking and comes to the table*].

MARTHA. And what sort do you belong to? Peasants, or some other?

TRAMP. Well, I'm not of the peasant class, nor of the aristocracy. I'm of the double-edged class.

MARTHA. What's that? [*hands him a cup of tea*].

TRAMP. *Merci*. Why this; that my father was a Polish Count, and besides him I had many others; and I also had two mothers. In general my biography presents many difficulties.

MARTHA. Have another cup? Well, did you get any learning?

TRAMP. My learning has also been very uncircumstantial. Not my mother, but my godmother apprenticed me to a blacksmith. That blacksmith was my first perdagogue; and his perdagogy consisted in this—that he did not beat his anvil as often as he beat my unfortunate head. Nevertheless, however much he hit me, he could not deprive me of talent. Then I went to a locksmith's, and there I was appreciated, and became foreman. I made acquaintance with educated people, and belonged to a political faction. I was able to master intellectual literature; and my life might have been elevated for I possessed immense talent.

AKULINA. Of course.

TRAMP. But here came an upset. The despotic yoke oppressing the life of the people! I got into prison; I mean, I suffered the incarceration of freedom.

MARTHA. What for?

TRAMP. For our rights.

MARTHA. What rights?

TRAMP. What rights? Why the rights that the bourgeois

¹ The "cigar" will have probably consisted of some bad tobacco rolled up in a bit of newspaper.

should not feast continually, and that the labouring proletariat might reap the rewards of labour.

AKULÍNA. And get back the land, I suppose?

TRAMP. Well naturally. The Agromoric question too.

AKULÍNA. May God and the Holy Queen of Heaven grant it. We are that pressed for land. Well, and how are things now?

TRAMP. Now? I am off to Moscow. I shall go to an exploiter of labour. Can't be helped; I shall humble myself and say—give me what work you will, only take me.

AKULÍNA. Well, have some more tea.

TRAMP. Thank you; *merci* I mean.

Noise and talk in the passage outside.

AKULÍNA. Here's Michael, just in time for tea.

MARTHA [*rises*] Oh, my goodness, Ignát is with him! That means he's drunk.

Michael and Ignát stagger in.

IGNÁT. How are you all? [*Crosses himself before the icon*] Here we are, damn you, just in time for tea. We went to church, service was done; we went to dine, all eaten and gone; to the pub. we went in, just time to begin. Ha, ha, ha! You give us some tea and we'll give you some vódka. That's fair. [*Laughs*].

MICHAEL. Where has this swell come from? [*Points to Tramp. Takes a bottle from the bosom of his coat and puts it on the table*] Bring some cups.

AKULÍNA. Well, did you get on all right?

IGNÁT. Nothing could be better, damn you; drank, and had a spree, and have brought some home.

MICHAEL [*fills the cups with vódka, hands one to his mother and then one to the Tramp*] Drink, you too!

TRAMP [*taking cup*] I offer most heartfelt thanks. Your health. [*Empties the cup*].

IGNÁT. Fine fellow, how he swills, damn him! I should think hunger makes it run through all his veins. [*Pours out some more*].

TRAMP [*drinks*] I wish you success in all your undertakings.

AKULÍNA. Well, did you get a good price for the hay?

IGNÁT. Good or bad, we've drunk it all, damn you! Am I right, Michael?

MICHAEL. Why, of course. It's not made to be looked at! One must have some fun once in a hundred years.

MARTHA. What are you swaggering for? There's not much good in that. We've nothing to eat at home, and see what you're doing.

MICHAEL [*threateningly*] Martha!

MARTHA. Well, what of Martha? I know I'm Martha. Oh, it makes me sick to look at you.

MICHAEL. Martha, look!

MARTHA. There's nothing to see. I don't want to look.

MICHAEL. Pour out the vodka and serve it round to our visitors.

MARTHA. Faugh, you bleary-eyed hound. I don't want to speak to you.

MICHAEL. You don't? Ah, you baggage, what did you say?

MARTHA [*rocks cradle. Paráshka is frightened and comes to her*] What I said? I said I do not want to talk to you, that's all.

MICHAEL. Have you forgotten? [*Jumps up from the table, strikes her on the head and knocks off her kerchief*] One!

MARTHA. Oh! Oh! Oh! [*Runs crying to the door*].

MICHAEL. You'll not get away, you jade! [*Rushes at her*].

TRAMP [*jumps up from the table and seizes his arm*] You have no kind of complete right.

MICHAEL [*stops and looks at Tramp with surprise*] Is it long since you had a thrashing?

TRAMP. You have no complete right to subject the female sex to insults.

MICHAEL. Oh, you son of a bitch! Do you see this? [*Shows his fist*].

TRAMP. I will not allow exploitations to be performed on the female sex.

MICHAEL. I'll give you such an extolpation that you'll not know which end you stand on. . . .

TRAMP. Go on, strike away! Why don't you? [*Holds out his face*].

MICHAEL [*shrugs his shoulders and spreads out his arms*] Suppose I really go for you?

TRAMP. I tell you, strike!

MICHAEL. Well, you are a rum chap, now I come to look at you. [*Drops his arms and shakes his head*].

IGNÁT [*to Tramp*] One sees at once that you're pretty sweet on the women, damn you!

TRAMP. I stand up for their rights.

MICHAEL [*to Martha as, breathing heavily, he steps to the table*] Well Martha, you must set a big candle before the saints for his sake. But for him, I'd have beaten you to a jelly.

MARTHA. What else can one expect of you. One worries all one's life, baking and cooking; and as soon as . . .

MICHAEL. Now, have done, have done! [*Offers vodka to the Tramp*] Drink. [*To his wife*] And what are you slobbering for? Mayn't a fellow have his joke? There you are [*gives her money*], put it away. Here are two three-rouble notes and two twenty-copeck pieces.

MARTHA. And the tea and sugar I wanted?

MICHAEL [*takes parcel from his pocket and hands it to his wife. Martha takes the money and the parcel and goes into the little room, silently arranging the kerchief on her head*] What an unreasonable lot these women are. [*He again offers vodka to the Tramp*] There, drink.

TRAMP [*declining it*] Drink it yourself.

MICHAEL. Come now, don't fuss.

TRAMP [*drinking*] Success to you.

IGNÁT [*to Tramp*] You must have seen many a strange

sight, I suppose. Oh, what a fine coat you've got! Latest fashion. Where did you get it from? [*pointing to Tramp's tattered jacket*]. Don't you mend it, it's fine as it is! It's getting on in years, I fancy. Well, it can't be helped. If I had one like it, the women would be sweet on me too! [*To Martha*] Ain't that true?

AKULÍNA. You should not, Ignát Iványch. Before seeing anything of him, why go and hold up a man to laughter?

TRAMP. It comes of his uneducatedness.

IGNÁT. I'm doing it friendly-like. Drink [*offers vodka*].

AKULÍNA. He says himself—it's the cause of all evil—and he's been in prison because of it.

MICHAEL. What were you in prison for?

TRAMP [*very drunk*] I've suffered for expropriation.

MICHAEL. What's that?

TRAMP. Why, this way. Came up to a fat paunch: "Give up your money, else here's a levolver."¹ He tries this way and that, but forks out 2,300 roubles.

AKULÍNA. Oh Lord!

TRAMP. We meant to dispose of it the proper way. Zemrikóf was our leader. Then those ravens swooped down on us. At once under arrest, and into prison.

IGNÁT. And took the money away?

TRAMP. Of course. Only they could not convict me. At the trial the procurator said these words to me: "You've stolen money" says he; and I answer him straight: "Thieves steal, but we have performed an expropriation for our Party." And he didn't know what to say. He tried this way and that, but couldn't answer me. "Lead him," says he, "to prison," that is—to the incarceration of free life.

IGNÁT. Clever dog! A regular brick! [*Offering vodka*] Drink, damn you.

¹ As usual he mispronounces his word and calls a "revolver" "a levolver."

AKULÍNA. Fie, how nastily you speak!

IGNÁT. I, Grannie? I don't mean it for abuse; it's a manner of speech of mine. Damn you, damn you! . . . Your good health, Grannie.

MARTHA [*returns and stands at the table pouring out tea*].

MICHAEL. That's right. Fancy taking offence! I say, it's thanks to him. [*To Tramp*] What do you think? [*Embraces Martha*] I cherish my old woman. See, how I cherish her. In a word, my old woman is first-rate. I would not change her for anybody.

IGNÁT. There, that's good. Grannie, drink! I stand treat.

TRAMP. What it means—the power of enershy! One was in a state of melancholy, and now there's nothing but pleasantness and friendly disposition. Grannie, I feel much love for you and for everybody. Brothers dear [*sings revolutionary song*].

MICHAEL. It has got right hold of him in his hunger.

ACT II

Same hut. Morning

Martha and Akulina. Michael is asleep

MARTHA [*takes hatchet*] I must go and chop some firewood.

AKULINA [*with a pail*] He'd have beaten you black and blue yesterday, had it not been for that fellow. I don't see him. Has he gone? I suppose he has. [*Exit one after the other*].

MICHAEL [*climbs down from the top of the oven*] Just look, the sun's already quite high. [*Puts on his boots*] She must have gone to fetch water with mother. How my head aches! I won't do it again; the devil take it! [*Crosses himself before the icon, prays, and then washes his hands and face*] I'll go and harness.

Enter Martha with firewood.

MARTHA. And yesterday's beggar? Has he gone?

MICHAEL. Must have gone. Can't see him.

MARTHA. Oh well, let him go. He seemed a clever chap though.

MICHAEL. He took your part!

MARTHA. What of that!

Michael puts on his coat.

MARTHA. And the tea and sugar? Did you put them away last night, eh?

MICHAEL. I thought you did.

Enter Akulina with a pail of water.

MARTHA [*to Akulina*] Mother, have you taken the parcel?

AKULÍNA. No, I know nothing about it. I haven't seen it.

MARTHA. Last night, I put it on the window-sill.

AKULÍNA. Yes, I saw it there.

MARTHA. Where can it be? [*They look for it*].

AKULÍNA. Dear me, what a shame!

Enter Neighbour.

NEIGHBOUR. Well Michael Tikhónych, are we to go for the wood?

MICHAEL. Yes, of course. I'm just going to harness; but you see we've lost something.

NEIGHBOUR. Dear me! What is it?

MARTHA. Why, you see, my old man brought a parcel from town yesterday, with tea and sugar in it, and I put it down here on the window-sill and didn't remember to put it away; and now it's gone.

MICHAEL. And we're committing the sin of suspecting a tramp who spent the night here.

NEIGHBOUR. What sort of tramp?

MARTHA. Well, he's rather thin and has no beard.

MICHAEL. His coat's all in rags.

NEIGHBOUR. Curly hair and rather hooked nose?

MICHAEL. Yes, yes!

NEIGHBOUR. I've just met him, and wondered why he was stepping out so fast.

MICHAEL. It must be him. Where was he?

NEIGHBOUR. I don't think he can have crossed the bridge yet.

MICHAEL [*snatches up his cap and goes out quickly, followed by the Neighbour*] I'll catch the knave. It's him.

MARTHA. Oh, what a shame, what a shame! It's surely him.

AKULÍNA. And suppose it's not. It happened once, some twenty years ago, that they accused a man of having stolen a horse. A crowd collected. One says: "I myself saw him catching it." Another says he saw

him leading it. It was a big piebald horse, easily noticed. All the people began searching for it, and in the forest they found the lad. "It's you," they say. He protests and swears it was not him. They say: "What's the good of listening to him; the women said quite certainly it's him." Then he said something rude. George Lapúshkin (he's dead now) was a hot-tempered man. He dashed at him slap bang, and struck him on the mouth. "It was you," said he, and hit out at him. Then all the others fell on him and began beating him with sticks and fists till they killed him. And what do you think! Next day the real thief was found. The lad they killed had only gone into the forest to choose a tree to cut down.

MARTHA. Yes, of course, we may be sinning against him. He has come down very low, but seemed a good fellow.

AKULÍNA. Yes, he has sunk very low. One can't expect much from the likes of him.

MARTHA. They're shouting. I expect they're bringing him back.

Enter Michael, Neighbour, an old man and a lad, pushing the Tramp before them.

MICHAEL [*with the parcel in his hands, excitedly to his wife*] It was found on him. [*To Tramp*] You thief! You dog!

AKULÍNA [*to Martha*] It's him, poor soul. See how he hangs his head.

MARTHA. It seems it was himself he spoke about yesterday that grabs anything that's handy when he's had some drink.

TRAMP. I'm not a thief; I'm an expropriator. I am a worker and must live. You can't understand it. Do what you like with me.

NEIGHBOUR. Take him to the village Elder or straight to the police!

TRAMP. I tell you, do whatever you like. I am not

afraid, and am ready to suffer for my convictions. If you were educated you would understand.

MARTHA [*to her husband*] Suppose we let him go, in God's name. We've got the parcel back. Let him go and let's not commit another sin.

MICHAEL [*repeating*] "Another sin!" Taken to teaching? One wouldn't know what to do without you, eh?

MARTHA. Why not let him go?

MICHAEL. "Let him go!" One knows what to do without you, you fool. "Let him go!" Go he may, but he must hear a word or two so that he should feel. [*To Tramp*] Well then, listen, you sir, to what I have to say to you. Though you are in a very low state, still you have done very wrong—very wrong. Another man would have caved your ribs in, and have taken you to the police; but I will only say this. You've done wrong, as wrong as may be; only you are in a very bad way and I don't want to hurt you. [*Pauses. Everyone is silent. Then he continues solemnly*] Go, and God be with you, and do not do it again. [*Looks at his wife*] And you want to teach me!

NEIGHBOUR. You shouldn't, Michael; oh, you should not. You're encouraging that sort of thing.

MICHAEL [*the parcel still in his hand*] Whether I should or not is my business. [*To his wife*] And you tried to teach me! [*Stops, looks at the parcel, then at his wife, and gives it to the Tramp with decision*] Take it, you can drink it on the way. [*To wife*] And you wanted to teach me! [*To Tramp*] Go, you've been told to go. Then go, and no palavering.

TRAMP [*takes parcel. Silence*] You think I don't understand. [*His voice trembles*] I fully understand. Had you beaten me like a dog, it would have felt less hard. Don't I understand what I am? I am a rascal, a degenerate, I mean. Forgive me for the Lord's sake. [*Sobs, throws the parcel on the table, and goes out hurriedly*].

MARTHA. A good thing he didn't take the tea, or we should have had none to drink.

MICHAEL [*to wife*] And you wanted to teach me!

NEIGHBOUR. How he cried, poor soul.

AKULÍNA. He too was a man.

THE LIGHT SHINES IN
DARKNESS

DRAMA

CHARACTERS

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH SARÝNTSOV.

MARY IVÁNOVNA SARÝNTSOVA. *His wife.*

LYÚBA. *Their daughter.*

STYÓPA. *Their son.*

VÁNYA. *A younger son.*

MISSY. *Their daughter.*

THE SARÝNTSOVS' LITTLE CHILDREN.

ALEXANDER MIKÁYLOVICH STARKÓVSKY. (*Lyúba's betrothed in Act IV*).

MITROFÁN ERMÍLYCH. *Ványa's tutor.*

THE SARÝNTSOVS' GOVERNESS.

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA KÓHOVTSEVA. *Mary Ivánovna's sister.*

PETER SEMYÓNOVICH KÓHOVTSEV. *Her husband.*

LISA. *Their daughter.*

PRINCESS CHEREMSHÁNOV.

BORÍS. *Her son.*

TÓNYA. *Her daughter.*

A YOUNG PRIEST.

THE SARÝNTSOVS' NURSE.

THE SARÝNTSOVS' MEN-SERVANTS.

IVÁN ZYÁBREV. *A peasant.*

A PEASANT WOMAN. *His wife.*

MALÁSHKA. *His daughter (carrying her baby-brother).*

PETER. *A peasant.*

A RURAL POLICEMAN.

FATHER GERÁSIM. *A priest.*

A NOTARY.

A CARPENTER.

A GENERAL.

HIS ADJUTANT.

A COLONEL.

A REGIMENTAL CLERK.

324 The Light Shines in Darkness

A SENTINEL.

TWO SOLDIERS.

A GENDARME OFFICER.

HIS CLERK.

THE CHAPLAIN OF THE REGIMENT.

THE CHIEF DOCTOR IN A MILITARY ASYLUM.

AN ASSISTANT DOCTOR.

WARDERS.

AN INVALID OFFICER.

PIANIST.

COUNTESS.

ALEXANDER PETRÓVICH.

PEASANT MEN AND WOMEN, STUDENTS, LADIES, DANCING COUPLES.

THE LIGHT SHINES IN DARKNESS

ACT I

SCENE 1

The scene represents the verandah of a fine country-house, in front of which a croquet-lawn and tennis-court are shown, also a flower-bed. The children are playing croquet with their governess. Mary Ivánovna Sarýntsova, a handsome elegant woman of forty; her sister, Alexándra Ivánovna Kóhovtseva, a stupid, determined woman of forty-five; and her husband, Peter Semyónovich Kóhovtsev, a fat flabby man, dressed in a summer suit, with a pince-nez, are sitting on the verandah at a table with a samovar and coffee-pot. Mary Ivánovna Sarýntsova, Alexándra Ivánovna Kóhovtseva, and Peter Semyónovich Kóhovtsev are drinking coffee, and the latter is smoking.

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. If you were not my sister, but a stranger, and Nicholas Ivánovich not your husband, but merely an acquaintance, I should think all this very original, and perhaps I might even encourage him, *J'aurais trouvé tout ça très gentil*;¹ but when I see that your husband is playing the fool—yes, simply playing the fool—then I can't help telling you what I think about

¹ I should have considered it all very pretty.

