

**A PROTÉGÉE OF THE MISTRESS**

**SCENES FROM VILLAGE LIFE**

**ALEXANDER NIKOLÁYEVICH OSTRÓVSKY**

## INTRODUCTION

*A Protégée of the Mistress shows us the challenges, difficulties, and expectations of the Russian class system. In Russia in the 1800s there was an upper class that was an aristocracy or nobility, then a middle class which consisted of merchants, bureaucrats, and professionals. A working class falls beneath them which consists of factory workers, and artisans. The final class consists of peasants and serfs that worked the land as payment to those in higher classes. Many of these peasants lived in a form of slavery. This play shows us the dedication that servants showed to their masters due to the form of slavery they lived in but also possibly because of the lack of having any other experience than that of being a servant. We see in this play that once you live in servitude long enough it becomes your way of life and thinking of anything different is a waste of time and useless. In relation to these problems the play addresses the impossibility of marrying someone not of your status. It is unthinkable for Nádyá to marry Leoníd due to their different class systems. The favor that is shown to Nádyá is not enough to raise her status enough to marry the son of the Mistress. We see similar patterns in many different class systems across the world. Madam Ulanbékov shares her disapproval of the system that does not allow her son the favors she thinks he deserves. She however has no ability to see the problems with the serfs and the way she treats her 2,000 servants. In a conversation between Gavrílovna and Potápých she says to him, “you ought to reason like a human being.” Later Nádyá says “I’m not my own mistress.” This play shows the struggle of servants to either think of themselves as individuals or to accept that their fate lies outside of their control. These are the issues Ostróvsky seeks to bring out in his works. Those of the class struggles that existed in Russia and have existed in many societies throughout history. The play takes a very realistic approach to what life might have been like for a servant or someone in a lower class. The ending is neither happy nor satisfying, communicating to the audience that many peasants found themselves with similar fates.*

*These truths that appear in the play are what make Ostróvsky a contributor to the realistic movement spreading through Russia. The aim to show realism in the theatre [theater?] was to bring real life to texts and performances. Dialogue was written in a naturalistic, authentic way without verse or poetic stylings. The goal was to depict human behavior in real life. The impulsiveness, pride, and anger of the characters in the protégée of the mistress fit these parameters. This play, as well as other works of Ostróvsky, shows a new side of Russia. One that is dissatisfied, unjust and full of problems. It is with this perspective, along with those of his peers who wrote of the upper class and nobility, that we begin to truly understand what life was like in 19<sup>th</sup> century Russia.*

*Ari Johnson, Mount Liberty College 2020*

### **ORIGINAL PREFATORY NOTE**

The following persons have co-operated in preparing the present play: Florence Noyes (suggestions on the style of the play), George Rapall Noyes (introduction, revision of the translation, and suggestions on the style of the play), John Laurence Seymour (“A Protégée of the Mistress “). The system of transliteration for Russian names used in the book is with very small variations that recommended for “popular” use by the School of Russian Studies in the University of Liverpool.

## ORIGINAL INTRODUCTION

**Note: This introduction is to a collection of five Ostróvsky plays published by Charles Scribner's Sons in 1917 (New York). The translation is by George Rapall Noyes. –aj**

ALEXANDER NIKOLÁYEVICH OSTRÓVSKY (1823-86) is the great Russian dramatist of the central decades of the nineteenth century, of the years when the realistic school<sup>1</sup> was all powerful in Russian literature, of the period when Turgenev, Dostoyevsky, and Tolstoy created a literature of prose fiction that has had no superior in the world's history. His work in the drama takes its place beside theirs in the novel. Obviously inferior as it is in certain ways, it yet sheds light on an important side of Russian life that they left practically untouched. Turgenev and Tolstoy were gentlemen by birth and wrote of the fortunes of the Russian nobility or of the peasants whose villages bordered on the nobles' estates. Dostoyevsky, though not of this landed-proprietor school, still dealt with the nobility, albeit with its waifs and strays. None of these masters more than touched the Russian merchants, that homespun moneyed class, crude and coarse, grasping and mean, without the idealism of their educated neighbors in the cities or the homely charm of the peasants from whom they themselves sprang, yet gifted with a rough force and determination not often found among the cultivated aristocracy. This was the field that Ostróvsky made peculiarly his own. With this merchant class Ostróvsky was familiar from his childhood. Born in 1823, he was the son of a lawyer doing business among the Moscow tradesmen. After finishing his course at the gymnasium and spending three years at the University of Moscow, he entered civil service in 1843 as an employee of the Court of Conscience in Moscow, from which he transferred two years later to the Court of Commerce<sup>2</sup>, where he continued until he was discharged from the service in 1851. Hence both by his home life and by his professional training he was brought into contact with types such as Bolshov and Rizpolozhensky in "It's a Family Affair We'll Settle It Ourselves."

As a boy of seventeen Ostróvsky had already developed a passion for the theatre. His literary career began in the year 1847, when he read to a group of Moscow men of letters his first experiments in dramatic composition. In this same year he printed one scene of "A Family Affair," which appeared in complete form three years later, in 1850, and established its author's reputation as a dramatist of undoubted talent. Unfortunately, by its mordant but true picture of commercial morals, it aroused against him the most bitter feelings among the Moscow merchants. Discussion of the play in the press was prohibited, and representation of it on the stage was out of the question. It was reprinted only in 1859, and then, at the instance of the censorship, in an altered form, in which a police officer appears at the end of the play as a *deus ex machina*,<sup>3</sup> arrests Podkhalyuzin, and announces that he will be sent to Siberia. In this mangled version the play was acted in 1861; in its original text it did not appear on the stage until 1881. Besides all this, the drama was the cause of the dismissal of Ostróvsky from the civil

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<sup>1</sup> The attempt to represent subject matter truthfully without artificiality and avoiding artistic conventions or implausible, exotic, and supernatural elements. The aim of bringing a greater fidelity of real life to texts and performances.

<sup>2</sup> Moscow Chamber of Commerce

<sup>3</sup> Latin: A plot where an unsolvable problem is suddenly and abruptly resolved by an unexpected occurrence, in classical Greek and Roman theater, usually the appearance of an actual god or goddess.

service, in 1851. The whole episode illustrates the difficulties under which the great writers of Russia have constantly labored under a despotic government.

Beginning with 1852 Ostróvsky gave his whole strength to literary work. He is exceptional among Russian authors in devoting himself almost exclusively to the theatre. The latest edition of his works contains forty-eight pieces written entirely by him, and six produced in collaboration with other authors. It omits his translations from foreign dramatists, which were of considerable importance, including, for example, a version of Shakespeare's "Taming of the Shrew."

The plays of Ostróvsky are of varied character, including dramatic chronicles based on early Russian history, and a fairy drama, "Little Snowdrop." His real strength lay, however, in the drama of manners, giving realistic pictures of Russian life among the Russian city classes and the minor nobility. Here he was recognized, from the time of the appearance on the stage of his first pieces, in 1853 and the following years, as without a rival among Russian authors for the theatre. Of this realistic drama the present volume gives four characteristic examples [only one of which is reproduced here].