326 The Light Shines in Darkness

it. And I shall tell your husband, Nicholas, too. *Je lui dirai son fait, ma chère.*¹ I am not afraid of anyone.

MARY IVÁNOVNA. I don't feel the least bit hurt; don't I see it all myself? but I don't think it so very important.

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. No. You don't think so, but I tell you that, if you let it go on, you will be beggared. *Du train que cela va . . .*²

PETER SEMYÓNOVICH. Come! Beggared indeed! Not with an income like theirs.

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. Yes, beggared! And please don't interrupt me, my dear! Anything a *man* does always seems right to you!

PETER SEMYÓNOVICH. Oh! I don't know. I was saying——

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. But you never do know what you are saying, because when you men begin playing the fool, *il n'y a pas de raison que ça finisse.*³ I am only saying that if I were in your place, I should not allow it. *J'aurais mis bon ordre à toutes ces lubies.*⁴ What does it all mean? A husband, the head of a family, has no occupation, abandons everything, gives everything away, *et fait le généreux à droite et à gauche.*⁵ I know how it will end! *Nous en savons quelque chose.*⁶

PETER SEMYÓNOVICH [to Mary Ivánovna]. But do explain to me, Mary, what is this new movement? Of course I understand Liberalism, County Councils, the Constitution, schools, reading-rooms, and *tout ce qui s'en suit*; ⁷ as well as Socialism, strikes, and an eight-hour day; but what is this? Explain it to me.

MARY IVÁNOVNA. But he told you about it yesterday.

¹ I will tell him the plain fact, my dear.

² At the rate things are going.

³ There is no reason for it to stop.

⁴ I should put an end to all these fads.

⁵ And plays the bountiful left and right.

⁶ We know something about it.

⁷ All the rest of it.

PETER SEMYÓNOVICH. I confess I did not understand. The Gospels, the Sermon on the Mount—and that churches are unnecessary! But then how is one to pray, and all that?

MARY IVÁNOVNA. Yes. That is the worst of it. He would destroy everything, and give us nothing in its place.

PETER SEMYÓNOVICH. How did it begin?

MARY IVÁNOVNA. It began last year, after his sister died. He was very fond of her, and her death had a very great effect on him. He became quite morose, and was always talking about death; and then, you know, he fell ill himself with typhus. When he recovered, he was quite a changed man.

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. But, all the same, he came in spring to see us again in Moscow, and was very nice, and played bridge. *Il était très gentil et comme tout le monde.*¹

MARY IVÁNOVNA. But, all the same, he was then quite changed.

PETER SEMYÓNOVICH. In what way?

MARY IVÁNOVNA. He was completely indifferent to his family, and purely and simply had *l'idée fixe*. He read the Gospels for days on end, and did not sleep. He used to get up at night to read, made notes and extracts, and then began going to see bishops and hermits—consulting them about religion.

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. And did he fast, or prepare for communion?

MARY IVÁNOVNA. From the time of our marriage—that's twenty years ago—till then he had never fasted nor taken the sacrament, but at that time he did once take the sacrament in a monastery, and then immediately afterwards decided that one should neither take communion nor go to church.

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. That's what I say—thoroughly inconsistent!

¹ He was very nice, and like everybody else

328 The Light Shines in Darkness

MARY IVÁNOVNA. Yes, a month before, he would not miss a single service, and kept every fast-day; and then he suddenly decided that it was all unnecessary. What can one do with such a man?

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. I have spoken and will speak to him again.

PETER SEMYÓNOVICH. Yes! But the matter is of no great importance.

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. No? Not to you! Because you men have no religion.

PETER SEMYÓNOVICH. Do let me speak. I say that that is not the point. The point is this: if he denies the Church, what does he want the Gospels for?

MARY IVÁNOVNA. Well, so that we should live according to the Gospels and the Sermon on the Mount, and give everything away.

PETER SEMYÓNOVICH. But how is one to live if one gives everything away?

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. And where has he found in the Sermon on the Mount that we must shake hands with footmen? It says "Blessed are the meek," but it says nothing about shaking hands!

MARY IVÁNOVNA. Yes, of course, he gets carried away, as he always used to. At one time it was music, then shooting, then the school. But that doesn't make it any the easier for me!

PETER SEMYÓNOVICH. Why has he gone to town to-day?

MARY IVÁNOVNA. He did not tell me, but I know it is about some trees of ours that have been felled. The peasants have been cutting trees in our wood.

PETER SEMYÓNOVICH. In the pine-tree plantation?

MARY IVÁNOVNA. Yes, they will probably be sent to prison and ordered to pay for the trees. Their case was to be heard to-day, he told me of it, so I feel certain that is what he has gone about.

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. He will pardon them, and to-morrow they will come to take the trees in the park.

MARY IVÁNOVNA. Yes, that is what it leads to. As it is, they break our apple-trees and tread down the green cornfields, and he forgives them everything.

PETER SEMYÓNOVICH. Extraordinary!

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. That is just why I say that it must not be allowed to go on. Why, if it goes on like that, *tout y passera*.¹ I think it is your duty as a mother to *prendre les mesures*.²

MARY IVÁNOVNA. What can I do?

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. What indeed! Stop him! Explain to him that this cannot go on. You have your children! What sort of an example is it for them?

MARY IVÁNOVNA. Of course, it is hard; but I go on bearing it, and hoping it will pass, like his former infatuations.

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. Yes, but "*Aide toi et Dieu t'aidera!*"³ You must make him feel that he has not only himself to think of, and that one can't live like that.

MARY IVÁNOVNA. The worst of all is that he no longer troubles about the children, and I have to decide everything myself. I have an unweaned baby, besides the older children: girls and boys, who have to be looked after, and need guidance. And I have to do it all single-handed. He used to be such an affectionate and attentive father, but now he seems no longer to care. Yesterday I told him that Ványa is not studying properly, and will not pass his exam., and he replied that it would be by far the best thing for him to leave school altogether.

PETER SEMYÓNOVICH. To go where?

MARY IVÁNOVNA. Nowhere! That's the most terrible

¹ Everything will be lost.

² To take measures.

³ God helps those who help themselves.

330 The Light Shines in Darkness

thing about it; everything we do is wrong, but he does not say what would be right.

PETER SEMYÓNOVICH. That's odd.

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. What is there odd about it? It is just *your* usual way. Condemn everything, and do nothing yourself!

MARY IVÁNOVNA. Styópa has now finished at the University, and ought to choose a career; but his father says nothing about it. He wanted to take a post in the Civil Service, but Nicholas Ivánovich says he ought not to do so. Then he thought of entering the Horse-Guards, but Nicholas Ivánovich quite disapproved. Then the lad asked his father: "What am I to do then—not go and plough after all?" and Nicholas Ivánovich said: "Why not plough? It is much better than being in a Government Office." So what was he to do? He comes to me and asks, and I have to decide everything, and yet the authority is all in his hands.

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. Well, you should tell him so straight out.

MARY IVÁNOVNA. So I must! I shall have to talk to him.

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. And tell him straight out that you can't go on like this. That you do your duty, and he must do his; or if not—let him hand everything over to you.

MARY IVÁNOVNA. It is all so unpleasant!

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. I will tell him, if you like. *Je lui dirai son fait.*¹

Enter a young priest, confused and agitated. He carries a book, and shakes hands all round.

PRIEST. I have come to see Nicholas Ivánovich. I have, in fact, come to return a book.

MARY IVÁNOVNA. He has gone to town, but will be back soon.

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. What book are you returning?

¹ I'll tell him the truth.

PRIEST. Oh, it's Mr. Renan's *Life of Jesus*.

PETER SEMYÓNOVICH. Dear me! What books you read!

PRIEST [*much agitated, lights a cigarette*] It was Nicholas Ivánovich gave it to me to read.

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA [*contemptuously*] Nicholas Ivánovich gave it you! And do you agree with Nicholas Ivánovich and Mr. Renan?

PRIEST. No, of course not. If I really did agree, I should not, in fact, be what is called a servant of the Church.

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. But if you are, as it is called, a faithful servant of the Church, why don't you convert Nicholas Ivánovich?

PRIEST. Everyone, in fact, has his own views on these matters, and Nicholas Ivánovich really maintains much that is quite true, only he goes astray, in fact, on the main point, the Church.

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA [*contemptuously*] And what are the many things that Nicholas Ivánovich maintains that are quite true? Is it true that the Sermon on the Mount bids us give our property away to strangers and let our own families go begging?

PRIEST. The Church, in fact, sanctions the family, and the Holy Fathers of the Church, in fact, blessed the family; but the highest perfection really demands the renunciation of worldly advantages.

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. Of course the Anchorites acted so, but ordinary mortals, I should imagine, should act in an ordinary way, as befits all good Christians.

PRIEST. No one can tell unto what he may be called.

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. And, of course, you are married?

PRIEST. Oh yes.

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. And have you any children?

PRIEST. Two.

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. Then why don't you renounce worldly advantages, and not go about smoking a cigarette?

332 The Light Shines in Darkness

PRIEST. Because of my weakness, in fact, my unworthiness.

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. Ah! I see that instead of bringing Nicholas Ivánovich to reason, you support him. That, I tell you straight out, is wrong!

Enter Nurse.

NURSE. Don't you hear baby crying? Please come to nurse him.

MARY IVÁNOVNA. I'm coming, coming? [*Rises and exit*].

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. I'm dreadfully sorry for my sister. I see how she suffers. Seven children, one of them unweaned, and then all these fads to put up with. It seems to me quite plain that he has something wrong here [*touching her forehead. To Priest*] Now tell me, I ask you, what new religion is this you have discovered?

PRIEST. I don't understand, in fact . . .

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. Oh, please don't beat about the bush. You know very well what I am asking you about.

PRIEST. But allow me . . .

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. I ask you, what creed is it that bids us shake hands with every peasant and let them cut down the trees, and give them money for vodka, and abandon our own families.

PRIEST. I don't know that . . .

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. He says it is Christianity. You are a priest of the Orthodox Greek Church, and therefore you must know and must say whether Christianity bids us encourage robbery.

PRIEST. But I . . .

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. Or else, why are you a priest, and why do you wear long hair and a cassock?

PRIEST. But we are not asked . . .

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. Not asked, indeed! Why, I am asking you! He told me yesterday that the Gospels say, "Give to him that asketh of thee." But then in what sense is that meant?

PRIEST. In its plain sense, I suppose.

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. And I think not in the plain sense ; we have always been taught that everybody's position is appointed by God.

PRIEST. Of course, but yet . . .

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. Oh, yes. It's just as I was told ; you take his side, and that is wrong ! I say so straight out. If some young school teacher, or some young lad, lickspittles to him, it's bad enough—but you, in your position, should remember the responsibility that rests on you.

PRIEST. I try to . . .

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. What sort of religion is it, when he does not go to church, and does not believe in the sacraments ? And instead of bringing him to his senses, you read Renan with him, and interpret the Gospels in a way of your own.

PRIEST [*excitedly*]. I cannot answer. I am, in fact, upset, and will hold my tongue.

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. Oh ! If only I were your Bishop ; I'd teach you to read Renan and smoke cigarettes.

PETER SEMYÓNOVICH. *Mais cessez, au nom du ciel. De quel droit ?*¹

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. Please don't teach me. I am sure the Reverend Father is not angry with me. What if I have spoken plainly. It would have been worse had I bottled up my anger. Isn't that so ?

PRIEST. Forgive me if I have not expressed myself as I should. [*Uncomfortable pause*].

Enter Lyúba and Lisa. Lyúba, Mary Ivánovna's daughter, is a handsome energetic girl of twenty. Lisa, Alexándra Ivánovna's daughter, is a little older. Both have kerchiefs on their heads, and are carrying baskets, to go gathering mushrooms. They greet Alexándra Ivánovna, Peter Semyónovich, and the priest.

¹ But do stop, for heaven's sake. What right have you ?

334 The Light Shines in Darkness

LYÚBA. Where is Mamma?

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. Just gone to the baby.

PETER SEMYÓNOVICH. Now mind you bring back plenty of mushrooms. A little village girl brought some lovely white ones this morning. I'd go with you myself, but it's too hot.

LISA. Do come, Papa!

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. Yes, go, for you are getting too fat.

PETER SEMYÓNOVICH. Well, perhaps I will, but I must first fetch some cigarettes. [*Exit*].

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. Where are all the young ones?

LYÚBA. Styópa is cycling to the station, the tutor has gone to town with papa. The little ones are playing croquet, and Ványa is out there in the porch, playing with the dogs.

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. Well, has Styópa decided on anything?

LYÚBA. Yes. He has gone himself to hand in his application to enter the Horse-Guards. He was horribly rude to papa yesterday.

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. Of course, it's hard on him too. . . . *Il n'y a pas de patience qui tienne*.¹ The young man must begin to live, and he is told to go and plough!

LYÚBA. That's not what papa told him; he said . . .

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. Never mind. Still Styópa must begin life, and whatever he proposes, it's all objected to. But here he is himself.

The Priest steps aside, opens a book, and begins to read. Enter Styópa cycling towards the verandah.

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. *Quand on parle du soleil on en voit les rayons*.² We were just talking about you. Lyúba says you were rude to your father.

STYÓPA. Not at all. There was nothing particular.

¹ There are limits to human endurance.

² Speak of the sun and you see its rays.

He gave me his opinion, and I gave him mine. It is not my fault that our views differ. Lyúba, you know, understands nothing, but must have her say about everything.

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. Well, and what have you decided on?

STYÓPA. I don't know what Papa has decided. I'm afraid he does not quite know himself; but as for me, I have decided to volunteer for the Horse-Guards. In our house some special objection is made to every step that is taken; but this is all quite simple. I have finished my studies, and must serve my time. To enter a line regiment and serve with tipsy low-class officers would be unpleasant, and so I'm entering the Horse-Guards, where I have friends.

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. Yes; but why won't your father agree to it?

STYÓPA. Papa! What is the good of talking about him? He is now possessed by his *idée fixe*.¹ He sees nothing but what he wants to see. He says military service is the basest kind of employment, and that therefore one should not serve, and so he won't give me any money.

LISA. No! Styópa. He did not say that! You know I was present. He says that if you cannot avoid serving, you should go when you are called; but that to volunteer, is to choose that kind of service of your own free will.

STYÓPA. But it's I, not he, who is going to serve. He himself was in the army!

LISA. Yes, but he does not exactly say that he will not give you the money; but that he cannot take part in an affair that is contrary to his convictions.

STYÓPA. Convictions have nothing to do with it. One must serve—and that's all!

LISA. I only say what I heard.

¹ Fixed idea.

336 The Light Shines in Darkness

STYÓPA. I know you always agree with Papa. Do you know, Aunt, that Lisa takes Papa's side entirely in everything?

LISA. What is true . . .

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. Don't I know that Lisa always takes up with any kind of nonsense. She scents nonsense. *Elle flaire cela de loin.*¹

Enter Ványa running in with a telegram in his hand, followed by the dogs. He wears a red shirt.

VÁNYA [to Lyúba]. Guess who is coming?

LYÚBA. What's the use of guessing? Give it here [*stretching towards him. Ványa does not let her have the telegram*].

VÁNYA. I'll not give it you, and I won't say who it is from. It's someone who makes you blush!

LYÚBA. Nonsense! Who is the telegram from?

VÁNYA. There, you're blushing! Aunt, she is blushing, isn't she?

LYÚBA. What nonsense! Who is it from? Aunt, who is it from?

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. The Cheremshánovs.

LYÚBA. Ah!

VÁNYA. There you are! Why are you blushing?

LYÚBA. Let me see the telegram, Aunt. [*Reads*] "Arriving all three by the mail train. Cheremshánovs." That means the Princess, Borís, and Tónya. Well, I am glad!

VÁNYA. There you are, you're glad! Styópa, look how she is blushing.

STYÓPA. That's enough—teasing over and over again.

VÁNYA. Of course, because you're sweet on Tónya! You'd better cast lots; for two men must not marry one another's sisters.²

¹ She scents it from afar.

² In Russia the relationships that are set up by marriage debar a marriage between a woman's brother-in-law and her sister.

STYÓPA. Don't humbug! Shut up! How often have you been told to?

LISA. If they are coming by the mail train, they will be here directly.

LYÚBA. That's true, so we can't go for mushrooms.

Enter Peter Semyónovich with his cigarettes.

LYÚBA. Uncle Peter, we are not going!

PETER SEMYÓNOVICH. Why not?

LYÚBA. The Cheremshánovs are coming directly. Better let's play tennis till they come. Styópa, will you play?

STYÓPA. I may as well.

LYÚBA. Ványa and I against you and Lisa. Agreed? Then I'll get the balls and call the boys. [*Exit*].

PETER SEMYÓNOVICH. So I'm to stay here after all!

PRIEST [*preparing to go*]. My respects to you.

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. No, wait a bit, Father. I want to have a talk with you. Besides, Nicholas Ivánovich will be here directly.

PRIEST [*sits down, and lights another cigarette*]. He may be a long time.

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. There, someone is coming. I expect it's he.

PETER SEMYÓNOVICH. Which Cheremshánova is it? Can it be Golitzin's daughter?

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. Yes, of course. It's the Cheremshánova who lived in Rome with her aunt.

PETER SEMYÓNOVICH. Dear me, I shall be glad to see her. I have not met her since those days in Rome when she used to sing duets with me. She sang beautifully. She has two children, has she not?

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. Yes, they are coming too.

PETER SEMYÓNOVICH. I did not know that they were so intimate with the Sarýntsovs.

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. Not intimate, but they lodged together abroad last year, and I believe that *la princesse a*

338 The Light Shines in Darkness

*des vues sur Lyúba pour son fils. C'est une fine mouche, elle flaire une jolie dot.*¹

PETER SEMYÓNOVICH. But the Cheremshánovs themselves were rich.

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. They *were*. The prince is still living, but he has squandered everything, drinks, and has quite gone to the dogs. She petitioned the Emperor, left her husband, and so managed to save a few scraps. But she has given her children a splendid education. *Il faut lui rendre cette justice.*² The daughter is an admirable musician; and the son has finished the University, and is charming. Only I don't think Mary is quite pleased. Visitors are inconvenient just now. Ah! here comes Nicholas.

Enter Nicholas Ivánovich.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. How d'you do, Alína;³ and you, Peter Semyónovich. [*To the Priest*] Ah! Vasily Nikanórych. [*Shakes hands with them*].

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. There is still some coffee left. Shall I give you a cup? It's rather cold, but can easily be warmed up. [*Rings*].

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. No, thank you. I have had something. Where is Mary?

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. Feeding Baby.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Is she quite well?

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. Pretty well. Have you done your business?

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. I have. Yes. If there is any tea or coffee left, I will have some. [*To Priest*] Ah! you've brought the book back. Have you read it? I've been thinking about you all the way home.

Enter man-servant, who bows. Nicholas Ivánovich shakes

¹ The princess has her eye on Lyúba for her son. She is a knowing one, and scents a nice dowry.

² One must do her that much justice.

³ Alína is an abbreviation, and a pet name, for Alexándra.

hands with him. Alexándra Ivánovna shrugs her shoulders, exchanging glances with her husband.

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. Re-heat the samovar, please.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. That's not necessary, Alína. I don't really want any, and I'll drink it as it is.

Missy, on seeing her father, leaves her croquet, runs to him, and hangs round his neck.

MISSY. Papa! Come with me.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH [*caressing her*]. Yes, I'll come directly. Just let me eat something first. Go and play, and I'll soon come.

Exit Missy.

Nicholas Ivánovich sits down to the table, and eats and drinks eagerly.

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. Well, were they sentenced?

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Yes! They were. They themselves pleaded guilty. [*To Priest*] I thought you would not find Renan very convincing . . .

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. And you did not approve of the verdict?

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH [*vexed*]. Of course I don't approve of it. [*To Priest*] The main question for you is not Christ's divinity, or the history of Christianity, but the Church . . .

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. Then how was it? *They* confessed their guilt, *et vous leur avez donné un démenti?*¹ They did not steal them—but only took the wood?

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH [*who had begun talking to the priest, turns resolutely to Alexándra Ivánovna*]. Alína, my dear, do not pursue me with pinpricks and insinuations.

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. But not at all . . .

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. And if you really want to know why I can't prosecute the peasants about the wood they needed and cut down . . .

¹ And you contradicted them.

340 The Light Shines in Darkness

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. I should think they also need this samovar.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Well, if you want me to tell you why I can't agree with those people being shut up in prison, and being totally ruined, because they cut down ten trees in a forest which is considered to be mine . . .

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. Considered so by everybody.

PETER SEMYÓNOVICH. Oh dear! Disputing again.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Even if I considered that forest mine, which I cannot do, we have 3000 acres of forest, with about 150 trees to the acre. In all, about 450,000 trees—is that correct? Well, they have cut down ten trees—that is, one 45-thousandth part. Now is it worth while, and can one really decide, to tear a man away from his family and put him in prison for that?

STYÓPA. Ah! but if you don't hold on to this one 45-thousandth, all the other 44,990 trees will very soon be cut down also.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. But I only said *that* in answer to your aunt. In reality I have no right to this forest. Land belongs to everyone; or rather, it can't belong to anyone. We have never put any labour into this land.

STYÓPA. No, but you saved money and preserved this forest.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. How did I get my savings? What enabled me to save up? And I didn't preserve the forest myself! However, this is a matter which can't be proved to anyone who does not himself feel ashamed when he strikes at another man—

STYÓPA. But no one is striking anybody!

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Just as when a man feels no shame at taking toll from others' labour without doing any work himself, you cannot prove to him that he ought to be ashamed; and the object of all the Political Economy you learnt at the University is merely to justify the false position in which we live.

STYÓPA. On the contrary ; science destroys all prejudices.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. However, all this is of no importance to me. What is important is that in Yefím's¹ place I should have acted as he did, and I should have been desperate had I been imprisoned. And as I wish to do to others as I wish them to do to me—I cannot condemn him, but do what I can to save him.

PETER SEMYÓNOVICH. But, if one goes on that line, one cannot possess anything.

Alexándra Ivánovna and Styópa—

Both speak together { ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. Then it is much more profitable to steal than to work.
STYÓPA. You never reply to one's arguments. I say that a man who saves, has a right to enjoy his savings.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH [*smiling*] I don't know which I am to reply to. [*To Peter Semyónovich*] It's true. One should not possess anything.

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. But if one should not possess anything, one can't have any clothes, nor even a crust of bread, but must give away everything, so that it's impossible to live.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. And it should be impossible to live as we do !

STYÓPA. In other words, we must die ! Therefore, that teaching is unfit for life. . . .

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. No. It is given just that men may live. Yes. One should give everything away. Not only the forest we do not use and hardly ever see, but even our clothes and our bread.

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. What ! And the children's too ?

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Yes, the children's too. And not only our bread, but ourselves. Therein lies the whole teaching of Christ. One must strive with one's whole strength to give oneself away.

¹ Yefím was the peasant who had cut down the tree.

342 The Light Shines in Darkness

STYÓPA. That means to die.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Yes, even if you gave your life for your friends, that would be splendid both for you and for others. But the fact is that man is not solely a spirit, but a spirit within a body; and the flesh draws him to live for itself, while the spirit of light draws him to live for God and for others: and the life in each of us is not solely animal, but is equipoised between the two. But the more it is a life for God, the better; and the animal will not fail to take care of itself.

STYÓPA. Why choose a middle course: an equipoise between the two? If it is right to do so—why not give away everything and die?

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. That would be splendid. Try to do it, and it will be well both for you and for others.

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. No, that is not clear, not simple. *C'est tiré pas les cheveux.*¹

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Well, I can't help it, and it can't be explained by argument. However, that is enough.

STYÓPA. Yes, quite enough, and I also don't understand it. [*Exit*].

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH [*turns to Priest*] Well, what impression did the book make on you?

PRIEST [*agitated*] How shall I put it? Well, the historic part is insufficiently worked out, and it is not fully convincing, or let us say, quite reliable; because the materials are, as a matter of fact, insufficient. Neither the Divinity of Christ, nor His lack of Divinity, can be proved historically; there is but one irrefragible proof. . . .

During this conversation first the ladies and then Peter Semyónovich go out.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. You mean the Church?

PRIEST. Well, of course, the Church, and the evidence, let's say, of reliable men—the Saints for instance.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Of course, it would be excellent if

¹ It's too fine spun.

there existed a set of infallible people to confide in. It would be very desirable; but its desirability does not prove that they exist!

PRIEST. And I believe that just *that is* the proof. The Lord could not in fact have exposed His law to the possibility of mutilation or misinterpretation, but must in fact have left a guardian of His truth to prevent that truth being mutilated.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Very well; but we first tried to prove the truth itself, and now we are trying to prove the reliability of the guardian of the truth.

PRIEST. Well here, as a matter of fact, we require faith.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Faith—yes, we need faith. We can't do without faith. Not, however, faith in what other people tell us, but faith in what we arrive at ourselves, by our own thought, our own reason . . . faith in God, and in true and everlasting life.

PRIEST. Reason may deceive. Each of us has a different mind.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH [*hotly*]. There, that is the most terrible blasphemy! God has given us just one sacred tool for finding the truth—the only thing that can unite us all, and we do not trust it!

PRIEST. How can we trust in it, when there are contradictions.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Where are the contradictions? That twice two are four; and that one should not do to others what one would not like oneself; and that everything has a cause? Truths of that kind we all acknowledge because they accord with all our reason. But that God appeared on Mount Sinai to Moses, or that Buddha flew up on a sunbeam, or that Mahomet went up into the sky, and that Christ flew there also—on matters of that kind we are all at variance.

PRIEST. No, we are not at variance, those of us who abide in the truth are all united in one faith in God, Christ.

344 The Light Shines in Darkness

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. No, even there, you are not united, but have all gone asunder; so why should I believe you rather than I would believe a Buddhist Lama? Only because I happened to be born in your faith?

[*The tennis players dispute*] "Out!" "Not out!"

VÁNYA. I saw it . . . :

During the conversation, men-servants set the table again for tea and coffee.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. You say the Church unites. But, on the contrary, the worst dissensions have always been caused by the Church. "How often would I have gathered you as a hen gathers her chickens." . . .

PRIEST. That was until Christ. But Christ did gather them all together.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Yes, Christ united; but we have divided: because we have understood him the wrong way round. He destroyed all Churches.

PRIEST. Did he not say: "Go, tell the Church."

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. It is not a question of words! Besides those words don't refer to what we call "Church." It is the spirit of the teaching that matters. Christ's teaching is universal, and includes all religions, and does not admit of anything exclusive; neither of the Resurrection nor the Divinity of Christ, nor the Sacraments—nor of anything that divides.

PRIEST. That, as a matter of fact, if I may say so, is your own interpretation of Christ's teaching. But Christ's teaching is all founded on His Divinity and Resurrection.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. That's what is so dreadful about the Churches. They divide by declaring that they possess the full indubitable and infallible truth. They say: "It has pleased us and the Holy Ghost." That began at the time of the first Council of the Apostles. They then began to maintain that they had the full and *exclusive* truth. You see, if I say there is a God: the first cause

of the Universe, everyone can agree with me; and *such* an acknowledgment of God will unite us; but if I say there is a God: Brahma, or Jehovah, or a Trinity, such a God divides us. Men wish to unite, and to that end devise all means of union, but neglect the one indubitable means of union—the search for truth! It is as if people in an enormous building, where the light from above shone down into the centre, tried to unite in groups around lamps in different corners, instead of going towards the central light, where they would naturally all be united.

PRIEST. And how are the people to be guided—without any really definite truth?

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. That's what is terrible! Each *one* of us has to save *his own* soul, and has to do God's work *himself*, but instead of that we busy ourselves saving *other people* and teaching *them*. And what do we teach them? We teach them now, at the end of the nineteenth century, that God created the world in six days, then caused a flood, and put all the animals in an ark, and all the rest of the horrors and nonsense of the Old Testament. And then that Christ ordered everyone to be baptized with water; and we make them believe in all the absurdity and meanness of an Atonement essential to salvation; and then that he rose up into the heavens which do not really exist, and there sat down at the right hand of the Father. We have got used to all this, but really it is dreadful! A child, fresh and ready to receive all that is good and true, asks us what the world is, and what its laws are; and we, instead of revealing to him the teaching of love and truth that has been given to us, carefully ram into his head all sorts of horrible absurdities and meannesses, ascribing them all to God. Is that not terrible? It is as great a crime as man can commit. And we—you and your Church—do this! Forgive me!

PRIEST. Yes, if one looks at Christ's teaching from a rationalistic point of view, it is so,

346 The Light Shines in Darkness

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Whichever way one looks, it is so. [*Pause*].

Enter Alexándra Ivánovna. Priest bows to take his leave:

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. Good-bye, Father. He will lead you astray. Don't you listen to him.

PRIEST. No. Search the Scriptures! The matter is too important, as a matter of fact, to be—let's say—neglected. [*Exit*].

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. Really, Nicholas, you have no pity on him! Though he is a priest, he is still only a boy, and can have no firm convictions or settled views. . . .

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Give him time to settle down and petrify in falsehood? No! Why should I? Besides, he is a good, sincere man.

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. But what will become of him if he believes you?

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. He need not believe *me*. But if he saw the truth, it would be well for him and for everybody.

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. If it were really so good, everyone would be ready to believe you. As it is, no one believes you, and your wife least of all. She *can't* believe you.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Who told you that?

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. Well, just you try and explain it to her! She will never understand, nor shall I, nor anyone else in the world, that one must care for other people and abandon one's own children. Go and try to explain that to Mary!

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Yes, and Mary will certainly understand. Forgive me, Alexándra, but if it were not for other people's influence, to which she is very susceptible, she would understand me and go with me.

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. To beggar your children for the sake of drunken Yefim and his sort? Never! But if I have made you angry, please forgive me. I can't help speaking out.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. I am not angry. On the contrary, I am even glad you have spoken out and given me the opportunity—challenged me—to explain to Mary my whole outlook on life. On my way home to-day I was thinking of doing so, and I will speak to her at once; and you will see that she will agree, because she is wise and good.

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. Well, as to that, allow me to have my doubts.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. But I have no doubts. For you know, this is not any invention of my own; it is only what we all of us know, and what Christ revealed to us.

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. Yes, you think Christ revealed this, but I think he revealed something else.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. It cannot be anything else.

Shouts from the tennis ground.

LYÚBA. Out!

VÁNYA. No, we saw it.

LISA. I know. It fell just here!

LYÚBA. Out! Out! Out!

VÁNYA. It's not true.

LYÚBA. For one thing, it's rude to say "It's not true."

VÁNYA. And it's rude to say what is not true!

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Just wait a bit, and don't argue, but listen. Isn't it true that at any moment we may die, and either cease to exist, or go to God who expects us to live according to His will?

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. Well?

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Well, what can I do in this life other than what the supreme judge in my soul, my conscience—God—requires of me? And my conscience—God—requires that I should regard everybody as equal, love everybody, serve everybody.

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. Your own children too?

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Naturally, my own too, but obeying all that my conscience demands. Above all, that I

348 The Light Shines in Darkness

should understand that my life does not belong to me—nor yours to you—but to God, who sent us into the world and who requires that we should do His will. And His will is . . .

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. And you think that you will persuade Mary of this?

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Certainly.

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. And that she will give up educating the children properly, and will abandon them? Never!

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Not only will she understand, but you too will understand that it is the only thing to do.

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. Never!

Enter Mary Ivánovna.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Well, Mary! I didn't wake you this morning, did I?

MARY IVÁNOVNA. No, I was not asleep. And have you had a successful day?

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Yes, very.

MARY IVÁNOVNA. Why, your coffee is quite cold! Why do you drink it like that? By the way, we must prepare for our visitors. You know the Cheremshánovs are coming?

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Well, if you're glad to have them, I shall be very pleased.

MARY IVÁNOVNA. I like her and her children, but they have chosen a rather inconvenient time for their visit.

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA [*rising*]. Well, talk matters over with him, and I'll go and watch the tennis.

A pause, then Mary Ivánovna and Nicholas Ivánovich begin both talking at once.

MARY IVÁNOVNA. It's inconvenient, because we must have a talk.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. I was just saying to Aline . . .

MARY IVÁNOVNA. What?

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. No, you speak first.

MARY IVÁNOVNA. Well, I wanted to have a talk with you about Styópa. After all, something *must* be decided. He, poor fellow, feels depressed, and does not know what awaits him. He came to me, but how can I decide?

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Why decide? He can decide for himself.

MARY IVÁNOVNA. But, you know, he wants to enter the Horse-Guards as a volunteer, and in order to do that he must get you to countersign his papers, and he must also be in a position to keep himself; and you don't give him anything. [*Gets excited*].

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Mary, for heaven's sake don't get excited, but listen to me. I don't give or withhold anything. To enter military service of one's own free will, I consider either a stupid, insensate action, suitable for a savage if the man does not understand the evil of his action, or despicable if he does it from an interested motive. . . .

MARY IVÁNOVNA. But nowadays everything seems savage and stupid to you. After all, he must live; you lived!

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH [*getting irritable*]. I lived when I did not understand; and when nobody gave me good advice. However, it does not depend on me but on him.

MARY IVÁNOVNA. How not on you? It's you who don't give him an allowance.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. I can't give what is not mine!

MARY IVÁNOVNA. Not yours? What do you mean?

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. The labour of others does not belong to me. To give him money, I must first take it from others. I have no right to do that, and I cannot do it! As long as I manage the estate I must manage it as my conscience dictates; and I cannot give the fruits of the toil of the overworked peasants to be spent on the debaucheries of Life-Guardsmen. Take over my property, and then I shall not be responsible!

MARY IVÁNOVNA. You know very well that I don't want

350 The Light Shines in Darkness

to take it, and moreover I can't. I have to bring up the children, besides nursing them and bearing them. It is cruel!

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Mary, dear one! That is not the main thing. When you began to speak I too began and wanted to talk to you quite frankly. We must not go on like this. We are living together, but don't understand one another. Sometimes we even seem to misunderstand one another on purpose.

MARY IVÁNOVNA. I want to understand, but I don't. No, I don't understand you. I do not know what has come to you.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Well then, try and understand! This may not be a convenient time, but heaven knows when we shall find a convenient time. Understand not me—but yourself: the meaning of your own life! We can't go on living like this without knowing what we are living for.

MARY IVÁNOVNA. We have lived so, and lived very happily. [*Noticing a look of vexation on his face*] All right, all right, I am listening.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Yes, I too lived so—that is to say, without thinking why I lived; but a time came when I was terror-struck. Well, here we are, living on other people's labour—making others work for us—bringing children into the world and bringing them up to do the same. Old age will come, and death, and I shall ask myself: "Why have I lived?" In order to breed more parasites like myself? And, above all, we do not even enjoy this life. It is only endurable, you know, while, like Ványa, you overflow with life's energy.

MARY IVÁNOVNA. But everybody lives like that.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. And they are all unhappy.