The tone of "Poverty Is No Crime" (1854), written only four years after "A Family Affair," is in sharp contrast with that of its predecessor. In the earlier play Ostróvsky had adopted a satiric tone that proved him a worthy disciple of Gogol,<sup>4</sup> the great founder of Russian realism. Not one lovable character appears in that gloomy picture of merchant life in Moscow; even the old mother repels us by her stupidity more than she attracts us by her kindness. No ray of light penetrates the "realm of darkness"<sup>5</sup>—to borrow a famous phrase from a Russian critic—conjured up before us by the young dramatist. In "Poverty Is No Crime" we see the other side of the medal. Ostróvsky had now been affected by the Slavophile<sup>6</sup> school of writers and thinkers, who found in the traditions of Russian society treasures of kindness and love that they contrasted with the superficial glitter of

Western civilization. Life in Russia is varied as elsewhere, and Ostróvsky could change his tone without doing violence to realistic truth. The tradesmen had not wholly lost the patriarchal charm of their peasant fathers. A poor apprentice is the hero of "Poverty Is No Crime," and a wealthy manufacturer the villain of the piece. Good heartedness is the touchstone by which Ostróvsky tries character, and this may be hidden beneath even a drunken and degraded exterior. The scapegrace, Lyubím Tortsov, has a sound Russian soul, and at the end of the play rouses his hard, grasping brother, who has been infatuated by a passion for aping foreign fashions, to his native Russian worth.

Just as "Poverty Is No Crime" shows the influence of the Slavophile movement, "A Protégée of the Mistress" (1859) was inspired by the great liberal movement that bore fruit in the emancipation of the serfs<sup>7</sup> in 1861. Ostróvsky here departed from town to a typical country manor and produced a work kindred in spirit to Turgenev's "Sportsman's Sketches," or "Mumu." In a short play, instinct [??] with simple poetry, he shows the suffering brought about by serfdom: the petty tyranny of the landed proprietor, which is the more galling because it is practiced with a full conviction of virtue on the part of the tyrant; and the crushed natures of the human cattle under his charge.

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<sup>4</sup> Nikolai Vasilievich Gogol. Russian dramatist of Ukrainian descent. One of the preeminent figures of the natural school of Russian literary realism.

<sup>5</sup> "A ray of light in the realm of darkness" Nikolai Dobrolyubov a Russian literary critic, journalist, poet and revolutionary democrat said of Alexander Ostróvsky.

<sup>6</sup> Intellectual movement that wanted the Russian Empire to be developed upon values and institutions derived from its early history. It aimed to protect Russian beliefs and culture from western European influences.

<sup>7</sup> Freeing the serfs who lived under Russian feudalism.

*The master grim, the lowly serf that tills his lands;  
With lordly pride the first sends forth commands,  
The second cringes like a slave.*

--Nekrasov.<sup>8</sup>

Despite the unvarying success of his dramas on the stage, Ostróvsky for a long time derived little financial benefit from them. Discouragement and overwork wrecked his health and were undoubtedly responsible for the gloomy tone of a series of plays written in the years following 1860, of which “Sin and Sorrow Are Common to All” (1863) is a typical example. Here the dramatist sketches a tragic incident arising from the conflict of two social classes, the petty tradesmen and the nobility. From the coarse environment of the first emerge honest, upright natures like Krasnov; from the superficial, dawdling culture of the second come weak-willed triflers like Babáyev. The sordid plot sweeps on to its inevitable conclusion with true tragic force.

Towards the end of his life Ostróvsky gained the material prosperity that was his due. “There was no theatre in Russia in which his plays were not acted” (Skabechévsky [?? Footnote?]). From 1874 to his death he was the president of the Society of Russian Dramatic Authors. In 1885 he received the important post of artistic director of the Moscow government theatres; the harassing duties of the position proved too severe for his weak constitution, and he passed away in the next year.

As a dramatist, Ostróvsky is above all else a realist; no more thoroughly natural dramas than his were ever composed. Yet as a master of realistic technique he must not be compared with Ibsen,<sup>9</sup> or even with many less noted men among modern dramatists. His plays have not the neat, concise construction that we prize today. Pages of dialogue sometimes serve no purpose except to make a trifle clearer the character of the actors, or perhaps slightly to heighten the impression of commonplace reality. Even in “Sin and Sorrow” and “A Protégée” whole passages merely illustrate the background against which the plot is set rather than help forward the action itself. Many plays, such as “A Family Affair,” end with relatively unimportant pieces of dialogue. Of others we are left to guess even the conclusion of the main action: will Nadya in “A Protégée” submit to her degrading fate, or will she seek refuge in the pond?

Ostróvsky rarely uses the drama to treat of great moral or social problems. He is not a revolutionary thinker or an opponent of existing society; his ideal, like that of his predecessor Gogol, is of honesty, kindness, generosity, and loyalty in a broad, general way to the traditions of the past. He attacks serfdom not as an isolated leader of a forlorn hope, but as an adherent of a great party of moderate reformers.

Thus, Ostróvsky’s strength lies in a sedate, rather common place realism. One of the most national of authors, he loses much in translation.<sup>10</sup> His style is racy, smacking of the street or the counting-house; he

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<sup>8</sup> Nikolay Nekrasov. Russian poet, writer, critic, and publisher. His poetry focused on peasant life in Russia and many considered him to be a hero among liberal and radical circles.

<sup>9</sup> Henrik Ibsen. Norwegian playwright in 19<sup>th</sup> century. Considered the father of realism and the founder of modernism in theatrical works. Most frequently performed dramatist in the world after Shakespeare.

<sup>10</sup> Ostróvsky it may be remarked, has been singularly neglected by translators from the Russian. The only previous versions of complete plays in English known to the present writer are “The Storm” by Constance Garnett (London and Chicago 1899, and since reprinted) and “Incompatibility of Temper” and “A Domestic Picture” (in “The Humour of Russia,” by E.L. Voynich, London and New York, 1895)

is one of the greatest masters of the Russian vernacular. To translate his Moscow slang into the equivalent dialect of New York would be merely to transfer Broadway associations to the Ilyínka.<sup>11</sup> A translator can only strive to be colloquial and familiar, giving up the effort to render the varying atmosphere of the different plays. And Ostróvsky's characters are as natural as his language. Pig-headed merchants; apprentices, knavish or honest as the case may be; young girls with a touch of poetry in their natures, who sober down into kindly housewives; tyrannical serf-owners and weak-willed sons of noble families: such is the material of which he builds his entertaining, wholesome, mildly thoughtful dramas. Men and women live and love, trade and cheat in Ostróvsky as they do in the world around us. Now and then a murder or a suicide appears in his pages as it does in those of the daily papers, but hardly more frequently. In him we can study the life of Russia as he knew it, crude and coarse and at times cruel, yet full of homely virtue and aspiration. Of his complex panorama the present volume gives a brief glimpse.

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<sup>11</sup> Ilyínka is an urban locality in Ikryaninsky District of Astrakhan Oblast, Russia.

## CHARACTERS

**MADAM ULANBÉKOV**,<sup>12</sup> an old woman of nearly sixty, tall, thin, with a large nose, and thick, black eyebrows; of an Eastern type of face, with a small mustache. She is powdered and rouged, and dressed richly in black. She is owner of two thousand serfs.<sup>13</sup>

**LEONÍD**, her son, eighteen years old, very handsome, resembling his mother slightly. Wears summer dress. Is studying in Petersburg.

**VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA**, a toady<sup>14</sup> of MADAM ULANBÉKOV'S, an old maid of forty. Scanty hair, parted slantingly, combed high, and held by a large comb. She is continually smiling with a wily expression, and she suffers from toothache; about her throat is a yellow shawl fastened by a brooch.

**POTÁPYCH**, the old steward. Tie and vest, white; coat black. Has an air of importance.

**NADÉZHDA**,<sup>15</sup> (Called **NÁDYA**) seventeen years old. Favorite protégée of MADAM ULANBÉKOV; dressed like a young lady

**GAVRÍLOVNA**, the housekeeper; an elderly woman, plump, with an open countenance.

**GRÍSHA**, a boy of nineteen, a favorite of the mistress. dandified in dress, wearing a watch with a gold chain. He is handsome, curly headed, with a foolish expression.