MARY IVÁNOVNA. Not at all.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Anyhow, I saw that I was terribly unhappy, and that I made you and the children unhappy,

and I asked myself: "Is it possible that God created us for this end?" And as soon as I thought of it, I felt at once that he had not. I asked myself: "What, then, has God created us for?"

Enter Man-servant.

MARY IVÁNOVNA [*Not listening to her husband, turns to Servant*] Bring some boiled cream.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. And in the Gospels I found the answer, that we certainly should not live for our own sake. That revealed itself to me very clearly once, when I was pondering over the parable of the labourers in the vineyard. You know?

MARY IVÁNOVNA. Yes, the labourers.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. That parable seemed to show me more clearly than anything else where my mistake had been. Like those labourers I had thought that the vineyard was my own, and that my life was my own, and everything seemed dreadful; but as soon as I had understood that my life is not my own, but that I am sent into the world to do the will of God . . .

MARY IVÁNOVNA. But what of it? We all know that!

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Well, if we know it we cannot go on living as we are doing, for our whole life—far from being a fulfilment of His will—is, on the contrary, a continual transgression of it.

MARY IVÁNOVNA. But how is it a transgression—when we live without doing harm to anyone?

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. But are we doing no harm? Such an outlook on life is just like that of those labourers. Why we . . .

MARY IVÁNOVNA. Yes, I know the parable—and that he paid them all equally.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH [*after a pause*] No, it's not that. But do, Mary, consider one thing—that we have only one life, and can live it well, or can waste it.

MARY IVÁNOVNA. I can't think and argue! I don't sleep

352 The Light Shines in Darkness

at night; I am nursing. I have to manage the whole house, and instead of helping me, you say things to me that I don't understand.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Mary!

MARY IVÁNOVNA. And now these visitors.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. No, let us come to an understanding.

[*Kisses her*] Shan't we?

MARY IVÁNOVNA. Yes, only be like you used to be.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. I can't, but now listen.

The sound of bells and an approaching vehicle are heard.

MARY IVÁNOVNA. I can't now—they have arrived! I must go to meet them. [*Exit behind corner of house. Styópa and Lyúba follow her*].

VÁNYA. We shan't abandon it; we must finish the game later. Well, Lyúba, what now?

LYÚBA [*seriously*] No nonsense, please.

Alexándra Ivánovna, with her husband and Lisa, come out on to the verandah. Nicholas Ivánovich paces up and down wrapt in thought.

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. Well, have you convinced her?

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Alína, what is going on between us is very important. Jokes are out of place. It is not I who am convincing her, but life, truth, God: they are convincing her—therefore she cannot help being convinced, if not to-day then to-morrow, if not to-morrow . . . It is awful that no one ever has time. Who is it that has just come?

PETER SEMYÓNOVICH. It's the Cheremshánovs. Catiche Cheremshánov, whom I have not met for eighteen years. The last time I saw her we sang together: "La ci darem la mano." [*Sings*].

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. Please don't interrupt us, and don't imagine that I shall quarrel with Nicholas. I am telling the truth. [*To Nicholas Ivánovich*] I am not joking at all, but it seemed to me strange that you wanted to

convince Mary just when she had made up her mind to have it out with you!

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Very well, very well. They are coming. Please tell Mary I shall be in my room. [*Exit*].

Curtain.

ACT II

SCENE 1

In the same country-house, a week later. The scene represents a large dining-hall. The table is laid for tea and coffee, with a samovár. A grand piano and a music-stand are by the wall. Mary Ivánovna, the Princess and Peter Semyónovich are seated at the table.

PETER SEMYÓNOVICH. Ah, Princess, it does not seem so long ago since you were singing Rosina's part, and I . . . though nowadays I am not fit even for a Don Basilio.

PRINCESS. Our children might do the singing now, but times have changed.

PETER SEMYÓNOVICH. Yes, these are matter-of-fact times . . . But your daughter plays really seriously and well. Where are the young folk? Not asleep still, surely?

MARY IVÁNOVNA. Yes, they went out riding by moonlight last night, and returned very late. I was nursing baby and heard them.

PETER SEMYÓNOVICH. And when will my better-half be back? Have you sent the coachman for her?

MARY IVÁNOVNA. Yes, they went for her quite early; I expect she will be here soon.

PRINCESS. Did Alexándra Ivánovna really go on purpose to fetch Father Gerásim?

MARY IVÁNOVNA. Yes, the idea occurred to her yesterday, and she was off at once.

PRINCESS. *Quelle énergie ! Je l'admire.*¹

¹ What energy, I do admire her.

PETER SEMYÓNOVICH. *Oh, pour ceci, ce n'est pas ça qui nous manque.*¹ [*Takes out a cigar*] But I will go and have a smoke and take a stroll through the park with the dogs till the young people are up. [*Exit*].

PRINCESS. I don't know, dear Mary Ivánovna, whether I am right, but it seems to me that you take it all too much to heart. I understand him. He is in a very exalted state of mind. Well, even supposing he does give to the poor? Don't we anyway think too much about ourselves?

MARY IVÁNOVNA. Yes, if that were all, but you don't know him; nor all he is after. It is not simply helping the poor, but a complete revolution, the destruction of everything.

PRINCESS. I do not wish to intrude into your family life, but if you will allow me . . .

MARY IVÁNOVNA. Not at all—I look upon you as one of the family—especially now.

PRINCESS. I should advise you to put your demands to him openly and frankly, and to come to an agreement as to the limits. . . .

MARY IVÁNOVNA [*excitedly*] There are no limits! He wants to give away everything. He wishes me now, at my age, to become a cook and a washerwoman.

PRINCESS. No, is it possible! That is extraordinary.

MARY IVÁNOVNA [*takes a letter out of her pocket*] We are by ourselves and I am glad to tell you all about it. He wrote me this letter yesterday. I will read it to you.

PRINCESS. What? He lives in the same house with you, and writes you letters? How strange!

MARY IVÁNOVNA. No, I understand him there. He gets so excited when he speaks. I have for some time past felt anxious about his health.

PRINCESS. What did he write?

MARY IVÁNOVNA. This [*reading*] "You reproach me for

¹ Oh, as far as that goes, we are not lacking.

356 The Light Shines in Darkness

upsetting our former way of life, and for not giving you anything new in exchange, and not saying how I should like to arrange our family affairs. When we begin to discuss it we both get excited, and that's why I am writing to you. I have often told you already why I cannot continue to live as we have been doing; and I cannot, in a letter, show you why that is so, nor why we must live in accord to Christ's teaching. You can do one of two things: either believe in the truth and voluntarily go with me, or believe in me and trusting yourself entirely to me—follow me." [*Stops reading*] I can do neither the one nor the other. I do not consider it necessary to live as he wishes us to. I have to consider the children, and I cannot rely on him. [*Reads*] "My plan is this: We shall give our land to the peasants, retaining only 135 acres besides the orchards and kitchen-garden and the meadow by the river. We will try to work ourselves, but will not force one another, nor the children. What we keep should still bring us in about £50 a year."

PRINCESS. Live on £50 a year—with seven children! Is it possible!

MARY IVÁNOVNA. Well, here follows his whole plan: to give up the house and have it turned into a school, and ourselves to live in the gardener's two-roomed cottage.

PRINCESS. Yes, now I begin to see that there is something abnormal about it. What did you answer?

MARY IVÁNOVNA. I told him I couldn't; that were I alone I would follow him anywhere, but I have the children. . . . Only think! I am still nursing little Nicholas. I tell him we can't break up everything like that. After all, was that what I agreed to when I married? And now I am no longer young or strong. Think what it has meant to bear and nurse nine children.

PRINCESS. I never dreamed that things had gone so far.

MARY IVÁNOVNA. That is how things are and I don't

know what will happen. Yesterday he excused the Dmítrovka peasants their rent; and he wants to give the land to them altogether.

PRINCESS. I do not think you should allow it. It is your duty to protect your children. If he cannot deal with the estate, let him hand it over to you.

MARY IVÁNOVNA. But I don't want that.

PRINCESS. You ought to take it for the children's sake. Let him transfer the property to you.

MARY IVÁNOVNA. My sister Alexándra told him so; but he says he has no right to do it; and that the land belongs to those who work it, and that it is his duty to give it to the peasants.

PRINCESS. Yes, now I see that the matter is far more serious than I thought.

MARY IVÁNOVNA. And the Priest! The Priest takes his side, too.

PRINCESS. Yes, I noticed that yesterday.

MARY IVÁNOVNA. That's why my sister has gone to Moscow. She wanted to talk things over with a lawyer, but chiefly she went to fetch Father Gerásim that he may bring his influence to bear.

PRINCESS. Yes, I do not think that Christianity calls upon us to ruin our families.

MARY IVÁNOVNA. But he will not believe even Father Gerásim. He is so firm; and when he talks, you know, I can't answer him. That's what is so terrible, that it seems to me he is right.

PRINCESS. That is because you love him.

MARY IVÁNOVNA. I don't know, but it's terrible, and everything remains unsettled—and that is Christianity!

[*Enter Nurse*].

NURSE. Will you please come. Little Nicholas has woke up and is crying for you.

MARY IVÁNOVNA. Directly! When I am excited he gets stomach ache. Coming, coming

358 The Light Shines in Darkness

Nicholas Ivánovich enters by another door, with a paper in his hand.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. No, this is impossible!

MARY IVÁNOVNA. What has happened?

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Why, Peter is to be imprisoned on account of some wretched pine-trees of ours.

MARY IVÁNOVNA. How's that?

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Quite simply! He cut it down, and they informed the Justice of Peace, and he has sentenced him to three months' imprisonment. His wife has come about it.

MARY IVÁNOVNA. Well, and can't anything be done?

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Not now. The only way is not to possess any forest. And I will not possess any. What is one to do? I shall, however, go and see whether what we have done can be remedied. [*Goes out on to the verandah and meets Borís and Lyúba*].

LYÚBA. Good morning, papa [*kisses him*], where are you going?

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. I have just returned from the village and am going back again. They are just dragging a hungry man to prison because he . . .

LYÚBA. I suppose it's Peter?

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Yes, Peter. [*Exit, followed by Mary Ivánovna*].

LYÚBA [*sits down in front of samovár*] Will you have tea or coffee?

BORÍS. I don't mind.

LYÚBA. It's always the same, and I see no end to it!

BORÍS. I don't understand him. I know the people are poor and ignorant and must be helped, but not by encouraging thieves.

LYÚBA. But how?

BORÍS. By our whole activity. By using all our knowledge in their service, but not by sacrificing one's own life.

The Light Shines in Darkness 359

LYÚBA. And papa says, that that is just what is wanted. BORÍS, I don't understand. One can serve the people without ruining one's own life. That is the way I want to arrange my life. If only you . . .

LYÚBA. I want what you want, and am not afraid of anything.

BORÍS. How about those earrings—that dress . . .

LYÚBA. The earrings can be sold and the dresses must be different, but one need not make oneself quite a guy.

BORÍS. I should like to have another talk with him. Do you think I should disturb him if I followed him to the village?

LYÚBA. Not at all. I see he has grown fond of you, and he addressed himself chiefly to you last night.

BORÍS [*finishes his coffee*] Well, I'll go then.

LYÚBA. Yes, do, and I'll go and wake Lisa and Tánya.

Curtain.

SCENE 2

Village street. Iván Zyábrev, covered with a sheepskin coat, is lying near a hut.

IVÁN ZYÁBREV. Maláshka!

A tiny girl comes out of the hut with a baby in her arms. The baby is crying.

IVÁN ZYÁBREV. Get me a drink of water.

Maláshka goes back into the hut, from where the baby can be heard screaming. She brings a bowl of water.

IVÁN ZYÁBREV. Why do you always beat the youngster and make him howl? I'll tell mother.

MALÁSHKA. Tell her then. It's hunger makes him howl!

360 The Light Shines in Darkness

IVÁN ZYÁBREV [*drinks*] You should go and ask the Démkins for some milk.

MALÁSHKA. I went, but there wasn't any. And there was no one at home.

IVÁN ZYÁBREV. Oh! if only I could die! Have they rung for dinner?

MALÁSHKA. They have. Here's the master coming.

Enter Nicholas Ivánovich.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Why have you come out here?

IVÁN ZYÁBREV. Too many flies in there, and it's too hot.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Then you're warm now?

IVÁN ZYÁBREV. Yes, now I'm burning all over.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. And where is Peter? Is he at home?

IVÁN ZYÁBREV. At home, at this time? Why, he's gone to the field to cart the corn.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. And I hear that they want to put him in prison.

IVÁN ZYÁBREV. That's so, the Policeman has gone to the field for him.

Enter a pregnant Woman, carrying a sheaf of oats and a rake. She immediately hits Maláshka on the back of the head.

WOMAN. What d'you mean by leaving the baby? Don't you hear him howling! Running about the streets is all you know.

MALÁSHKA [*howling*] I've only just come out. Daddy wanted a drink.

WOMAN. I'll give it you. [*She sees the land-owner, N. I. Sarýntsov*] Good-day, sir. Children are a trouble! I'm quite done up, everything on my shoulders, and now they're taking our only worker to prison, and this lout is sprawling about here.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. What are you saying? He's quite ill!

WOMAN. He's ill, and what about me? Am I not ill? When it's work, he's ill; but to merry-make or pull my

hair out, he's not too ill. Let him die like a hound! What do I care?

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. How can you say such wicked things?

WOMAN. I know it's a sin; but I can't subdue my heart. I'm expecting another child, and I have to work for two. Other people have their harvest in already, and we have not mowed a quarter of our oats yet. I ought to finish binding the sheaves, but can't. I had to come and see what the children were about.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. The oats shall be cut—I'll hire someone, and to bind the sheaves too.

WOMAN. Oh, binding's nothing. I can do that myself, if it's only mown down quick. What d'you think, Nicholas Ivánovich, will he die? He is very ill!

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. I don't know. But he really is very ill. I think we must send him to the hospital.

WOMAN. Oh God! [*Begins to cry*] Don't take him away, let him die here.¹ [*To her husband, who utters something*] What's the matter?

IVÁN ZYÁBREV. I want to go to the hospital. Here I'm treated worse than a dog.

WOMAN. Well, I don't know. I've lost my head. Maláshka, get dinner ready.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. What have you for dinner?

WOMAN. What? Why, potatoes and bread, and not enough of that. [*Enters hut. A pig squeals, and children are crying inside*].

IVÁN ZYÁBREV [*groans*] Oh Lord, if I could but die!

Enter Borís.

BORÍS. Can I be of any use?

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Here no one can be of use to another. The evil is too deeply rooted. Here we can only be of use to ourselves, by seeing on what we build

¹ The woman, for all her roughness, is sorry to part from her husband.

362 The Light Shines in Darkness

our happiness. Here is a family: five children, the wife pregnant, the husband ill, nothing but potatoes to eat, and at this moment the question is being decided whether they are to have enough to eat next year or not. Help is not possible. How can one help? Suppose I hire a labourer; who will he be? Just such another man: one who has given up his farming, from drink or from want.

BORÍS. Excuse me, but if so, what are you doing here?

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. I am learning my own position. Finding out who weeds our gardens, builds our houses, makes our garments, and feeds and clothes us. [*Peasants with scythes and women with rakes pass by and bow. Nicholas Ivánovich, stopping one of the Peasants*] Ermíl, won't you take on the job of carting for these people?

ERMÍL [*shakes his head*] I would with all my heart, but I can't possibly do it. I haven't carted my own yet. We are off now to do some carting. But is Iván dying?

ANOTHER PEASANT. Here's Sebastian, he may take on the job. I say, Daddy Sebastian! They want a man to get the oats in.

SEBASTIAN. Take the job on yourself. At this time of year one day's work brings a year's food. [*The Peasants pass on*].

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. They are all half-starved; they have only bread and water, they are ill, and many of them are old. That old man, for instance, is ruptured and is suffering, and yet he works from four in the morning to ten at night, though he is only half alive. And we? Is it possible, realising all this, to live quietly and consider oneself a Christian? Or let alone a Christian—simply not a beast?

BORÍS. But what can one do?

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Not take part in this evil. Not own the land, nor devour the fruits of their labour. How this can be arranged, I don't yet know. The fact of the matter is—at any rate it was so with me—I lived and did

not realise how I was living. I did not realise that I am a son of God and that we are all sons of God—and all brothers. But as soon as I realised it—realised that we have all an equal right to live—my whole life was turned upside down. But I cannot explain it to you now. I will only tell you this: I was blind, just as my people at home are, but now my eyes are opened and I cannot help seeing; and seeing it all, I can't continue to live in such a way. However, that will keep till later. Now we must see what can be done.

Enter Policeman, Peter, his wife, and boy.

PETER [*falls at Nicholas Ivánovich's feet*] Forgive me, for the Lord's sake, or I'm ruined. How can the woman get in the harvest? If at least I might be bailed out.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. I will go and write a petition for you. [*To Policeman*] Can't you let him remain here for the present?

POLICEMAN. Our orders are to take him to the police-station now.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH [*to Peter*] Well then go, and I'll do what I can. This is evidently my doing. How can one go on living like this? [*Exit*].

Curtain.

SCENE 3

In the same country-house. It is raining outside. A drawing-room with a grand piano. Tónya has just finished playing a sonata of Schumann's and is sitting at the piano. Styópa is standing by the piano. Borís is sitting. Lyúba, Lisa, Mitrofán Ermtlych and the young Priest are all stirred by the music.

LYÚBA. That andante! Isn't it lovely!

STYÓPA. No, the scherzo. Though really the whole of it is beautiful.

LISA. Very fine.

364 The Light Shines in Darkness

STYÓPA. But I had no idea you were such an artist. It is real masterly play. Evidently the difficulties no longer exist for you, and you think only of the feeling, and express it with wonderful delicacy.