**NEGLIGÉNTOV**, A clerk in a government office; a very disreputable young man.

**LÍZA**, a housemaid, not bad-looking, but very stout and snub-nosed; in a white dress, of which the bodice is short and ill-fitting. About her neck is a little red kerchief her hair is very much pomaded.

A peasant girl, a footman, and a housemaid: mute personages.

The action takes place in the springtime, at the suburban estate of MADAM ULANBÉKOV

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<sup>12</sup> The name hints at a Circassian origin and a tyrannical disposition. Ostróvsky frequently gives to the persons in his plays names that suggest their characteristics.

<sup>13</sup> Serfs were the poorest of the peasant class and were a type of slave. Lords owned the serfs who lived on their lands. In exchange for a place to live serfs worked the land. It was a form of indentured servitude.

<sup>14</sup> A person who behaves in an obedient or attentive way to someone important.

<sup>15</sup> Hope.



**ACT I**

*Part of a densely grown garden; on the right benches; at the back a rail fence, separating the garden from a field.*

**SCENE I**

*Enter NÁDYA and LÍZA*

NÁDYA. No, Lída, don't say that: what comparison could there be between country and city life!

LÍZA. What is there so specially fine about city life?

NÁDYA. Well, everything is different there; the people themselves, and even the whole social order are entirely different.<sup>16</sup> [*She sits down on a bench*] When I was in Petersburg with the mistress, one had only to take a look at the sort of people who came to see us, and at the way our rooms were decorated; besides, the mistress took me with her everywhere; we even went on the steamer to Peterhof,<sup>17</sup> and to Tsarskoe Selo.<sup>18</sup>

LÍZA. That was pretty fine, I suppose.

NÁDYA. Yes indeed, it was so splendid that words can't describe it! Because, no matter how much I may tell you about it, if you haven't seen it yourself, you'll never understand. And when a young lady, the mistress's niece, was visiting us, I used to chat with her the whole evening, and sometimes we even sat through the night.

LÍZA. What in the world did you talk about with her?

NÁDYA. Well, naturally, for the most part about the ways of high society, about her dancing partners, and about the officers of the guard. And she was often at balls, she told me what they talked about there, and whom she had liked best. Only how fine those young ladies are!

LÍZA. What do you mean?

NÁDYA. They're very gay. And where did they learn all that? Afterwards we lived a whole winter in Moscow. Seeing all this my dear, you try to act like a born lady yourself. Your very manners change, and you try to have a way of talking of your own.

LÍZA. But why should we try to be fine ladies? Much good it does!

NÁDYA. Much good, you say? Well, you see the ladies promised to marry me off, so I am trying to educate myself, so that no one'll be ashamed to take me. You know what sort of wives our officials have; well, what a lot they are! And I understand life and society ten times better than they do. Now I

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<sup>16</sup> Russia in the 19<sup>th</sup> century consisted of an upper class or nobility, middle class, working class and then peasants. This class system lasted into the Soviet era.

<sup>17</sup> The Peterhof Palace, is a series of palaces and gardens located in Peterhof, St Petersburg, Russia, commissioned by Peter the Great as a direct response to the Palace of Versailles by Louis XIV of France.

<sup>18</sup> Tsarskoye Selo was the town containing a former Russian residence of the imperial family and visiting nobility. Located 15 miles south from the center of St Petersburg. Under the Soviet Union the town was nicknamed "the Czar's village."

have just one hope: to marry a good man, so I may be the mistress of my own household. You just watch then how I'll manage the house; it will be no worse at my house than any fine lady's.

LÍZA. God grant your wish! But do you notice how the young master is running after you?

NÁDYA. Much good it'll do him! Of course, he's a pretty fellow, you might even say, a beauty; only he has nothing to expect from me: because I am decidedly not of that sort; and on the other hand, I'm trying now in every way that there may be no scandal of any sort about me. I have but one thing in mind: to get married.

LÍZA. Even married life is sometimes no joy! You may get such a husband that.... God help you!

NÁDYA. What a joy it would be to me to marry a really fine man! I thank God, am able to distinguish between people: who is good, who bad. That's easy to see at once from their manners and conversation. But the mistress is so unreasonable in holding us in so strictly, and in keeping everlasting watch over us! Indeed, it's insulting to me! I'm a girl that knows how to take care of herself without any watching.

LÍZA. It looks as if the master were coming.

NÁDYA. Then let's go. [*They rise and go out. LEONÍD comes in with a gun.*]

## SCENE II

### LEONÍD and then POTÁPYCH

LEONÍD. Wait a bit! Hey, you, where are you going? Why are they always running away from me? You can't catch them anyhow! [*He stands musing. Silence. A GIRL sings behind the rail fence*]

*"No man may hope to flee the sting  
Of cruel affliction's pain;  
New love within the heart may sing  
Regret still in its train."*

LEONÍD. [*Running up to the fence*] What a pretty girl you are!

GIRL. Pretty, but not yours!

LEONÍD. Come here!

GIRL. Where?

LEONÍD. To me in the garden.

GIRL. Why go to you?

LEONÍD. I'll go to town and buy you earrings.

GIRL. You're only a kid!  
*[She laughs loudly and goes out. LEONÍD stands with bowed head musing. POTÁPYCH enters in hunting dress, with a gun.]*

POTÁPYCH. One can't keep up with you, sir; you have young legs.

LEONÍD. *[All the while lost in thought]* All this, Potápych, will be mine.

POTÁPYCH. All yours. sir. and we shall all be yours.... Just as we served the old master, so we must serve you.... Because you're of the same blood<sup>19</sup>... That's the right way. Of course, may God prolong your dear mamma's days...

LEONÍD. Then I shan't enter the service, Potápych; I shall come directly to the country. and here I shall live.

POTÁPYCH. You must enter the service, sir.

LEONÍD. What's that you say? Much I must! They'll make me a copying clerk! *[He sits down on a bench.]*

POTÁPYCH. No, sir, why should you work yourself? That's not the way to do things! They'll find a position for you of the most gentlemanly, delicate sort; your clerks will work, but you'll be their chief, over all of them. And promotions will come to you of themselves.

LEONÍD. Perhaps they will make me vice-governor or elect me marshal of the nobility.

POTÁPYCH. It's not improbable.

LEONÍD. Well, and when I'm vice-governor, shall you be afraid of me?

POTÁPYCH. Why should I be afraid? Let others cringe, but for us it's all the same. You are our master: that's honor enough for us.

LEONÍD. *[Not hearing]* Tell me, Potápych, have we many pretty girls here?

POTÁPYCH. Why, really, sir, if you think it over, why shouldn't there be girls? There are some on the estate, and among the house servants; only it must be said that in these matters the household is very strictly run. Our mistress, owing to her strict life and her piety, looks after that very carefully. Now just take this: she herself marries off the protégées and housemaids whom she likes. If a man pleases her, she marries the girl off to him, and even gives her a dowry, not a big one needless to say. There are always two or three protégées on the place. The mistress takes a little girl from someone or other and brings her up; and when she is seventeen or eighteen years old, then, without any talk, she marries her off to some clerk or townsman, just as she takes a notion, and sometimes even to a nobleman. Ah, yes sir! Only what

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<sup>19</sup> Serfdom, the status of many peasants under feudalism, was developed during the early middle ages and lasted in Russia until the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. The land was given to lords and nobility who controlled the people that lived on the land.

an existence for these protégées, sir! Misery!