LYÚBA. Yes, and with dignity.

TÓNYA. While *I* felt that it was not at all what I meant it to be. A great deal remained unexpressed.

LISA. What could be better? It was wonderful.

LYÚBA. Schumann is good, but all the same Chopin takes a stronger hold of one's heart.

STYÓPA. He is more lyrical.

TÓNYA. There is no comparison.

LYÚBA. Do you remember his prelude?

TÓNYA. Oh, the one called the George Sand prelude? [*Plays the commencement*].

LYÚBA. No, not that one. That is very fine, but so hackneyed. Do play this one. [*Tónya plays what she can of it, and then breaks off*].

TÓNYA. Oh, that is a lovely thing. There is something elemental about it—older than creation.

STYÓPA [*laughs*]. Yes, yes. Do play it. But no, you are too tired. As it is, we have had a delightful morning, thanks to you.

TÓNYA [*rises and looks out of window*]. There are some more peasants waiting outside.

LYÚBA. That is why music is so precious. I understand Saul. Though I'm not tormented by devils, I still understand him. No other art can make one so forget everything else as music does. [*Approaches the window. To Peasants*] Whom do you want?

PEASANTS. We have been sent to speak to Nicholas Ivánovich.

LYÚBA. He is not in. You must wait.

TÓNYA. And yet you are marrying Boris who understands nothing about music.

LYÚBA. Oh, surely not.

The Light Shines in Darkness 365

BORÍS [*absently*] Music? Oh no. I like music, or rather I don't dislike it. Only I prefer something simpler—I like songs.

TÓNYA. But is not this sonata lovely?

BORÍS. The chief thing is, that it is not important; and it rather hurts me, when I think of the lives men live, that so much importance is attached to music.

They all eat sweetmeats, which are standing on the table.

LISA. How nice it is to have a fiancé here and sweetmeats provided!

BORÍS. Oh that is not my doing. It's mamma's.

TÓNYA. And quite right too.

LYÚBA. Music is precious because it seizes us, takes possession of us, and carries us away from reality. Everything seemed gloomy till you suddenly began to play, and really it has made everything brighter.

LISA. And Chopin's valse. They are hackneyed, but all the same . . .

TÓNYA. This . . . [*plays*].

Enter Nicholas Ivánovich. He greets Borís, Tónya, Styópa, Lisa, Mitrofán Ermílych and the Priest.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Where's mamma?

LYÚBA. I think she's in the nursery.

Styópa calls the Man-servant.

LYÚBA. Papa, how wonderfully Tónya plays! And where have you been?

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. In the village.

Enter servant, Afanásy.

STYÓPA. Bring another samovár.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH [*greets the Man-servant, and shakes hands with him*¹] Good-day. [*Servant becomes confused. Exit Servant. Nicholas Ivánovich also goes off*].

¹ People shake hands much more often in Russia than in England, but it is quite unusual to shake hands with a servant, and Nicholas Ivánovich does it in consequence of his belief that all men are brothers.

366 The Light Shines in Darkness

STYÓPA. Poor Afanásy! He was terribly confused. I can't understand papa. It is as if we were guilty of something.

Enter Nicholas Ivánovich.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. I was going back to my room without having told you what I feel. (*To Tónya*) If what I say should offend you—who are our guest—forgive me, but I cannot help saying it. You, Lisa, say that Tónya plays well. All you here, seven or eight healthy young men and women, have slept till ten o'clock, have eaten and drunk and are still eating; and you play and discuss music: while there, where I have just been, they were all up at three in the morning, and those who pastured the horses at night have not slept at all; and old and young, the sick and the weak, children and nursing-mothers and pregnant women are working to the utmost limits of their strength, so that we here may consume the fruits of their labour. Nor is that all. At this very moment, one of them, the only breadwinner of a family, is being dragged to prison because he has cut down one of a hundred thousand pine-trees that grow in the forest that is called *mine*. And we here, washed and clothed, having left the slops in our bedrooms to be cleaned up by slaves, eat and drink and discuss Schumann and Chopin and which of them moves us most or best cures our ennui? That is what I was thinking when I passed you, so I have spoken. Consider, is it possible to go on living in this way? [*Stands greatly agitated*].

LISA. True, quite true!

LYÚBA. If one lets oneself think about it, one can't live.

STYÓPA. Why? I don't see why the fact that people are poor should prevent one talking about Schumann. The one does not exclude the other. If one . . .

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH [*angrily*] If one has no heart, if one is made of wood . . .

STYÓPA. Well, I'll hold my tongue.

TÓNYA. It is a terrible problem; it is the problem of our day; and we should not be afraid of it, but look it straight in the face, in order to solve it.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. We cannot wait for the problem to be solved by public measures. Every one of us must die—if not to-day, then to-morrow. How can I live without suffering from this internal discord?

BORÍS. Of course there is only one way; that is, not to take part in it at all.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Well, forgive me if I have hurt you. I could not help saying what I felt. [*Exit*].

STYÓPA. Not take part in it? But our whole life is bound up with it.

BORÍS. That is why he says that the first step is to possess no property; to change our whole way of life and live so as not to be served by others but to serve others.

TÓNYA. Well, I see *you* have quite gone over to Nicholas Ivánovich's side.

BORÍS. Yes, I now understand it for the first time—after what I saw in the village. . . . You need only take off the spectacles through which we are accustomed to look at the life of the people, to realise at once the connection between their sufferings and our pleasures—that is enough!

MITROFÁN ERMÍLYCH. Yes, but the remedy does not consist in ruining one's own life.

STYÓPA. It is surprising how Mitrofán Ermílych and I, though we usually stand poles asunder, come to the same conclusion: those are my very words, "not ruin one's own life."

BORÍS. Naturally! You both of you wish to lead a pleasant life, and therefore want life arranged so as to ensure that pleasant life for you. [*To Styópa*] You wish to maintain the present system, while Mitrofán Ermílych wants to establish a new one.

368 The Light Shines in Darkness

Lyúba and Tónya whisper together. Tónya goes to the piano and plays a nocturne by Chopin. General silence.

STYÓPA. That's splendid; that solves everything.

BORÍS. It obscures and postpones everything!

While Tónya is playing, Mary Ivánovna and the Princess enter quietly and sit down to listen.

Before the end of the nocturne carriage bells are heard outside.

LYÚBA. It is Aunt. [*Goes to meet her*].

The music continues. Enter Alexándra Ivánovna, Father Gerásim (a priest with a cross round his neck) and a Notary. All rise.

FATHER GERÁSIM. Please go on, it is very pleasant.

The Princess approaches to receive his blessing, and the young Priest does the same.

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. I have done exactly what I said I would do. I found Father Gerásim, and you see I have persuaded him to come—he was on his way to Koursk—so I have done my part; and here is the Notary. He has got the deed ready; it only needs signing.

MARY IVÁNOVNA. Won't you have some lunch?

Notary puts down his papers on the table, and exit.

MARY IVÁNOVNA. I am very grateful to Father Gerásim.

FATHER GERÁSIM. What else could I do—though it was out of my way—yet as a Christian I considered it my duty to visit him.

Alexándra Ivánovna whispers to the young people. They consult together and go out on to the verandah, all except Borís. The young Priest also wants to go.

FATHER GERÁSIM.¹ No. You as a pastor and spiritual father must remain here! You may benefit by it yourself, and may be of use to others. Stay here, if Mary Ivánovna has no objection.

MARY IVÁNOVNA. No, I am as fond of Father Vasíly as

¹ Father Gerásim is modelled on the lines of the celebrated Father John of Cronstadt.

if he were one of the family. I have even consulted him; but being so young he has not much authority.

FATHER GERÁSIM. Naturally, naturally.

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA [*approaching*] Well, you see now, Father Gerásim, that you are the only person who can help and can bring him to reason. He is a clever, well-read man, but learning, you know, can only do harm. He is suffering from some sort of delusion. He maintains that the Christian law forbids a man to own any property; but how is that possible?

FATHER GERÁSIM. Temptation, spiritual pride, self-will! The Fathers of the Church have answered the question satisfactorily. But how did this befall him?

MARY IVÁNOVNA. Well, to tell you everything . . . when we married he was quite indifferent to religion, and we lived so, and lived happily, during our best years—the first twenty years. Then he began to reflect. Perhaps he was influenced by his sister, or by what he read. Anyhow, he began thinking and reading the Gospels, and then suddenly he grew extremely religious, began going to church and visiting the monks. Then all at once he gave all this up and changed his way of life completely. He began doing manual labour, would not let the servants wait on him, and above all he is now giving away his property. He yesterday gave away a forest—both the trees and land. It frightens me, for I have seven children. Do talk to him. I'll go and ask him whether he will see you. [*Exit*].

FATHER GERÁSIM. Nowadays many are falling away. And is the estate his or his wife's?

PRINCESS. His! That's what is so unfortunate.

FATHER GERÁSIM. And what is his official rank?

PRINCESS. His rank is not high. Only that of a cavalry captain, I believe. He was once in the army.

FATHER GERÁSIM. There are many who turn aside in that way. In Odessa there was a lady who was carried

370 The Light Shines in Darkness

away by Spiritualism and began to do much harm. But all the same, God enabled us to lead her back to the Church.

PRINCESS. The chief thing, please understand, is that my son is about to marry his daughter. I have given my consent, but the girl is used to luxury and should therefore be provided for, and not have to depend entirely on my son. Though I admit he is a hard-working and an exceptional young man.

Enter Mary Ivánovna and Nicholas Ivánovich.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. How d'you do, Princess? How d'you do? [*To Father Gerásim*] I beg your pardon. I don't know your name.¹

FATHER GERÁSIM. Do you not wish to receive my blessing?

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. No, I don't.

FATHER GERÁSIM. My name is Gerásim Sédorovitch. Very pleased to meet you.

Men-servants bring lunch and wine.

FATHER GERÁSIM. Pleasant weather, and good for the harvest.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. I suppose you came, at Alexándra Ivánovna's invitation, to divert me from my errors and direct me in the path of truth. If that is so, don't let us beat about the bush, but let us get to business at once. I do not deny that I disagree with the teaching of the Church. I used to agree with it, and then left off doing so. But with my whole heart I wish to be in the truth and will at once accept it if you show it to me.

FATHER GERÁSIM. How is it you say you don't believe the teaching of the Church? What is there to believe in, if not the Church?

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. God and His law, given to us in the Gospels.

¹ He knows that the priest is Father Gerásim, but wishes to address him not as a priest, but by his Christian name and patronymic, as one gentleman would usually address another.

FATHER GERÁSIM. The Church teaches that very law.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. If it did so, I should believe in the Church, but unfortunately it teaches the contrary.

FATHER GERÁSIM. The Church cannot teach the contrary, because it was established by the Lord himself. It is written, "I give you power," and, "Upon this rock I will build my Church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. That was not said in this connection at all, and proves nothing. But even if we were to admit that Christ established the Church, how do I know that it was *your* Church?

FATHER GERÁSIM. Because it is said, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. That, too, was not said in this connection, and proves nothing.

FATHER GERÁSIM. How *can* one deny the Church? It alone provides salvation.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. I did not deny the Church until I found it supported everything that is contrary to Christianity.

FATHER GERÁSIM. It can make no mistakes, for it alone has the truth. Those who leave it go astray, but the Church is sacred.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. I have already told you that I do not accept that. I do not accept it because, as is said in the Gospels, "By their deeds shall ye know them, by their fruit shall ye know them." I have found out that the Church blesses oaths, murders and executions.

FATHER GERÁSIM. The Church acknowledges and sanctifies the Powers ordained by God.

During the conversation, Styópa, Lyúba, Lîsa and Tónya at different times enter the room and sit or stand listening.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. I know that the Gospels say, not only "Do not kill," but "Do not be angry," yet the

372 The Light Shines in Darkness

Church blesses the army. The Gospel says, "Swear not at all," yet the Church administers oaths. The Gospel says . . .

FATHER GERÁSIM. Excuse me. When Pilate¹ said, "I adjure thee by the living God," Christ accepted his oath by replying "I am."

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Dear me! What are you saying? That is really absurd.

FATHER GERÁSIM. That is why the Church does not permit everyone to interpret the Gospel, lest he should go astray, but like a mother caring for her child gives him an interpretation suitable to his strength. No, let me finish! The Church does not lay on its children burdens too heavy for them to bear, but demands that they should keep the Commandments: love, do no murder, do not steal, do not commit adultery.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Yes! Do not kill me, do not steal from me my stolen goods. We have all robbed the people, we have stolen their land and have then made a law forbidding them to steal it back; and the Church sanctions all these things.

FATHER GERÁSIM. Heresy and spiritual pride are speaking through you. You ought to conquer your intellectual pride.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. It is not pride. I am only asking you what should I do according to Christ's law, when I have become conscious of the sin of robbing the people and enslaving them by means of the land. How am I to act? Continue to own land and to profit by the labour of starving men: putting them to this kind of work [*points to Servant who is bringing in the lunch and some wine*], or am I to return the land to those from whom my ancestors stole it?

FATHER GERÁSIM. You must act as behoves a son of the

¹. Father Gerásim attributes to Pilate what was said by Caiaphas the high priest.

Church. You have a family and children, and you must keep and educate them in a way suitable to their position.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Why?

FATHER GERÁSIM. Because God has placed you in that position. If you wish to be charitable, be charitable by giving away part of your property and by visiting the poor.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. But how is it that the rich young man was told that the rich cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven?

FATHER GERÁSIM. It is said, "If thou wouldest be perfect."

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. But I *do* wish to be perfect. The Gospels say, "Be ye perfect as your Father in Heaven . . ."

FATHER GERÁSIM. But we have to understand in what connection a thing is said.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. I do try to understand, and all that is said in the Sermon on the Mount is plain and comprehensible.

FATHER GERÁSIM. Spiritual pride.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Where is the pride, since it is said that what is hidden from the wise is revealed to babes?

FATHER GERÁSIM. Revealed to the meek, but not to the proud.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. But who is proud? I, who consider myself a man like the rest of mankind, and one who therefore must live like the rest by his own labour and as poorly as his brother men, or those who consider themselves to be specially selected sacred people, knowing the whole truth and incapable of error; and who interpret Christ's words their own way?

FATHER GERÁSIM [*offended*] Pardon me, Nicholas Ivánovich, I did not come here to argue which of us is right, nor to receive an admonition, but I called, at Alexándra Ivánovna's request, to talk things over with you. But since you

374 The Light Shines in Darkness

know everything better than I do, we had better end our conversation. Only, once again, I must entreat you in God's name to come to your senses. You have gone cruelly astray and are ruining yourself. [*Rises*].

MARY IVÁNOVNA. Won't you have something to eat?

FATHER GERÁSIM. No, I thank you. [*Exit with Alexándra Ivánovna*].

MARY IVÁNOVNA [*to young Priest*] And what now?

PRIEST. Well, in my opinion, Nicholas Ivánovich spoke the truth, and Father Gerásim produced no argument on his side.

PRINCESS. He was not allowed to speak, and he did not like having a kind of debate with everybody listening. It was his modesty that made him withdraw.

BORÍS. It wasn't modesty at all. All he said was so false. It was evident that he had nothing to say.

PRINCESS. Yes, with your usual instability I see that you are beginning to agree with Nicholas Ivánovich about everything. If you believe such things you ought not to marry.

BORÍS. I only say that truth is truth, and I can't help saying it.

PRINCESS. You of all people should not talk like that.

BORÍS. Why not?

PRINCESS. Because you are poor, and have nothing to give away. However, all this is not our business. [*Exit, followed by all except Nicholas Ivánovich and Mary Ivánovna*].

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH [*sits pondering, then smiles at his own thoughts*] Mary! What is all this for? Why did you invite that wretched, erring man? Why do those noisy women and that priest come into our most intimate life? Can we not settle our own affairs?

MARY IVÁNOVNA. What am I to do, if you want to leave the children penniless? That is what I cannot quietly submit to. You know that I am not grasping, and that I want nothing for myself.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. I know, I know and believe it. But the misfortune is that you do not trust the truth. I know you see it, but you can't make up your mind to rely on it. You rely neither on the truth nor on me. Yet you trust the crowd—the Princess and the rest of them.

MARY IVÁNOVNA. I believe in you, I always did ; but when you want to let the children go begging . . .

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. That means that you do not rely on me. Do you think I have not struggled and have not feared ! But afterwards I became convinced that this course is not only possible but obligatory, and that it is the one thing necessary and good for the children themselves. You always say that were it not for the children you would follow me, but I say that if we had no children we might live as we are doing ; we should then only be injuring ourselves, but now we are injuring them too.

MARY IVÁNOVNA. But what am I to do, if I don't understand ?

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. And what am I to do ? Don't I know why that wretched man—dressed up in his cassock and wearing that cross—was sent for, and why Alexándra Ivánovna brought the Notary ? You want me to hand the estate over to you, but I can't. You know that I have loved you all the twenty years we have lived together. I love you and wish you well, and therefore cannot sign away the estate to you. If I sign it away at all, it can only be to give it back to those from whom it has been taken—the peasants. And I can't let things remain as they are, but must give it to them. I'm glad the Notary has come ; and I will do it.

MARY IVÁNOVNA. No, that is dreadful ! Why this cruelty ? Though you think it a sin, still give it to me. [*Weeps*].

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. You don't know what you are saying. If I give it to you, I cannot go on living with

376 The Light Shines in Darkness

you; I shall have to go away. I cannot continue to live under these conditions. I shall not be able to look on while the life-blood is squeezed out of the peasants and they are imprisoned, in your name if not in mine. So choose!

MARY IVÁNOVNA. How cruel you are! Is this Christianity? It is harshness! I cannot, after all, live as you want me to. I cannot rob my own children and give everything away to other people; and that is why you want to desert me. Well—do so! I see you have ceased loving me, and I even know why.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Very well then—I will sign; but, Mary, you demand the impossible of me. [*Goes to writing-table and signs*] You wished it, but I shall not be able to go on living like this.

Curtain.

ACT III

SCENE 1

The scene is laid in Moscov. A large room. In it a carpenter's bench; a table with papers on it; a book-cup-board; a looking-glass and pictures on the wall behind, with some planks leaning in front of them. A Carpenter and Nicholas Ivánovich wearing a carpenter's apron are working at the bench, planing.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH [*takes a board from the vice*] Is that all right?

CARPENTER [*setting a plane*] Not quite, you must do it more boldly—like this.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. It is easy to say boldly, but I can't manage it.

CARPENTER. But why should your honour trouble to learn to be a carpenter? There are such a lot of us nowadays that we can hardly get a living as it is.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH [*at work again*] I'm ashamed to lead an idle life.

CARPENTER. Yours is that kind of position. God has given you property.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. That's just where it is. I don't believe that God gave it, but that some of us have taken it, and taken it from our brother men.

CARPENTER [*taken aback*] That's so! But still you've no need to do this.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. I understand that it must seem strange to you that while living in this house where there is such superfluity, I should wish to earn something.

378 The Light Shines in Darkness

CARPENTER [*laughs*] No. Everybody knows that gentle-folk want to master everything. Well, now go over it again with the smoothing plane.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. You won't believe me and will laugh, but still I must tell you that formerly I was not ashamed to live in this way, but now that I believe in Christ's law, which tells us we are all brothers—I am ashamed to live so.

CARPENTER. If you are ashamed of it, give away your property.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. I wanted to, but failed, and gave it to my wife.

CARPENTER. But after all it would not be possible for you to do it—you are too used to comforts.

[*Voice outside the door*] Papa, may I come in?

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. You may, you always may.

Enter Lyúba.

LYÚBA. Good-day, Jacob!

CARPENTER. Good-day, Miss!

LYÚBA. Borís has gone to his regiment. I am afraid of what he may do or say there. What do you think?

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. What can I think? He will do what is natural to him.

LYÚBA. It is awful. He has such a short time to serve¹ and may go and ruin his whole life.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. He did well not to come to see me. He understands that I can't say anything to him but what he knows himself. He told me that he handed in his resignation because he sees that not only is there no more immoral, lawless, cruel and brutal occupation than this one, the object of which is to kill, but also that there is nothing more degrading and mean than to have to submit implicitly to any man of higher rank who happens to come along. He knows all that.

¹ The period of compulsory service for a University graduate would be short in any case.

LYÚBA. That's just why I am afraid. He knows that, and may want to take some action.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. His conscience—the God that dwells within him—will decide that. Had he come to me I should have given him only one piece of advice: not to do anything in which he is guided by his reason alone—nothing is worse than that—but only to act when his whole being demands it. Now I, for instance, wished to act according to Christ's injunction: to leave father, wife and children and to follow Him, and I left home, but how did it end? It ended by my coming back and living with you in luxury in town. Because I was trying to do more than I had strength for, I have landed myself in this degrading and senseless position: I wish to live simply and to work with my hands, but in these surroundings, with lackeys and porters, it seems a kind of affectation. I see that, even now, Jacob Nikonórych is laughing at me.

CARPENTER. Why should I laugh? You pay me, and give me my tea. I am grateful to you.

LYÚBA. I wonder if I had not better go to him.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. My dear, my darling, I know you find it hard and are frightened, though you should not be so. After all, I am a man who understands life. Nothing evil can happen. All that appears evil really makes one's heart more joyful; only understand that a man who has started on that path will have to choose, and it sometimes happens that God's side and the Devil's weigh so equally that the scales oscillate, and it is then that the great choice has to be made. At that point any interference from outside is terribly dangerous and tormenting. It is as though a man were making such terrible efforts to draw a weight over a ridge that the slightest touch would cause him to break his back.

LYÚBA. Why should he suffer so?

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. That is as though a mother were to ask why she should suffer. There can be no child-

380 The Light Shines in Darkness

birth without suffering, and it is the same in spiritual life. One thing I can tell you. Borís is a true Christian, and consequently is free, and if you cannot as yet be like him, or believe in God as he does, then believe in God through him.

MARY IVÁNOVNA [*behind door*] May I come in?

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. You may always come in. What a reception I'm having here to-day.

MARY IVÁNOVNA. Our priest, Vasily Nikonórovich, has come. He is going to the Bishop, and has resigned his living!

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Impossible!

MARY IVÁNOVNA. He is here! Lyúba, go and call him! He wants to see you. [*Exit Lyúba*]. I had another reason for coming. I want to speak to you about Ványa. He behaves abominably, and does his lesson so badly that he can't possibly pass; and when I speak to him he is rude.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Mary, you know I am out of sympathy with the whole manner of life you are all leading, and with the education you are giving to the children. It is a terrible question for me, whether I have a right to see them perishing before my very eyes . . .

MARY IVÁNOVNA. Then you should suggest something else, something definite. But what do you offer?

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. I cannot say what. But can only say that first we should get rid of all this depraving luxury.

MARY IVÁNOVNA. So that they should become peasants! I cannot agree to that.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Then don't consult me. The things that grieve you are natural and inevitable.

Enter Priest and Lyúba. The Priest and Nicholas Ivánovich kiss¹ one another.

¹ It is not unusual among Russians for men-friends to kiss one another; but it is quite unusual for a man of position to kiss a village priest who calls as a visitor—and it indicates great intimacy or great emotion.

The Light Shines in Darkness 381

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Is it possible that you have thrown it all up?

PRIEST. I could stand it no longer.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. I did not expect it so soon.

PRIEST. But it was really impossible. In our calling we cannot be indifferent. We have to hear confessions, and to administer the Sacrament, and when once one has become convinced that it is all not true . . .

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Well, and what now?

PRIEST. Now I am going to the Bishop to be questioned. I am afraid he will exile me to the Solovétsk Monastery. At one time I thought of asking you to help me to escape abroad, but then I considered that it would seem cowardly. Only, there is my wife!

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Where is she?

PRIEST. She has gone to her father's. My mother-in-law came and took our boy away. That hurt me very much. I should much like . . . [*pauses, restraining his tears*].

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Well, may God help you! Are you staying with us?

PRINCESS [*running into the room*] There now, it has happened. He has refused to serve, and has been put under arrest. I have just been there but was not admitted. Nicholas Ivánovich, you must go.

LYÚBA. Has he refused? How do you know?

PRINCESS. I was there myself! Vasily Andréevich, who is a Member of the Council, told me all about it. Borís just walked in and told them he would serve no longer, would take no oath, and in fact said everything Nicholas Ivánovich has taught him.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Princess! Can such things be taught?

PRINCESS. I don't know. Only this is not Christianity! What is your opinion, Father?

PRIEST. I am no longer "Father."

382 The Light Shines in Darkness

PRINCESS. Well, all the same. However, you are also one of them! No, I cannot leave things in this state. And what cursed Christianity it is that makes people suffer and perish. I hate this Christianity of yours. It's all right for you, who know you won't be touched; but I have only one son, and you have ruined him!

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Do be calm, Princess.

PRINCESS. Yes you, you have ruined him! And having ruined him, you must save him. Go and persuade him to abandon all this nonsense. It's all very well for rich people, but not for us.

LYÚBA [*crying*] Papa, what can be done?

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. I will go. Perhaps I can be of some use. [*Takes off his apron*].

PRINCESS [*helping him on with his coat*] They would not let me in, but now we will go together and I shall get my way. [*Exeunt*].

Curtain.

SCENE 2.

A Government office. A Clerk is seated at a table, and a Sentinel is pacing up and down. Enter a General with his Adjutant. The Clerk jumps up, the Sentinel presents arms.

GENERAL. Where is the Colonel?

CLERK. Gone to see that new conscript, Your Excellency.

GENERAL. Ah, very well. Ask him to come here to me.

CLERK. Yes, Your Excellency.

GENERAL. And what are you copying out? Isn't it the conscript's evidence?

CLERK. Yes, sir, it is.

GENERAL. Give it here.

The Clerk hands General the paper and exit. The General hands it to his Adjutant.

GENERAL. Please read it.

ADJUTANT [*reading*] "These are my answers to the questions put to me, namely: (1) Why I do not take my oath. (2) Why I refuse to fulfil the demands of the Government. (3) What induced me to use words offensive not only to the army but also to the Highest Authorities. In reply to the first question: I cannot take the oath because I accept Christ's teaching, which directly and clearly forbids taking oaths, as in St. Matthew's Gospel, ch. 5 vv. 33-37, and in the Epistle of St. James, ch. 5 v. 12."

GENERAL. Of course he must be arguing! Putting his own interpretations!

ADJUTANT [*goes on reading*] "The Gospel says: 'Swear not at all, but let your yea be yea, and your nay, nay; and what is more than these is of the evil one!' St. James's Epistle says: 'Before all things, brethren, swear not by the heavens nor by the earth, nor by any other oath; but let your yea be yea, and your nay, nay, that ye fall not into temptation!' But apart from the fact that the Bible gives us such clear injunctions not to swear—or even if it contained no such injunctions—I should still be unable to swear to obey the will of men, because as a Christian I must always obey the will of God, which does not always coincide with the will of men."

GENERAL. He must be arguing! If I had my way, there would be none of this.

ADJUTANT [*reading*] "I refuse to fulfil the demands of men calling themselves the Government, because . . ."

GENERAL. What insolence!

ADJUTANT. "Because those demands are criminal and wicked. They demand of me that I should enter the army, and learn and prepare to commit murder, though this is forbidden both in the Old and the New Testa-

384 The Light Shines in Darkness

ments, and above all by my conscience. To the third question . . .”

Enter Colonel followed by Clerk. The General shakes hands with Colonel.

COLONEL. You are reading the evidence?

GENERAL. Yes. Unpardonably insolent language. Well, go on.

ADJUTANT. “To the third question : What induced me to use offensive words before the Court, my answer is : that I was induced to do so by the wish to serve God, and in order to expose the fraud carried on in His name. This desire, I hope to retain till I die, and therefore . . .”

GENERAL. Come ; that’s enough ; one can’t listen to all this balderdash. The fact is all this sort of thing must be eradicated, and action taken to prevent the people being perverted. [*To Colonel*] Have you spoken to him?

COLONEL. I have been doing so all the time. I tried to shame him, and also to convince him that it would only be worse for himself, and that he would gain nothing by it. Besides that, I spoke of his relations. He was very excited, but holds to his opinions.

GENERAL. A pity you talked to him so much. We are in the army not to reason, but to act. Call him here!

Exit Adjutant with Clerk.

GENERAL [*sits down*]. No, Colonel, that’s not the way. Fellows of this kind must be dealt with in a different manner. Decisive measures are needed to cut off the diseased limb. One maggoty sheep infects the whole flock. In these cases one must not be too squeamish. His being a Prince, and having a mother and a fiancée, is none of our business. We have a soldier before us and we must obey the Tsar’s will.

COLONEL. I only thought that we could move him more easily by persuasion.

GENERAL. Not at all—by firmness ; only by firmness ! I have dealt with men of that sort before. He must be

made to feel that he is a nonentity—a grain of dust beneath a chariot wheel, and that he cannot stop it.

COLONEL. Well, we can try!

GENERAL [*getting irritable*] No need to try! I don't need to try! I have served the Tsar for forty-four years, I have given and am giving my life to the service, and now this fellow wants to teach me and wants to read me theological lectures! Let him take that to the Priest, but to me—he is either a soldier or a prisoner. That's all!

Enter Boris guarded by two Soldiers and followed by Adjutant and Clerk.

GENERAL [*pointing with a finger*] Place him there.

BORIS. I need no placing. I shall stand or sit where I like, for I do not recognise your authority.

GENERAL. Silence! You don't recognise authority? I will make you recognise it.

BORIS [*sits down on a stool*] How wrong it is of you to shout so!

GENERAL. Lift him, and make him stand!

Soldiers raise him.

BORIS. That you can do, and you can kill me; but you cannot make me submit . . .

GENERAL. Silence, I tell you. Hear what I have to say to you.

BORIS. I don't in the least want to hear what you have to say.

GENERAL. He is mad! He must be taken to the hospital to be examined. That is the only thing to do.

COLONEL. The order was to send him to be examined at the Gendarmes' office.

GENERAL. Well, then, send him there. Only put him into uniform.

COLONEL. He resists.

GENERAL. Bind him. [*To Boris*] Please hear what I have to say to you. I don't care what happens to you, but for

386 The Light Shines in Darkness

your own sake I advise you, bethink yourself. You will rot in a fortress, and not do any good to anyone. Give it up. Well, you flared up a bit and I flared up. [*Slaps him on the shoulder*] Go, take the oath and give up all that nonsense. [*To Adjutant*] Is the Priest here? [*To Boris*] Well? [*Boris is silent*] Why don't you answer? Really you had better do as I say. You can't break a club with a whip. You can keep your opinions, but serve your time! We will not use force with you. Well?

BORIS. I have nothing more to say. I have said all I had to.

GENERAL. There, you see, you wrote that there are such and such texts in the Gospels. Well, the Priest knows all about that. Have a talk with the Priest, and then think things over. That will be best. Good-bye, and I hope "au revoir," when I shall be able to congratulate you on having entered the Tsar's service. Send the Priest here. [*Exit, followed by Colonel and Adjutant*].

BORIS [*To Clerk and Convoy Soldiers*] There you see how they deceive you. They know that they are deceiving you. Don't submit to them. Lay down your rifles and go away. Let them put you into the Disciplinary Battalions and flog you; it will not be as bad as it is to serve such impostors.

CLERK. But how could one get on without an army? It's impossible.

BORIS. That is not for us to consider. We have to consider what God demands of us; and God wants us.

ONE OF THE SOLDIERS. But how is it that they speak of "the Christian army"?

BORIS. That is not said anywhere in the Bible. It's these impostors who invented it.

Enter a Gendarme Officer with Clerk.

GENDARME OFFICER. Is it here that the conscript, Prince Cheremshánov, is being kept?

CLERK. Yes, sir. Here he is.

GENDARME OFFICER. Come here, please. Are you Prince Borís Siménovich Cheremshánov, who refuses to take the oath?

BORÍS. I am.

GENDARME OFFICER [*sits down and points to a seat opposite*] Please sit down.

BORÍS. I think our conversation will be quite useless.

GENDARME OFFICER. I don't think so. At any rate not useless to you. You see it's like this. I am informed that you refuse military service and the oath, and are therefore suspected of belonging to the Revolutionary Party, and that is what I have to investigate. If it is true, we shall have to withdraw you from the service and imprison you or banish you according to the share you have taken in the revolution. If it is not true, we shall leave you to the military authorities. You see I express myself quite frankly to you, and I hope you will treat us in the same way.

BORÍS. In the first place I cannot trust men who wear this sort of thing [*pointing to the Gendarme Officer's uniform*]. Secondly, your very occupation is one I cannot respect, and for which I have the greatest aversion. But I do not refuse to answer your questions. What do you wish to know?

GENDARME OFFICER. In the first place, tell me your name, your calling, and your religion?

BORÍS. You know all that and I will not reply. Only one of the questions is of great importance to me. I am *not* what is called an Orthodox Christian.

GENDARME OFFICER. What then is your religion?

BORÍS. I do not label it.

GENDARME OFFICER. But still? . . .

BORÍS. Well then, the Christian religion, according to the Sermon on the Mount.

GENDARME OFFICER. Write it down [*Clerk writes. To*

388 The Light Shines in Darkness

Borís] Still you recognise yourself as belonging to some nationality or rank.

Borís. No, I don't. I recognise myself as a man, and a servant of God.

GENDARME OFFICER. Why don't you consider yourself a member of the Russian Empire?

Borís. Because I do not recognise any empires.

GENDARME OFFICER. What do you mean by not recognising? Do you wish to overthrow them?

Borís. Certainly I wish it, and work for it.

GENDARME OFFICER [*To Clerk*] Put that down. [*To Borís*] How do you work for it?

Borís. By exposing fraud and lies, and by spreading the truth. When you entered I was telling these soldiers not to believe in the fraud into which they have been drawn.

GENDARME OFFICER. But beside this method of exposing and persuading, do you approve of any others?

Borís. No, I not only disapprove, but I consider all violence to be a great sin; and not only violence, but all concealment and craftiness . . .

GENDARME OFFICER. Write that down. Very well. Now kindly let me know whom you are acquainted with. Do you know Ivashénko?

Borís. No.

GENDARME OFFICER. Klein?

Borís. I have heard of him, but never met him.

Enter Priest (an old man wearing a cross and carrying a Bible). The Clerk goes up to him and receives his blessing.

GENDARME OFFICER. Well, I think I may stop. I consider that you are not dangerous, and not within our jurisdiction. I wish you a speedy release. Good-day. [*Presses Borís's hand*].

Borís. One thing I should like to say to you. Forgive me, but I can't help saying it. Why have you chosen

this wicked, cruel profession? I should advise you to give it up.

GENDARME OFFICER [*smiles*] Thank you for your advice, but I have my reasons. My respects to you. [*To Priest*] Father, I relinquish my place to you [*Exit with Clerk*].

PRIEST. How can you so grieve the authorities by refusing to fulfil the duty of a Christian, to serve the Tsar and your Fatherland?

BORÍS [*smiling*] Just because I want to fulfil my duty as a Christian, I do not wish to be a soldier.