LEONÍD. But why?

POTÁPÝCH. They have a hard time. The lady says: “I have found you a prospective husband, and now,” she says “the wedding will be on such and such a day and that’s an end to it; and don’t one of you dare to argue about it!” It’s a case of get along with you to the man you’re told to. Because, sir, I reason this way: who wants to see disobedience in a person he’s brought up? And sometimes it happens that the bride doesn’t like the groom, nor the groom the bride: then the lady falls into a great rage. She even goes out of her head. She took a notion to marry one protégée to a petty shopkeeper in town; but he, an unpolished individual, was going to resist. “The bride doesn’t please me,” he said, “and, besides, I don’t want to get married yet.” So, the mistress complained at once to the town bailiff and to the priest: well, they brought the blockhead round.

LEONÍD. You don’t say.

POTÁPÝCH. Yes, sir. And even if the mistress sees a girl at one of her acquaintances’, she immediately looks up a husband for her. Our mistress reasons this way: that they are stupid; that if she doesn’t look after them closely now, they’ll just waste their life and never amount to anything. That’s the way, sir. Some people, because of their stupidity, hide girls from the Mistress, so that she may never set eyes on them; because if she does, it’s all up with the girls.

LEONÍD. And so she treats other people’s girls the same way?

POTÁPÝCH. Other people’s, too. She extends her care to everybody. She has such a kind heart that she worries about everybody. She even gets angry if they do anything without her permission. And the way she looks after her protégées is just a wonder. She dresses them as if they were her own daughters. Sometimes she has them eat with her; and she doesn’t make them do any work. “Let everybody look,” says the mistress, “and see how my protégées live; I want everyone to envy them.: she says.

LEONÍD. Well, now, that’s fine, Potápých.

POTÁPÝCH. And what a touching little sermon she reads them when they’re married! “You,” she says, “have lived with me in wealth and luxury, and have had nothing to do; now you are marrying a poor man, and will live your life in poverty, and will work, and will do your duty. And now forget,” she says, “how you lived here, because not for you I did all this; I was merely diverting myself, but you must never even think of such a life; always remember your insignificance, and of what station you are.” And all this so feelingly that there are tears in her own eyes.

LEONÍD. Well, now, that’s fine.

POTÁPÝCH. I don’t know how to describe it, sir. Somehow, they all get tired of married life later; they mostly pine away.

LEONÍD. Why do they pine away, Potápých?

POTÁPYPCH. Must be they don't like it, if they pine away.

LEONÍD. That's queer.

POTÁPYPCH. The husbands mostly turn out ruffians.

LEONÍD. Is that so?

POTÁPYPCH. Everybody hopes to get one of our protégées, because the mistress right away becomes his patroness. Now in the case of these she marries to government clerks, there's a good living for the husband; because if they want to drive him out of the court, or have done so, he goes at once to our mistress with a complaint, and she's a regular bulwark for him; she'll bother the governor himself. And then the government clerk can get drunk or anything else, and not be afraid of anybody, unless he is insubordinate or steals a lot ....

LEONÍD. But, say, Potápych, why is it that the girls run away from me?

POTÁPYPCH. How can they help running? They must run, sir!

LEONÍD. Why must they?

POTÁPYPCH. Hm! Why? Why, because, as you are still underage, the mistress wants to watch over you as she ought to; well, and she watches over them, too.

LEONÍD. She watches us, ha, ha, ha!

POTÁPYPCH. Yes sir. That's the truth! She was talking about that. You're a child, just like a dove, but, well the girls are foolish. [*Silence*] What next, sir? It's your mamma's business to be strict, because she is a lady. But why should you mind her! You ought to act for yourself, as all young gentlemen do. You don't have to suffer because she's strict. Why should you let others get ahead of you? That'd disgrace you.

LEONÍD. Well, well, but I don't know how to talk to the girls.

POTÁPYPCH. But what's the use of talking to them a long time? What about? What kind of sciences would you talk about with them? Much they understand such stuff! You're just the master, and that's all.

LEONÍD. [*Glances to one side*] Who's this coming? That's Nádyá, evidently. Ah, Potápych, how pretty she is!

POTÁPYPCH. She is related to me, sir, my niece. Her father was set free by the late master; he was employed in a confectioner's in Moscow. When her mother died, her mistress took and brought her up. and is awful fond of her. And because her father is dead, why, now, she's an orphan. She's a good girl.

LEONÍD. Looks as if they were coming this way.

POTÁPYPCH. Well, let 'em.

GAVRÍLOVNA *and* NÁDYA *enter*.

**SCENE III**

*The same, GAVRÍLOVNA and NÁDYA*

GAVRÍLOVNA. How do you do. good master?

LEONÍD. [*Bows*] How do you do?

GAVRÍLOVNA. Well, master, I suppose you're bored in the country.

LEONÍD. No, not at all.

GAVRÍLOVNA. What, not bored yet! Why, you see it's like a monastery here; they look after you with a hundred eyes. Well as for you, it goes without saying, you're a young gentleman, you ought to have some amusement; but you can't. It's no great joy to shoot ducks! [*She laughs.*]

LEONÍD. [*Going up to GAVRÍLOVNA*] Yes, yes, Gavrílovna.

NÁDYA. [*To GAVRÍLOVNA*] Let's go.

GAVRÍLOVNA. Where do you want to go? Now, seeing that the mistress isn't at home, you ought to have a little fun with the young master. That's what young folks need. And what a clever girl she is, master! In talking, and in everything.

NÁDYA. Come, what's the use!

GAVRÍLOVNA. Well, there's no harm in it! I was young once. I didn't run away from the gentlemen, and you see they didn't eat me. Perhaps even he won't bite you. Quit playing the prude and stay here! But I'm going to get the tea ready! Good-by, good master! [*She goes out.*]

LEONÍD. Why did you not wish to remain with me?

POTÁPYPCH. What's this, sir! You talk to her as if she were a young lady! Call her Nádyá!

LEONÍD. What are you afraid of, Nádyá?

[*NÁDYA is silent.*]

POTÁPYPCH. Talk! What are you keeping still for? And I'm going, sir; I must get dressed for tea, too. [*He goes out.*]

SCENE IV

LEONÍD, NÁDYA, *and then* LÍZA

NÁDYA. Of course, I'm a girl of humble position, but, indeed, even we do not want anybody to speak evil of us. Pray consider yourself, after such talk, who would marry me?

LEONÍD. Are you going to get married?

NÁDYA. Yes, sir. Every girl hopes to get married some time.

LEONÍD. But have you a suitor?

NÁDYA. Not yet, sir.

LEONÍD. [*Timidly*] If you have no suitor, then, maybe you're in love with somebody?

NÁDYA. You want to know a lot! Well, no, I needn't fib about it, I'm not in love with anybody, sir.

LEONÍD. [*With great joy*] Then love me!

NÁDYA. It's impossible to force the heart, sir.

LEONÍD. Why? Don't you like me?

NÁDYA. Well, how could I help liking you? But I'm not your equal! What sort of love is that? Clean ruin! Here comes Liza running after me, I suppose. Good-by. Good luck to you! [*She goes away.*]

LÍZA *comes in.*

LÍZA. Master, if you please! Your mamma has come.

LEONÍD. Liza!

LÍZA. [*Approaching*] What is it, please?

LEONÍD. [*He embraces LÍZA; she trembles with pleasure*] Why won't Nádyá love me?

LÍZA. [*Affectedly*] What are you talking about, master! Girls of our sort must look out for themselves!

LEONÍD. Look out for ourselves how?

LÍZA. [*Looks him, in the face and smiles*] Why, everybody knows. What are you talking like a child for?

LEONÍD. [*Sadly*] What shall I do now? Indeed, I don't know. They all run away from me.

LÍZA. But don't lose courage; just make love a little bit. Heavens, our hearts aren't of stone!

LEONÍD. But see here! I asked her: she said she didn't love me.

LÍZA. Well, if you aren't a queer one! Whoever asked girls right out whether they were in love or not! Even if one of us girls was in love, she wouldn't say so.

LEONÍD. Why?

LÍZA. Because she's bashful. Only let me go, sir! [*She gets free*] There goes the old fury!

LEONÍD. Come out here into the garden after supper, when mamma goes to bed.

LÍZA. You don't lose any time!

LEONÍD. Please come.

LÍZA. Well, we'll see later. [*VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA enters*] Master, please come to tea, your mamma is waiting.

LEONÍD. All right, I'm coming.

## SCENE V

*The same and* VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA

VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA. I saw you, my dear, I saw you.

LÍZA. There was nothing to see. [*She goes out*]

LEONÍD. Well, what did you see? What are you going to complain about? I shall simply say that you lie. Whom are they going to believe quicker, you or me?  
[*He makes a grimace and goes out.*]

VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA. There, that's the way they all treat me. I can't stand it! My heart is just sick. I'm a martyr in this world. [*She plucks a flower viciously and pulls off its petals*] I believe that if I had the power, I'd do this to all of you! I'd do this to all of you! I'd do this to all of you! You just wait, you young scamp! I'll catch you. My heart boils, it boils, it boils over! And now I must smirk before the mistress as if I were a fool. What a life! What a life! The sinners in hell do not suffer as I suffer in this house! [*She goes out.*]

**ACT II**  
**SCENE I**

*A parlor. Rear centre, a door opening into the garden. Doors at the sides; in the centre a round table. From a side door there enter a footman with a samovar and a maid with a tea-service; they place both on the table and go out. GAVRÍLOVNA and POTÁPÝCH enter after them. GAVRÍLOVNA prepares the tea. VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA enters from the garden.*

VASILISA PEREGRINOYNA. My dear, you always serve me only water.

GAVRÍLOVNA. It isn't good for you to drink strong tea, madam.

VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA. It's not your business to worry about me!

GAVRÍLOVNA. It dries up the chest, and you're all dried up as it is.

VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA. What a life! What a life! I am not dried up from tea-drinking, my dear, but from the insults of the world.

GAVRÍLOVNA. Insults! You insult everybody yourself, as if something were stirring you up!

VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA. Don't you dare talk to me like that! Just remember who you are. I once owned serfs myself; at my place, such people as you didn't dare peep, they walked the chalk. [note: "toed the line"] I didn't let your sort get high-headed!

GAVRÍLOVNA. That time's gone by. God gives a vicious cow no horns.

VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA. Oh, you monsters, wretches! You want me to die. Soon I shall die, soon; my soul feels it's fast approaching end! [*Raising her eyes heavenward*] Shelter me from men, O lid of my coffin! Take me to thee, moist earth! Then you'll be happy; then you'll be joyful!

POTÁPÝCH. We? What's it to us?.... Tend to your own business.

GAVRÍLOVNA. While God is patient with your sins.

VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA. For my sins I have already been tortured here. I mourn now the sins of others.

GAVRÍLOVNA. It would be better for you not to bother with other people's sins. Now you're getting ready to die, yet you talk about the sins of others. Aren't you afraid?

VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA. Afraid of what? Why should I be afraid?

GAVRÍLOVNA. Of that little black man with the hook. He's waiting for you now, I guess.

VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA. Where am I? Where am I? My God! Just as if I were in a slough; monsters ....

[From the left side MADAM ULANBÉKOV, NÁDYA, LÍZA, and GRÍSHA come in.]

## SCENE II

*The same and MADAM ULANBÉKOV, GRÍSHA, NÁDYA, and LÍZA.*

VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA. Did our benefactress deign to attend prayer service?

MADAM ULANBÉKOV. Yes, I went to vespers<sup>20</sup> in town; today is a holiday there.

VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA. Did you distribute generous alms among the people present?

MADAM ULANBÉKOV. No. I only called in Pustaya Street at old man Negligéntov's. He asked me to set up his nephew; you see, the nephew is my godson. I'm sorry for these people!

VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA. And you, dear soul, are a benefactress to all. To all alike, to all! You do favors to people who aren't even worth your looking at.

MADAM ULANBÉKOV. [*Sits down*] Never mind, my dear. One must do good to his neighbor.

VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA. But do they feel that good? Can they understand, heartless creatures, how great is your condescension to them?

MADAM ULANBÉKOV. It's all the same to me, my dear! One must do good for his own sake, for his own soul. Then I stopped in to see the chief of police and asked him to make Negligéntov head-clerk.

VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA. But, my benefactress, is he worthy?

MADAM ULANBÉKOV. Don't interrupt! A strange man, our chief of police! I ask him, and he says: "There's no job!" I say to him: "You evidently don't understand who's asking you?" "Well!" says he, "do you expect me to drive out a good man for your godson?" Churlish fellow! However, he promised!

VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA. To think of his hesitating! I cannot understand how he could even talk back to you. Here his ill-breeding shows up at once. Maybe Negligéntov, because of his life, isn't worth saying much about; nevertheless, the chief ought to do everything in the world for him for your sake, no matter how worthless a scamp Negligéntov might be.

MADAM ULANBÉKOV. Don't you forget that he's my godson!

VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA. And for that very reason, benefactress, I add: he is your godson; well, and that's all there is to it; the chief of police ought not to listen to any kind of gossip. And, besides, what things they do say! They say that he's utterly worthless, that his uncle got him a court job, but he won't stay with it. He was gone a whole week, they say, somewhere or other about three miles down the

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<sup>20</sup> A service of evening prayer.

highroad, near the tavern, fishing. Yes, and that he is a drunkard beyond his years. But whose business is it? He must be worthy of it, since you ask it.

MADAM ULANBÉKOV. I've never heard that. I've never seen him drunk; but I spoke to the chief of police on his behalf, because he's my godson. I take his mother's place.

VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA. I know, benefactress, I know; everyone knows that if you take a notion, you, my benefactress, can make a man out of mud; but if you don't take a notion to do so, he'll fall into insignificance no matter how brainy he may be. He's to blame himself, because he didn't deserve it!

MADAM ULANBÉKOV. I'm sure I never did any one any harm.

VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA. Harm? You, who because of your angelic heart wouldn't hurt even a fly! Of course, all we mortals are not without sins; you have done many things; you can't please everybody. Indeed, to tell the truth, my dear benefactress, there are people enough who complain about you.

MADAM ULANBÉKOV. Who complains about me? What a lie!

VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA. It's impossible for you to know everything, dear benefactress. And it's not worthwhile for you, in your gentility, to trouble yourself about every low-lived person. And though they do complain, what's the use of paying attention; are they worth our notice? Since you do so many good deeds for others, God will forgive you, our benefactress.

MADAM ULANBÉKOV. All the same, I want to know whom I have offended?

VASILISA PEREGRINOYNA. Well, there are some persons, benefactress.

MADAM ULANBÉKOV. [*Forcibly*] But who? Speak!

VASILISA PEREGRINOYNA. Don't be angry, benefactress! I spoke as I did because you yourself know how touchy people are nowadays, never satisfied.

MADAM ULANBÉKOV. You spoke as you did in order to cause me some unpleasantness.

VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA. May my eyes burst if I did.