PRIEST. Why don't you wish it? It is said that, "To lay down one's life for a friend" is to be a true Christian. . . .

BORÍS. Yes, to "lay down one's life," but not to take another man's. That is just what I want to do, to "lay down my life."

PRIEST. You do not reason rightly, young man. John the Baptist said to the soldiers . . .

BORÍS [*smiling*] That only goes to prove that even in those days the soldiers used to rob, and he told them not to!

PRIEST. Well, but why don't you wish to take your oath?

BORÍS. You know that the Gospels forbid it!

PRIEST. Not at all. You know that when Pilate said: "I adjure thee by the living God, art thou the Christ?" the Lord Jesus Christ answered "I am." That proves that oaths are not forbidden.

BORÍS. Are not you ashamed to talk so? You—an old man.

PRIEST. Take my advice and don't be obstinate. You and I cannot change the world. Just take your oath and you'll be at ease. Leave it to the Church to know what is a sin and what is not.

BORÍS. Leave it to you? Are you not afraid to take so much sin upon yourself?

PRIEST. What sin? Having been brought up firmly

390 The Light Shines in Darkness

in the faith, and having worked as a priest for thirty years, I can have no sins on my shoulders.

BORÍS. Whose then is the sin, when you deceive such numbers of people? What have these poor fellows got in their heads? [*Points to Sentinel*].

PRIEST. You and I, young man, will never settle that. It is for us to obey those placed above us.

BORÍS. Leave me alone! I am sorry for you and—I confess—it disgusts me to listen to you. Now if you were like that General—but you come here with a cross and the Testament to persuade me in the name of Christ, to deny Christ! Go [*excitedly*]. Leave me—Go. Let me be taken back to the cell that I may not see anyone. I am tired, dreadfully tired!

PRIEST. Well, if that is so, good-bye.

Enter Adjutant.

ADJUTANT. Well?

PRIEST. Great obstinacy, great insubordination.

ADJUTANT. So he has refused to take the oath and to serve?

PRIEST. On no account will he.

ADJUTANT. Then he must be taken to the hospital.

PRIEST. And reported as ill? That no doubt would be better, or his example may lead others astray.

ADJUTANT. To be put under observation in the ward for the mentally diseased. Those are my orders.

PRIEST. Certainly. My respects to you. [*Exit*].

ADJUTANT [*approaches Borís*] Come, please. My orders are to conduct you——

BORÍS. Where to?

ADJUTANT. First of all to the hospital, where it will be quieter for you, and where you will have time to think things over.

BORÍS. I've thought them over long ago. But let us go! [*Exeunt*].

Curtain.

SCENE 3

Room in Hospital. Head Doctor, Assistant Doctor, an Officer - Patient in a dressing-gown, and two Warders wearing blouses.

PATIENT. I tell you that you are only leading me to perdition. I have already several times felt quite well.

HEAD DOCTOR. You must not get excited. I should be glad to sign an order for you to leave the hospital, but you know yourself that liberty is dangerous for you. If I were sure that you would be looked after . . .

PATIENT. You think I should take to drink again? No, I have had my lesson, but every extra day I spend here only does me harm. You are doing [*gets excited*] the opposite of what you ought to do. You are cruel. It's all very well for *you*!

HEAD DOCTOR. Don't get excited. [*Makes a sign to Warders ; who come up from behind*].

PATIENT. It's easy for you to argue, being at liberty; but how about us who are kept among madmen! [*To Warders*] What are you after? Be off!

HEAD DOCTOR. I beg of you to be calm.

PATIENT. But I beg and I demand that you set me free. [*Yells, and rushes at the Doctor, but the Warders seize him. A struggle ; after which he is taken out*].

ASSISTANT DOCTOR. There! Now it has begun again. He nearly got at you that time.

HEAD DOCTOR. Alcoholic . . . nothing can be done. But there is some improvement.

Enter Adjutant.

ADJUTANT. How d'you do.

HEAD DOCTOR. Good morning!

ADJUTANT. I have brought you an interesting fellow, a

392 The Light Shines in Darkness

certain Prince Cheremshánov, who has been conscripted, but on religious grounds refuses to serve. He was sent to the Gendarmes, but they say he does not come within their jurisdiction, not being a political conspirator. The Priest exhorted him, but also without effect.

HEAD DOCTOR [*laughing*] And then as usual you bring him to us, as the highest Court of Appeal. Well, let's have him.

Exit Assistant Doctor.

ADJUTANT. He is said to be a highly educated young man, and he is engaged to a rich girl. It's extraordinary! I really consider this is the right place for him!

HEAD DOCTOR. Yes, it's a mania.

Boris is brought in.

HEAD DOCTOR. Glad to see you. Please take a seat and let's have a chat. [*To Adjutant*] Please leave us. [*Exit Adjutant*].

BORIS. I should like to ask you, if possible, if you mean to lock me up somewhere, to be so good as to do it quickly and let me rest.

HEAD DOCTOR. Excuse me, we must keep the rules. Only a few questions. What do you feel? What are you suffering from?

BORIS. Nothing. I am perfectly well.

HEAD DOCTOR. Yes, but you are not behaving like other people.

BORIS. I am behaving as my conscience demands.

HEAD DOCTOR. Well, you see you have refused to perform your military service. On what grounds do you do so?

BORIS. I am a Christian, and therefore cannot commit murder.

HEAD DOCTOR. But one must defend one's country from her foes, and keep those who want to destroy the social order from evil-doing.

BORIS. No one is attacking our country; and there are

more among the governors who destroy social order, than there are among those whom they oppress.

HEAD DOCTOR. Yes? But what do you mean by that?

BORÍS. I mean this: the chief cause of evil—*vódka*—is sold by the Government; false and fraudulent religion is also fostered by the Government; and this military service which they demand of me—and which is the chief means of demoralising the people—is also demanded by the Government.

HEAD DOCTOR. Then, in your opinion, Government and the State are unnecessary.

BORÍS. That I don't know; but I know for certain that I must take no part in evil-doing.

HEAD DOCTOR. But what is to become of the world? Is not our reason given in order to enable us to look ahead.

BORÍS. It is also given in order to enable us to see that social order should not be maintained by violence, but by goodness; and that one man's refusal to participate in evil cannot be at all dangerous.

HEAD DOCTOR. Well now, allow me to examine you a bit. Will you have the goodness to lie down? [*Begins touching him*] You feel no pain here?

BORÍS. No.

HEAD DOCTOR. Nor here?

BORÍS. No.

HEAD DOCTOR. Take a deep breath, please. Now don't breathe. Now allow me [*takes out a measure and measures forehead and nose*]. Now be so good as to shut your eyes and walk.

BORÍS. Are you not ashamed to do all this?

HEAD DOCTOR. What do you mean?

BORÍS. All this nonsense? You know that I am quite well and that I am sent here because I refuse to take part in their evil deeds, and because they have no answer to give to the truth I told them; and that is why they

394 The Light Shines in Darkness

pretend to think me mad. And you co-operate with them. It is horrid and it is shameful. Don't do it!

HEAD DOCTOR. Then you don't wish to walk?

BORÍS. No, I don't. You may torture me, but you must do it yourself; I won't help you. [*Holly*] Let me alone! [*The Doctor presses button of bell. Enter two Warders*].

HEAD DOCTOR. Don't get excited. I quite understand that your nerves are strained. Will you please go to your wård?

Enter Assistant Doctor.

ASSISTANT DOCTOR. Some visitors have just come to see Cheremshánov.

BORÍS. Who are they?

ASSISTANT DOCTOR. Saryntsov and his daughter.

BORÍS. I should like to see them.

HEAD DOCTOR. There is no reason why you shouldn't. Ask them in. You may see them here. [*Exit, followed by Assistant and Warders*].

Enter Nicholas Ivánovich and Lyúba. The Princess looks in at the door and says, "Go in, I'll come later."

LYÚBA [*goes straight to Borís, takes his head in her hands and kisses him*] Poor Borís.

BORÍS. No, don't pity me. I feel so well, so joyful, so light. How d'you do. [*Kisses Nicholas Ivánovich*].

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. I have come to say chiefly one thing to you. First of all, in such affairs it is worse to overdo it than not to do enough. And in this matter you should do as is said in the Gospels, and not think beforehand, "I shall say this, or do that": "When they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaketh in you." That is to say, do not act because you have reasoned out beforehand that you should do so and so, but act only when your whole being feels that you cannot act otherwise.

BORÍS. I have done so. I did not think I should refuse

to serve; but when I saw all this fraud, those Mirrors of Justice, those Documents, the Police and Officers smoking, I could not help saying what I did. I was frightened, but only till I had begun, after that it was all so simple and joyful.

Lyúba sits down and cries.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Above all, do nothing for the sake of being praised, or to gain the approval of those whose opinion you value. For myself I can say definitely, that if you take the oath at once, and enter the service, I shall love and esteem you not less but more than before; because not the things that take place in the external world are valuable, but that which goes on within the soul.

BORÍS. Of course, for what happens within the soul must make a change in the outside world.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Well, I have said my say. Your mother is here. She is terribly upset. If you can do what she asks, do it—that is what I wished to say to you.

From the corridor outside hysterical weeping is heard. A Lunatic rushes in, followed by Warders who drag him out again.

LYÚBA. How terrible! And you will be kept here? [*Weeps*].

BORÍS. I am not afraid of it, I'm afraid of nothing now! I feel so happy, the only thing I fear is what you feel about it. Do help me; I am sure you will!

LYÚBA. Can I be glad about it?

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Not glad, that is impossible. I myself am not glad. I suffer on his account and would gladly take his place, but though I suffer I yet know that it is well.

LYÚBA. It may be well; but when will they set him free?

BORÍS. No one knows. I do not think of the future. The present is so good, and you can make it still better.

396 The Light Shines in Darkness

Enter the Princess, his mother.

PRINCESS. I can wait no longer! [*To Nicholas Ivánovich*] Well, have you persuaded him? Does he agree? Bórya, my darling, you understand, don't you, what I suffer? For thirty years I have lived but for you; rearing you, rejoicing in you. And now when everything has been done and is complete—you suddenly renounce everything. Prison and disgrace! Oh no! Bórya!

BORÍS. Mamma! Listen to me.

PRINCESS [*to Nicholas Ivánovich*] Why do you say nothing? You have ruined him, it is for you to persuade him. It's all very well for you! Lyúba, do speak to him!

LYÚBA. I cannot!

BORÍS. Mamma, do understand that there are things that are as impossible as flying; and I cannot serve in the army.

PRINCESS. You think that you can't! Nonsense. Everybody has served and does serve. You and Nicholas Ivánovich have invented some new sort of Christianity which is not Christianity, but a devilish doctrine to make everybody suffer!

BORÍS. As is said in the Gospels!

PRINCESS. Nothing of the kind, or if it is, then all the same it is stupid. Darling, Bórya, have pity on me. [*Throws herself on his neck, weeps*] My whole life has been nothing but sorrow. There was but one ray of joy, and you are turning it into torture. Bórya—have pity on me!

BORÍS. Mamma, this is terribly hard on me. But I cannot explain it to you.

PRINCESS. Come now, don't refuse—say you will serve!

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Say you will think it over—and do think it over.

BORÍS. Very well then. But you too, Mamma, should have pity on me. It is hard on me too. [*Cries are again heard from the corridor*]. You know I'm in a lunatic asylum, and might really go mad.

Enter Head Doctor.

HEAD DOCTOR. Madam, this may have very bad consequences. Your son is in a highly excited condition. I think we must put an end to this interview. You may call on visiting days—Thursdays and Sundays. Please come to see him before twelve o'clock.

PRINCESS. Very well, very well, I will go. Bórya, good-bye! Think it over. Have pity on me and meet me next Thursday with good news!

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH [*shaking hands with Borís*] Think it over with God's help, and as if you knew you were to die to-morrow. Only so will you decide rightly. Good-bye.

BORÍS [*approaching Lyúba*] And what do you say to me?

LYÚBA. I cannot lie; and I do not understand why you should torment yourself and everybody. I do not understand—and can say nothing. [*Goes out weeping. Exeunt all except Borís*].

BORÍS [*alone*] Oh how hard it is! Oh, how hard, Lord help me! [*Prays*].

Enter Warders with dressing-gown.

WARDER. Please change.

Borís puts on dressing-gown.

Curtain.

ACT IV

SCENE 1

In Moscow a year later. A drawing-room in the Saryntsov's town house is prepared for a dance. Footmen are arranging plants round the grand piano. Enter Mary Ivánovna in an elegant silk dress, with Alexándra Ivánovna.

MARY IVÁNOVNA. A ball? No, only a dance! A "Juvenile Party" as they once used to say. My children took part in the Theatricals at the Mákofs, and have been asked to dances everywhere, so I must return the invitations.

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. I am afraid Nicholas does not like it.

MARY IVÁNOVNA. I can't help it. [*To Footmen*] Put it here! [*To Alexándra Ivánovna*] God knows how glad I should be not to cause him unpleasantness. But I think he has become much less exacting.

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. No, no! Only he does not show it so much. I saw how upset he was when he went off to his own room after dinner.

MARY IVÁNOVNA. What can I do? After all, people must live. We have seven children, and if they find no amusement at home, heaven knows what they may be up to. Anyhow I am quite happy about Lyúba now.

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. Has he proposed, then?

MARY IVÁNOVNA. As good as proposed. He has spoken to her, and she has said, Yes!

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. That again will be a terrible blow to Nicholas.

The Light Shines in Darkness 399

MARY IVÁNOVNA. Oh, he knows. He can't help knowing.

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. He does not like him.

MARY IVÁNOVNA [*to the Footmen*] Put the fruit on the side-board. Like whom? Alexander Mikáylovich? Of course not; because he is a living negation of all Nicholas's pet theories. A nice pleasant kindly man of the world. But oh! That terrible night-mare—that affair of Boris Cheremshánov's. What has happened to him?

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. Lisa has been to see him. He is still there. She says he has grown terribly thin, and the Doctors fear for his life or his reason.

MARY IVÁNOVNA. Yes, he is one of the terrible sacrifices caused by Nicholas's ideas. Why need he have been ruined? I never wished it.

Enter Pianist.

MARY IVÁNOVNA [*to Pianist*] Have you come to play?

PIANIST. Yes, I am the pianist.

MARY IVÁNOVNA. Please take a seat and wait a little. Won't you have a cup of tea?

PIANIST [*goes to piano*] No, thank you!

MARY IVÁNOVNA. I never wished it. I liked Bórya, but still he was not a suitable match for Lyúba—especially after he let himself be carried away by Nicholas Ivánovich's ideas.

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. But still, the strength of his convictions is astonishing. See what he endures! They tell him that as long as he persists in refusing to serve, he will either remain where he is or be sent to the fortress; but his reply is always the same. And yet Lisa says he is full of joy and even merry!

MARY IVÁNOVNA. Fanatic! But here comes Alexander Mikáylovich!

Enter Alexander Mikáylovich Starkóvsky,¹ an elegant man in evening dress.

¹ Alexander in his Christian name, Mikáylovich (= son of Michael) is his patronymic, and Starkóvsky in his surname which is seldom used in ordinary social life,

400 The Light Shines in Darkness

STARKÓVSKY. I am afraid I have come too soon. [*Kisses the hands of both ladies*].

MARY IVÁNOVNA. So much the better.

STARKÓVSKY. And Lyubóv Nikoláyevna? ¹ She proposed to dance a great deal so as to make up for the time she has lost, and I have undertaken to help her.

MARY IVÁNOVNA. She is sorting favours for the cotillion.

STARKÓVSKY. I will go and help her, if I may?

MARY IVÁNOVNA. Certainly.

As Starkóvsky is going out he meets Lyúba in evening, but not low-necked, dress carrying a cushion with stars and ribbons.

LYÚBA. Ah! here you are. Good! Now you can help me. There are three more cushions in the drawing-room. Go and fetch them all.

STARKÓVSKY. I fly to do so!

MARY IVÁNOVNA. Now, Lyúba; friends are coming, and they will be sure to hint and ask questions. May we announce it?

LYÚBA. No, Mamma, no. Why? Let them ask! Papa will not like it.

MARY IVÁNOVNA. But he knows or guesses; and he will have to be told sooner or later. I think it would be better to announce it to-day. Why, *C'est le secret de la comédie*.²

LYÚBA. No, no, Mamma, please don't. It would spoil our whole evening. No, no, you must not.

MARY IVÁNOVNA. Well, as you please.

LYÚBA. All right then: after the dance, just before supper.

Enter Starkóvsky.

LYÚBA. Well, have you got them?

¹ Lyúbov Nikoláyevna (= Love daughter of Nicholas) is the courteous way of naming Lyúba. The latter is a pet name.

² It is only a comedy secret,

The Light Shines in Darkness 401

MARY IVÁNOVNA. I'll go and have a look at the little ones. [*Exit with Alexándra Ivánovna*].

STARKÓVSKY [*carrying three cushions, which he steadies with his chin, and dropping things on the way*] Don't trouble, Lyúbov Nikoláyevna, I'll pick them up. Well, you have prepared a lot of favours. If only I can manage to lead the dance properly! Ványa, come along.

VÁNYA [*bringing more favours*] This is the whole lot. Lyúba, Alexander Mikáylovich and I have a bet on, which of us will win the most favours.

STARKÓVSKY. It will be easy for you, for you know everybody here, and will gain them easily, while I shall have to charm the young ladies first before winning anything. It means that I am giving you a start of forty points.

VÁNYA. But then you are a fiancé, and I am a boy.

STARKÓVSKY. Well no, I am not a fiancé yet, and I am worse than a boy.

LYÚBA. Ványa, please go to my room and fetch the gum and the pin-cushion from the what-not. Only for goodness' sake don't break anything.