MADAM ULANBÉKOV. Well, I know you. You're never at rest in your own soul unless you're about to say something mean. You will please be more careful; otherwise you'll drive me out of patience one of these days; it'll be all the worse for you. [*Silence*] Serve the tea.

GAVRÍLOVNA. Right away, mistress.

[*She pours out two cups. POTÁPÝCH hands them to MADAM ULANBÉKOV and to VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA.*]

MADAM ULANBÉKOV. Pour Grísha a cup, too; he went with me today, and he's tired out.

GAVRÍLOVNA. Yes, Mistress. [*She pours out a cup and hands it to GRÍSHA.*]

GRÍSHA. Why didn't you put more milk in it? Are you stingy, eh?

GAVRILOYNA. [*Adding milk*] As it is, you're fattened on milk, like a calf.

[GRÍSHA *takes the cup and goes out through the door into the garden.*]

MADAM ULANBÉKOV. I have thought of marrying Nádyá to Negligéntov with a decent settlement, of course. You say that he leads a bad life; consequently, we must hasten the wedding. She is a girl of good principles, she'll hold him back, otherwise he'll ruin himself with his bachelor habits. Bachelor life is very bad for young men.

NÁDYA. [*To LÍZA*] Do you hear, Lída? What's this! My God!

LÍZA. You just have to listen, and you can't say a word.

VASILÍSA PEREGRINOYA. It's high time she was married, benefactress; why should she be hanging around here? And now your young son, the angel, has come.

MADAM ULANBÉKOV. Oh, be still! What are you thinking up now? Why, he's only a child!

VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA. A child, benefactress! Well, there's nothing more to be said; God gave you a son as a joy and a consolation. And we can never feast our eyes enough on him. It's just as if the sunshine had come into our house. So good-natured, so merry, so gentle with every one! But he's already running after the girls so; he never lets one pass; and they, silly things, are tickled to death; they fairly snort with delight.

MADAM ULANBÉKOV. You're lying. He never has a chance to see the girls anywhere, I think; all day long they are in their own side of the house, and, besides, they never go anywhere.

VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA. Ah, benefactress, there are no locks to keep a girl in, once she takes a notion to do something.

MADAM ULANBÉKOV. "You hear, Gavrílovna! Look after my girls. You know I won't have any loose conduct. You tell them that, so they'll know I mean it. [*To VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA*] But no, there can't be anything like that. You're merely disturbing me with your silly notions. What a dirty tongue you have! What business had you to chatter? And now I can't get the stuff out of my head! Keep watch, Gavrílovna!

GAVRÍLOVNA. What's the use of listening to her, mistress?

VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA. But really, benefactress, am I saying anything bad? Would I dare to

think any harm about him, that little angel? Of course, he's still a child, he wants to frisk a little; but here he hasn't any companions, so he plays with the girls.

MADAM ULANBÉKOV. There's poison on your tongue. [*She reflects.* POTÁPÝCH *takes the cups.* GAVRÍLOVNA *fills them and gives them back.* GRÍSHA *comes in from the garden, gives GAVRÍLOVNA a push, and makes a sign with his head that she is to pour him another cup.* GAVRÍLOVNA *does so.* GRÍSHA *goes out*] However, I must marry off Nádyá.

NÁDYA. [*Almost weeping*] Mistress, you have shown me such kindness that I can't even express it. Forgive me for daring to speak to you now; but, because of your attitude towards me, I expected quite a different favor from you. In what respect have I displeased you now, mistress, that you wish to marry me to a drunkard?

MADAM ULANBÉKOV. My dear, it's not for you to argue about that; you're just a girl. You ought to rely in all things upon me, your patroness. I brought you up, and I am even bound to establish you in life. And again, you ought to not forget this: that he is my godson. Rather you ought to be thankful for the honor. And now I tell you once and for all: I do not like it when my girls argue, I simply do not like it, and that's all there is to it. That's a thing I cannot permit anybody. I've been accustomed, from my youth, to having people obey my every word; it's time you knew that! And it's very strange to me, my dear, that you should presume to oppose me. I see that I have spoiled you; and you at once get conceited.  
[NÁDYA *weeps.*]

VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA. Benefactress, one must have feeling for his fellow creature. One must have feeling. But what kind of feelings can such as they have, save ingratitude?

MADAM ULANBÉKOV. No one's talking to you! What are you mixing into everything for? [*To NÁDYA, sternly*] What new tale is this? Still crying! Let's have no more tears! [NÁDYA *weeps*] I'm talking to you. [*Rising slightly*] Your tears mean absolutely nothing to me! When I make up my mind to do a thing, I take a firm stand, and listen to no one on earth! [*She sits down*] And know, first of all, that your obstinacy will lead to nothing; you will simply anger me.

NÁDYA. [*Weeping*] I'm an orphan, mistress! Your will must be obeyed!

MADAM ULANBÉKOV. Well, I should say! Of course, it must; because I brought you up; that's equal to giving life itself.

[LEONÍD *enters.*]

### SCENE III *The same and LEONÍD*

LEONÍD. How are you, mamma?

MADAM ULANBÉKOV. How are you, my dear? Where have you been?

LEONÍD. I went hunting with Potápych. I killed two ducks, mamma.

MADAM ULANBÉKOV. You don't spare your mother; the idea, going hunting in your state of health! You'll fall sick again, God forbid! and then you'll simply kill me! Ah, my God, how I have suffered with that child! [*She muses.*]

GAVRÍLOVNA. Some tea, master:

LEONÍD. No, thanks.

MADAM ULANBÉKOV. [*To VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA*] When he was born, I was ill a very long time. Then he was always sickly, and he grew up puny. How many tears have I shed over him! Sometimes I would just look at him, and my tears would flow; no, it will never be my lot to see him in the uniform of the guardsmen! But it was most distressing of all for me when his father, owing to the boy's poor health, was unable to send him to a military school. How much it cost me to renounce the thought that he might become a soldier! For half a year I was ill. Just imagine to yourself, my dear, when he finishes his course, they will give him some rank or other, such as they give to any priest's son clerking in a government office! Isn't it awful? In the military service, especially in the cavalry, all ranks are aristocratic; one knows at once that even a junker<sup>21</sup> is from the nobility. But what is a provincial secretary, or a titular councilor! Anyone can be a titular councilor even a merchant, a church-school graduate, a low-class townsman, if you please. You have only to study, then serve awhile. Why, one of the petty townsmen who is apt at learning will get a rank higher than his! That's the way of the world! That's the way of the world! Oh, dear! [*She turns away with a wave of her hand.*] I don't like to pass judgment on anything that is instituted by higher authority, and won't permit others to do so, but nevertheless, I don't approve of this system. I shall say loudly that it's unjust, unjust.

LEONÍD. Why are Nádyá's eyes red from crying?

VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA. She hasn't been flogged for a long time.

MADAM ULANBÉKOV. That's none of your business, my dear. Nádyá, go away, you're not needed here.

[*NÁDYA goes out.*]

LEONÍD. Well, I know why: you want to marry her off.

MADAM ULANBÉKOV. Whether I do or not, my dear, is my own business. Furthermore, I do not like to have any one meddle in my arrangements.

VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA. What a clever young man you are; you know everything, you get into everything!

LEONÍD. Indeed, mamma dear, I don't mean to meddle in your arrangements. Only he's a drunkard.

MADAM ULANBÉKOV. And that, again, is none of your business. Leave that to your mother's

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<sup>21</sup> A member of a class of aristocratic landholders, especially in East Prussia.

judgment.

LEONÍD. I'm only sorry for her, mamma.

MADAM ULANBÉKOV. All very fine, my dear; but I should like to know from whom you heard that I'm going to marry Nádyá. If one of the housemaids has ....

LEONÍD. No, mamma, no.

MADAM ULANBÉKOV. How could you find out otherwise? How did that get out? [*To GAVRÍLOVNA*] Find out without fail!

LEONÍD. No, indeed, mamma; the man she's going to marry told me.

MADAM ULANBÉKOV. What sort of a man?

LEONÍD. I don't know what sort! He said he was a clerk in a government office ....a peculiar surname: Negligéntov. What a funny fellow he is! He says he's your godson, and that he's afraid of nobody. He's dancing in the garden now, drunk.

MADAM ULANBÉKOV. Drunk. in my house!

LEONÍD. If you want, I'll invite him in. Potápych, call Negligéntov! He said that you were at his uncle's today, and that you promised to give him Nádyá. Already he's reckoning, in anticipation, how much income he will get in the court or "savings," as he says. What a funny fellow! He showed me how they taught him at school. Do you want me to bring him in?

[*Enter POTÁPYPCH and NEGLIGÉNTOV.*]

#### SCENE IV

*The same, NEGLIGÉKTOV and POTÁPYPCH*

MADAM ULANBÉKOV. Oh, oh, how disgusting! Don't come near me!

NEGLIGÉNTOV. I'm sent from uncle to thank you for your bounty.

LEONÍD. He says, mamma, that they taught him a good deal. only it was impossible for him to learn anything.

NEGLIGÉNTOV. Impossible; from my birth I had no aptitude for the sciences. I received from fifty to a hundred birch rods nearly every day, but they didn't quicken my understanding.

LEONÍD. Oh, mamma. how amusingly he tells about the way he learned! Here, just listen. Well, and how did you learn Latin?

NEGLIGÉNTOV. Turpissime!<sup>22</sup>

MADAM ULANBÉKOV. [*Shrugging her shoulders*] What in the world is that?

NEGLIGÉNTOV. Most abominably.

LEONÍD. No, wait a bit; and what did the teacher do with you?

NEGLIGÉNTOV. [*Bursts out laughing*] It made you laugh. Once, after a cruel torture, he commanded two students to fasten me by the neck with a belt, and to lead me through the market-place as a laughing-stock.

MADAM ULANBÉKOV. How is it they took you into the civil service if you never learned anything?

NEGLIGÉNTOV. Through the mediation of influential people.

LEONÍD. And did they expel you from school?

NEGLIGÉNTOV. They didn't expel me; but they excluded me because I grew too much.

LEONÍD. Grew too much?

NEGLIGÉNTOV. Well, as I, during all this teaching and grilling, remaining in the lower grades, was getting on in years, and grew more than that other fellows of my class of course I was excluded because I was too big. I suffered all the more from the venality of those at the head. Our rector liked gifts; and a week before the examinations, he sent us all to our parents for presents. According to the number of these presents, we were promoted to the higher classes.

LEONÍD. What was your conduct like?

NEGLIGÉNTOV. Reprehensible.

MADAM ULANBÉKOV. What in the world! Good heavens! Go away, my dear sir, go away!

LEONÍD. Oh, mamma, he's comical; wait a bit before driving him out. Dance, Negligéntov!

NEGLIGÉNTOV. [*Dances and sings*] "I shall go, shall go to mow upon the meadow green."  
[GRÍSHA *bursts out laughing.*]

MADAM ULANBÉKOV. Stop, stop! [NEGLIGÉNTOV *ceases. To GRÍSHA*] What are you laughing at?

GRÍSHA. The member dances very comically.

MADAM ULANBÉKOV. What do you mean, "member?"

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<sup>22</sup> Turpissime is a Latin word meaning most basely; most shamefully; or most uglily.

GRÍSHA. Why, he himself tell us all that he is a member in the court, not a copy-clerk. And so they call him the member.

NEGLIGÉNTOV. I call myself the member, although falsely, but expressly for the respect of the court menials, and in order to escape scoffing and insult.

MADAM ULANBÉKOV. Be gone, and don't you ever dare to show yourself to me!

NEGLIGÉNTOV. Uncle says that I fell into loose living because of my bachelor life, and that I may get mired in it unless you show me your favor.

MADAM ULANBÉKOV. No, no, never!

NEGLIGÉNTOV. [*On his knees*] Uncle told me to beg you with tears, because I am a lost man, subject to many vices, and, without your favor, I shall not be tolerated in the civil service.

MADAM ULANBÉKOV. Tell your uncle that I shall always be your benefactress; but don't you even think about a wife! Be gone, be gone!

NEGLIGÉNTOV. I thank you for not deserting me! [*To GRÍSHA*] Ask the mistress to let you go to the fair and catch up with me! [*He goes out.*]

## SCENE V

*The same, except NEGLIGÉNTOV*

MADAM ULANBÉKOV. How easy it is to be mistaken in people! You take pains for them, work your head off, and they don't even feel it. I should have been glad to establish that boy in life, but he crawls into the house drunk. Now, if he's a prey to that weakness, he ought, at least, to try to hide it from me. Let him drink where he will, but don't let me see it! I should know, at least, that he respected me. What clownishness! What impudence! Whom will he be afraid of, pray tell, if not of me?

LEONÍD. Oh, what a comical fellow! Don't he angry with me, mamma. When I found out that you wanted to marry Nádyá to him, I felt sorry for her. And you're so good to everybody. [*He kisses her hand*] I didn't want you to do anything unjust.

MADAM ULANBÉKOV. Such people fairly drive you into sin. [*Kissing him*] You have a beautiful soul, my dear! [*To VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA*] Indeed, I have always thought that God himself sometimes speaks with the lips of babes. Lída! Go tell Nadézhda not to cry, that I have turned out Negligéntov.

LÍZA. Yes, ma'am. [*She goes out.*]

GRÍSHA. [*Approaches, swaggering, and stops in a free and easy pose*] Mistress!

MADAM ULANBÉKOV. What's the matter with you?

GRÍSHA. Let me go downtown; today's a holiday there.

MADAM ULANBÉKOV. What do you want to go for? To stare at the drunkards?

GRÍSHA. [*Clasping his hands behind him*] Please, ma'am.

MADAM ULANBÉKOV. No, most certainly not!

GRÍSHA. Please do, mistress.

MADAM ULANBÉKOV. I tell you, positively, no! One's morals are just spoiled at these fairs. Your greedy ears will take in all kinds of nastiness! You 're still a boy; that's no place for you!

GRÍSHA. No, but please let me, ma'am.

MADAM ULANBÉKOV. You stay right here! Put that nonsense out of your head!

GRÍSHA. Well, I declare! I slave, and slave, and can't ever go anywhere!

VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA. Oh me, oh my! Oh me, oh my! How spoiled you are! How spoiled you are!

MADAM ULANBÉKOV. What are you cackling about? Keep still!

VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA. But how can I keep still, benefactress? Such lack of feeling! Such ingratitude! It pierces the heart.

MADAM ULANBÉKOV. I command you to keep still, and you must keep still!

GRÍSHA. Please let me, ma'am!

VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA. As if the mistress didn't love you, as if she didn't fondle you, more, if anything, than her own son!

MADAM ULANBÉKOV. [*Stamping her foot*] Shhh!.... I'll turn you out!

GRÍSHA. I want awfully to go to the fair; please let me, ma'am.

MADAM ULANBÉKOV. Well. go along then! but come back early!

GRÍSHA. Yes, ma'am.

VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA. Kiss the dear lady's hand, you blockhead!