VÁNYA. I'll break everything! [*Runs off*].

STARKÓVSKY [*takes Lyúba's hand*] Lyúba, may I? I am so happy. [*Kisses her hand*] The mazurka is mine, but that is not enough. One can't say much in a mazurka, and I must speak. May I wire to my people that I have been accepted and am happy?

LYÚBA. Yes, to-night.

STARKÓVSKY. One word more: how will Nicholas Ivánovich take it? Have you told him? Yes?

LYÚBA. No, I haven't; but I will. He will take it as he now takes everything that concerns the family. He will say, "Do as you think best." But he will be grieved at heart.

STARKÓVSKY. Because I am not Chcremshánov? Because I am a Maréchal de la Noblesse?

402 The Light Shines in Darkness

LYÚBA. Yes. But I have struggled with myself and deceived myself for his sake ; and it is not because I love him less that I am now doing not what he wants, but it is because I can't lie. He himself says so. I do so want to *live*!

STARKÓVSKY. And life is the only truth! Well, and what of Cheremshánov?

LYÚBA [*excitedly*] Don't speak of him to me! I wish to blame him, to blame him whilst he is suffering; and I know it is because I feel guilty towards him. All I know is that I feel there is a kind of love—and I think a more real love than I ever felt for him.

STARKÓVSKY. Lyúba, is that true?

LYÚBA. You wish me to say that I love you with that real love—but I won't say it. I do love you with a different kind of love; but it is not the real thing either! Neither the one nor the other is the real thing—if only they could be mixed together!

STARKÓVSKY. No, no, I am satisfied with mine. [*Kisses her hand*] Lyúba!

LYÚBA [*pushes him away*] No, let us sort these things. They are beginning to arrive.

Enter Princess with Tónya and a little girl.

LYÚBA. Mamma will be here in a moment.

PRINCESS. Are we the first?

STARKÓVSKY. Some one must be! I have suggested making a gutta-percha dummy to be the first arrival!

Enter Styópa, also Ványa carrying the gum and pin-cushion.

STYÓPA. I expected to see you at the Italian opera last night.

TÓNYA. We were at my Aunt's, sewing for the charity-bazaar.

Enter Students, Ladies, Mary Ivánovna and a Countess.

COUNTLESS. Shan't we see Nicholas Ivánovich?

MARY IVÁNOVNA. No, he never leaves his study to come to our gathering.

The Light Shines in Darkness 403

STARKÓVSKY. Quadrille, please! [*Claps his hands. The dancers take their places and dance*].

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA [*approaches Mary Ivánovna*] He is terribly agitated. He has been to see Borís, and he came back and saw there was a ball, and now he wants to go away! I went up to his door and overheard him talking to Alexander Petróvich.

MARY IVÁNOVNA. Well?

STARKÓVSKY. *Rond des dames. Les cavaliers en avant!*¹

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. He has made up his mind that it is impossible for him to live so, and he is going away.

MARY IVÁNOVNA. What a torment the man is! [*Exit*].

Curtain.

SCENE 2

Nicholas Ivánovich's room. The dance music is heard in the distance. Nicholas Ivánovich has an overcoat on. He puts a letter on the table. Alexander Petróvich, dressed in ragged clothes, is with him.

ALEXANDER PETRÓVICH. Don't worry, we can reach the Caucasus without spending a penny, and there you can settle down.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. We will go by rail as far as Túla, and from thence on foot. Well, I'm ready. [*Puts letter in the middle of the table, and goes to the door, where he meets Mary Ivánovna*] Oh! Why have you come here?

MARY IVÁNOVNA. Why indeed? To prevent your doing a cruel thing. What's all this for? Why d'you do it?

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Why? Because I cannot continue

¹ Starkóvsky, directing the dance, says: "Ladies form a circle. Gentlemen advance!"

404 The Light Shines in Darkness

living like this. I cannot endure this terrible, depraved life.

MARY IVÁNOVNA. It is awful. My life—which I give wholly to you and the children—has all of a sudden become “depraved.” [*Sees Alexander Petróvich*] *Renvoyez au moins cet homme. Je ne veux pas qu’il soit témoin de cette conversation.*¹

ALEXANDER PETRÓVICH. *Comprenez. Toujours moi partez.*²

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Wait for me out there, Alexander Petróvich, I’ll come in a minute,

Exit Alexander Petróvich.

MARY IVÁNOVNA. And what can you have in common with such a man as that? Why is he nearer to you than your own wife? It is incomprehensible! And where are you going?

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. I have left a letter for you. I did not want to speak; it is too hard; but if you wish it, I will try to say it quietly.

MARY IVÁNOVNA. No, I don’t understand. Why do you hate and torture your wife, who has given up everything for you? Tell me, have I been going to balls, or gone in for dress, or flirted? My whole life has been devoted to the family. I nursed them all myself; I brought them up, and this last year the whole weight of their education, and the managing our affairs, has fallen on me. . . .

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH [*interrupting*] But all this weight falls on you, because you do not wish to live as I proposed.

MARY IVÁNOVNA. But that was impossible! Ask anyone! It was impossible to let the children grow up illiterate, as you wished them to do, and for me to do the washing and cooking.

¹ At least send that man away. I don’t wish him to be a witness of our conversation.

Alexander Petróvich replies in very bad French: “I understand! I am always to go away!”

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. I never wanted that!

MARY IVÁNOVNA. Well, anyhow it was something of that kind! No, you are a Christian, you wish to do good, and you say you love men; then why do you torture the woman who has devoted her whole life to you?

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. How do I torture you? I love you, but . . .

MARY IVÁNOVNA. But is it not torturing me to leave me and to go away? What will everybody say? One of two things, either that I am a bad woman, or that you are mad.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Well, let us say I am mad; but I can't live like this.

MARY IVÁNOVNA. But what is there so terrible in it, even if once in a winter (and only once, because I feared you would not like it) I do give a party—and even then a very simple one, only ask Mánya and Barbara Vasilyevna! Everybody said I could not do less—and that it was absolutely necessary. And now it seems even a crime, for which I shall have to suffer disgrace. And not only disgrace. The worst of all is that you no longer love me! You love everyone else—the whole world, including that drunken Alexander Petróvich—but I still love you and cannot live without you. Why do you do it? Why? [*Weeps*].

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. But you don't even wish to understand my life; my spiritual life.

MARY IVÁNOVNA. I do wish to understand it, but I can't. I see that your Christianity has made you hate your family and hate me; but I don't understand why!

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. You see the others do understand!

MARY IVÁNOVNA. Who? Alexander Petróvich, who gets money out of you?

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. He and others: Tónya and Vasily Nikonórovich. But even if nobody understood it, that would make no difference,

406 The Light Shines in Darkness

MARY IVÁNOVNA. Vasily Nikonórovich has repented, and has got his living back, and Tónya is at this very moment dancing and flirting with Styópa.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. I am sorry to hear it, but it does not turn black into white, and it cannot change my life. Mary! You do not need me. Let me go! I have tried to share your life and to bring into it what for me constitutes the whole of life; but it is impossible. It only results in torturing myself and you. I not only torment myself, but spoil the work I try to accomplish. Everybody, including that very Alexander Petróvich, has the right to tell me that I am a hypocrite; that I talk but do not act! That I preach the Gospel of poverty while I live in luxury, pretending that I have given up everything to my wife!

MARY IVÁNOVNA. So you are ashamed of what people say? Really, can't you rise above that?

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. It's not that I am ashamed (though I am ashamed), but that I am spoiling God's work.

MARY IVÁNOVNA. You yourself often say that it fulfils itself despite man's opposition; but that's not the point. Tell me, what do you want of me?

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Haven't I told you?

MARY IVÁNOVNA. But, Nicholas, you know that that is impossible. Only think, Lyúba is now getting married; Ványa is entering the university; Missy and Kátya are studying. How can I break all that off?

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Then what am I to do?

MARY IVÁNOVNA. Do as you say one should do: have patience, love. Is it too hard for you? Only bear with us and do not take yourself from us! Come, what is it that torments you?

Enter Ványa running.

VÁNYA. Mamma, they are calling you!

MARY IVÁNOVNA. Tell them I can't come. Go, go!

VÁNYA. Do come! [*He runs off*].

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. You don't wish to see eye to eye—nor to understand me.

MARY IVÁNOVNA. It is not that I don't wish to, but that I can't.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. No, you don't wish to, and we drift further and further apart. Only enter into my feelings; put yourself for a moment in my place, and you will understand. First, the whole life here is thoroughly depraved. You are vexed with the expression, but I can give no other name to a life built wholly on robbery; for the money you live on is taken from the land you have stolen from the peasants. Moreover, I see that this life is demoralising the children: "Whoso shall cause one of these little ones to stumble," and I see how they are perishing and becoming depraved before my very eyes. I cannot bear it when grown-up men dressed up in swallow-tail coats serve us as if they were slaves. Every dinner we have is a torture to me.

MARY IVÁNOVNA. But all this was so before. Is it not done by everyone—both here and abroad?

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. But *I* can't do it. Since I realised that we are all brothers, I cannot see it without suffering.

MARY IVÁNOVNA. That is as you please. One can invent anything.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH [*hotly*] It's just this want of understanding that is so terrible. Take for instance to-day! I spent this morning at Rzhánov's lodging-house, among the outcasts there; and I saw an infant literally die of hunger; a boy suffering from alcoholism; and a consumptive charwoman rinsing clothes outside in the cold. Then I returned home, and a footman with a white tie opens the door for me. I see my son—a mere lad—ordering that footman to fetch him some water; and I see the army of servants who work for us. Then I go to visit Borís—a man who is sacrificing his life for truth's sake. I see how he, a pure, strong, resolute man, is deliberately

408 The Light Shines in Darkness

being goaded to lunacy and to destruction, that the Government may be rid of him! I know, and they know, that his heart is weak, and so they provoke him, and drag him to a ward for raving lunatics. It is too dreadful, too dreadful. And when I come home, I hear that the one member of our family who understood—not me but the truth—has thrown over both her betrothed to whom she had promised her love, and the truth, and is going to marry a lackey, a liar . . .

MARY IVÁNOVNA. How very Christian!

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Yes, it is wrong of me, and I am to blame, but I only want you to put yourself in my place. I mean to say that she has turned from the truth . . .

MARY IVÁNOVNA. You say, "from the truth"; but other people—the majority—say from "an error." You see Vasíly Nikonórovich once thought he was in error, but now has come back to the Church.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. That's impossible —

MARY IVÁNOVNA. He has written to Lisa! She will show you the letter. That sort of conversion is very unstable. So also in Tónya's case; I won't even speak of that fellow Alexander Petróvich, who simply considers it profitable!

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH [*getting angry*] Well, no matter. I only ask *you* to understand me. I still consider that truth is truth! All this hurts me very much. And here at home I see a Christmas-tree, a ball, and hundreds of roubles being spent while men are dying of hunger. I cannot live so. Have pity on me, I am worried to death. Let me go! Good-bye.

MARY IVÁNOVNA. If you go, I will go with you. Or if not with you, I will throw myself under the train you leave by; and let them all go to perdition—and Missy and Kátya too. Oh my God, my God. What torture! Why? What for? [*Weeps*].

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH [*at the door*] Alexander Petróvich,

go home! I am not going. [*To his wife*] Very well, I will stay. [*Takes off his overcoat*].

MARY IVÁNOVNA [*embracing him*] We have not much longer to live. Don't let us spoil everything after twenty-eight years of life together. Well, I'll give no more parties; but do not punish me so.

Enter Ványa and Kátya running.

VÁNYA and KATYA. Mamma, be quick—come.

MARY IVÁNOVNA. Coming, coming. So let us forgive one another! [*Exit with Kátya and Ványa*].

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. A child, a regular child; or a cunning woman? No, a cunning child. Yes, yes. It seems Thou dost not wish me to be Thy servant in this Thy work. Thou wishest me to be humiliated, so that everyone may point his finger at me and say, "He preaches, but he does not perform." Well, let them! Thou knowest best what Thou requirest: submission, humility! Ah, if I could but rise to that height!

Enter Lisa.

LISA. Excuse me. I have brought you a letter from Vasíly Nikonórovich. It is addressed to me, but he asks me to tell you.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Can it be really true?

LISA. Yes. Shall I read it?

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Please do.

LISA [*reading*] "I write to beg you to communicate this to Nicholas Ivánovich. I greatly regret the error which led me openly to stray from the Holy Orthodox Church, to which I rejoice to have now returned. I hope you and Nicholas Ivánovich will follow the same path. Please forgive me!"

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. They have tortured him into this, poor fellow. But still it is terrible.

LISA. I also came to tell you that the Princess is here. She came upstairs to me in a dreadfully excited state and is determined to see you. She has just been to see

410 The Light Shines in Darkness

BORIS. I think you had better not see her. What good can it do for her to see you?

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. No. Call her in. Evidently this is fated to be a day of dreadful torture.

LISA. Then I'll go and call her. [*Exit*].

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH [*alone*] Yes—could I but remember that life consists only in serving Thee; and that if Thou sendest a trial, it is because Thou holdest me capable of enduring it, and knowest that my strength is equal to it: else it would not be a trial. . . . Father, help me—help me to do Thy will.

Enter Princess.

PRINCESS. You receive me? You do me that honour? My respects to you. I don't give you my hand, for I hate you and despise you.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. What has happened?

PRINCESS. Just this, that they are moving him to the Disciplinary Battalion; and it is you who are the cause of it.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Princess, if you want anything, tell me what it is; but if you have come here merely to abuse me, you only injure yourself. You cannot offend me, for with my whole heart I sympathise with you and pity you!

PRINCESS. What charity! What exalted Christianity! No, Mr. Sarýntsov, you cannot deceive me! We know you now. You have ruined my son, but you don't care; and you go giving balls; and your daughter—my son's betrothed—is to be married and make a good match, that you approve of; while you pretend to lead a simple life, and go carpentering. How repulsive you are to me, with your new-fangled Pharisaism.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Don't excite yourself so, Princess. Tell me what you have come for—surely it was not simply to scold me?

PRINCESS. Yes, that too! I must find vent for all this

The Light Shines in Darkness 411

accumulated pain. But what I want is this: He is being removed to the Disciplinary Battalion, and I cannot bear it. It is you who have done it. You! You! You!

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Not I, but God. And God knows how sorry I am for you. Do not resist this will. He wants to test you. Bear the trial meekly.

PRINCESS. I cannot bear it meekly. My whole life was wrapped up in my son; and you have taken him from me and ruined him. I cannot be calm. I have come to you—it is my last attempt to tell you that you have ruined him and that it is for you to save him. Go and prevail on them to set him free. Go and see the Governor-General, the Emperor, or whom you please. It is your duty to do it. If you don't do it, I know what I shall do. You will have to answer to me for it!

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Teach me what to do. I am ready to do anything.

PRINCESS. I again repeat it—you must save him! If you do not—beware! Good-bye. [*Exit*].

Nicholas Ivánovich (alone). Lies down on sofa. Silence. The door opens and the dance music sounds louder. Enter Styópa.

STYÓPA. Papa is not here, come in!

Enter the adults and the children, dancing in couples.

LYÚBA [*noticing Nicholas Ivánovich*] Ah, you are here. Excuse us.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH [*rising*] Never mind. [*Exit dancing couples*].

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Vasíly Nikonórovich has recanted. I have ruined Borís. Lyúba is getting married. Can it be that I have been mistaken? Mistaken in believing in Thee? No! Father help me!

Curtain.

412 The Light Shines in Darkness

Tolstoy left the following notes for a fifth act which was never written.

ACT V

Disciplinary Battalion. A cell. Prisoners sitting and lying. Borís is reading the Gospel and explaining it. A man who has been flogged is brought in. "Ah, if there were but a Pugachev¹ to revenge us on such as you." The Princess bursts in, but is turned out. Conflict with an officer. Prisoners led to prayers. Borís sent to the Penitentiary Cell: "He shall be flogged!"

Scene changes.

The Tsar's Cabinet. Cigarettes; jokes; caresses. The Princess is announced. "Let her wait." Enter petitioners, flattery, then the Princess. Her request is refused. Exit.

Scene changes.

Mary Ivánovna talks about illness with the doctor. "He has changed, has become more gentle, but is dispirited." Enter Nicholas Ivánovich and speaks to Doctor about the uselessness of treatment. But for his wife's sake he agrees to it. Enter Tónya with Styópa. Lyúba with Starkóvsky. Conversation about land. Nicholas Ivánovich tries not to offend them. Exeunt all. Nicholas Ivánovich with Lisa. "I am always in doubt whether I have done right. I have accomplished nothing. Borís has perished, Vasíly Nikonórovich has recanted. I set an example of weakness. Evidently God does not wish me to be his servant. He has many other servants—and

¹ Pugachev was the leader of a formidable rebellion in Russia in the eighteenth century.

The Light Shines in Darkness 413

can accomplish his will without me, and he who realises this is at peace." Exit Lisa. He prays. The Princess rushes in and shoots him. Everybody comes running into the room. He says he did it himself by accident. He writes a petition to the Emperor. Enter Vasily Nikonórovich with Doukhobors.¹ Dies rejoicing that the fraud of the Church is exposed, and that he has understood the meaning of his life.

This play was begun in the 'eighties, and continued in 1900 and 1902.

¹ Tolstoy did not fully realise the facts (described in *A Peculiar People*) of the Doukhobors' submission to their leader, or of their belief in him as an incarnation of the Deity. In fact, when he wrote this play, Tolstoy regarded the Doukhobors as a type of what all Christians should be.

END OF "THE LIGHT SHINES IN DARKNESS."