GRÍSHA. What are you trying to teach me for? I know my own business. [*He kisses the mistress's hand and goes out.*]

MADAM ULANBÉKOV. As for you, my dear, if I ever hear anything like this again, I'll have them drive you off the place with brooms.

[*She goes out. VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA remains standing in a stupor.*]

## SCENE VI

*The same except MADAM ULANBÉKOV; then LÍZA*

LEONÍD. Well, you caught it, didn't you? And you deserved it, too!

VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA. I'll have my turn yet.

[*LÍZA enters*]

LÍZA. [*Quietly to LEONÍD*] Nádyá sent me to say that we'll come to the garden.

LEONÍD. Give her a kiss from me.

GAVRÍLOVNA. God give you health, master, for taking our part. Any wretch can insult us; but there's no one to take our part. You'll get a rich reward for that in the next world.

LEONÍD. I'm always ready to help you. [*He goes out to the right, with a caper.*]

GAVRÍLOVNA. Thanks, my dear! [*She goes out with LÍZA, to the left.*]

## SCENE VII

*VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA and POTÁPÝCH*

VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA. Why don't you insult me? They all insult me, why don't you? You heard how she herself wanted to flog me; "I'll have them do it with brooms," she said. May her words choke her!

POTÁPÝCH. What, I!.... I insult anybody! But as to the gentlefolk there.... I don't know, but perhaps they have to.

VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA. Do you see what's going on in this house! Do you see? Do you understand it, or don't you? Just now when I began to talk about Grísha, you heard how she began to roar? You heard how she began to hiss?

POTÁPÝCH. What's that to me? I, by the Mistress's kindness, in her employ.... I shall carry out all her orders.... What business is it of mine? I don't want to know anything that isn't my business.

VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA. But did you see how Nádyá and Líza—the hussies!—looked at me?

Did you see how the snakes looked? Ha! I must look after them, I must! [POTÁPŮCH, *with a wave of his hand, goes out*] Bah! You! You old blockhead! What people! What people! There's no one to whom I can talk and relieve my heart. [*She goes out*]

### ACT III

*Part of the garden: to the rear, a pond, on the shore of which is a boat. Starry night. A choral song is heard in the far distance. For a while the stage is empty.*

### SCENE I

*Enter NÁDYA and LÍZA*

LÍZA. Oh, Nádyá, what's this we're doing? When the mistress hears of this, it'll be your last day on earth.

NÁDYA. If you're afraid, take yourself home.

LÍZA. No, I'll wait for you. But all the same, my girl, it's awful, no matter what you say! Lord preserve us when she finds it out.

NÁDYA. Always singing the same tune! If you fear the wolf, keep out of the woods.

LÍZA. But what has happened to you? Before, you didn't talk like this. You used to hide yourself; and now you go to him of your own accord.

NÁDYA. Yes, before I ran away from him; now I don't want to. [*She stands musing*] Now I myself don't know what has suddenly happened within me! Just when the mistress said, a short while ago, that I shouldn't dare to argue, but marry the man she said to marry, just then my whole heart revolted. "Oh, Lord, what a life for me!" I thought. [*She weeps*] "What's the use in my living purely, guarding myself not merely from every word, but even from every look? Even so, evil seized upon me. "Why," I thought, "should I guard myself?" I don't want to! I don't want to! It was just as if my heart died within me. It seemed that if she said another word. I should die on the spot.

LÍZA. What are you saying! Why, I really thought you were coming to the master as a joke.

NÁDYA. As a joke! I can't hear an insult! I cannot. [*Silence*] Oh, Liza, if life were better, I shouldn't have come into the garden at night. You know how it used to be, when I would think about myself I suppose it must have come into your head, too that here you are, an honest girl; you live like a bird, suddenly you're fascinated by some man, he makes love to you, comes to see you often, kisses you.... You're abashed before him, yet happy to see him. That's the way it always is. Although you may not be rich; although it may be you have to sit with your lover in the servants' room; yet it is as if you were a queen, just as if every day were a holiday for you. Then they marry you, and all congratulate you. Well, then, no matter how hard married life may be, perhaps there may be lots of work, in spite of that you live as if in paradise; just as if you were proud of something

LÍZA. Naturally, my girl.

NÁDYA. But when they say to you: “Pack off to this drunkard, and don’t you dare argue, and don’t you dare cry over yourself!”.... Oh, Liza!.... And then you think how that horrid man will make fun of you, will bully you. show his authority, will begin to ruin your life, all for nothing! You grow old by his side without having a chance to live. [*She weeps*] It breaks your heart even to tell about it! [*Waving her hand*] And so, indeed, the young master is better.

LÍZA. Oh, Nádyá; it would be better if you hadn’t spoken, and I hadn’t listened!

NÁDYA. Stop, Liza! “Why are you playing the prude with me? What would you do yourself if the master fell in love with you?”

LÍZA. [*Stammering*] Well, how should I know? Of course, what shall I say.... The old Nick is strong.

NÁDYA. There you are!.... [*Silence*] Here is what I wanted to say to you, Liza. What a strange inspiration has come over me! When such thoughts came into my head, and, Liza, when I began to think about the master—then how dear he became to me! ....so dear, that, really, I can’t tell .... Before, when he ran after me, I didn’t care; but now it’s just as if something drew me to him.

LÍZA. Oh, my girl! Just think of it; surely this is fate!

NÁDYA. And such a spirit came into me, I am afraid of nothing! I feel as if you could cut me to pieces, and still I’d not change my mind. And why this is so, I don’t know. [*Silence*] I could hardly wait till night! It seems as if I could fly to him on wings! The one thing that I have in mind is that, at any rate, I am not a pretty girl for nothing; I shall have something by which to remember my youth. [*Musingly*] I thought to myself: “What a young man, how handsome! Am I, silly girl that I am, worth his loving me?” May I be choked here, in this lonely spot, if he does not.

LÍZA. What’s this, Nádyá? You seem beside yourself.

NÁDYA. And I really am beside myself. While she spoiled me, caressed me, then I thought that I was a person like other people; and my thoughts about life were entirely different. But when she began to command me, like a doll; when I saw that I was to have no will of my own, and no protection, then, Liza, despair fell upon me. What became of my fear, of my shame—don’t know. “Only one day, but mine!” I thought; “then come what may, I don’t care to inquire. Marry me off to a herdsman, lock me in a castle with thirty locks!....it’s all the same to me!”

LÍZA. I think the master’s coming.

[*LEONÍD enters from the opposite side, in a cloak.*]

NÁDYA. Well, Liza, isn’t he handsome, ha?

LÍZA. Oh, stop! You’re either sick or half out of your head!

**SCENE II**  
*The same and LEONÍD*

LEONÍD. [*Approaching*] I was thinking you would deceive me by not coming.

NÁDYA. Why did you think so?

LEONÍD. Well, you see, you said you didn't love me.

NÁDYA. No matter what girls say, don't you believe them. How could one help loving such a handsome fellow?

LEONÍD. [*Surprised*] Why, Nádyá!

[*He takes her hand for a short time holds it, then kisses it.*]

NÁDYA. [*In fright withdrawing her hand*] Oh! why did you do that? Dear, kind master! Aren't you ashamed?

LEONÍD. I love you ever so much, Nádyá!

NÁDYA. You love me? Well, then, you might give me a kiss!

LEONÍD. May I, Nádyá? Will you let me?

NÁDYA. What's the harm in it?

LEONÍD. [*Turning about*] Oh, and you, Líza, here ....

LÍZA. I'm going, I'm going ....I shan't meddle.

LEONÍD. [*Confused*] I didn't mean that. Where did you get that idea?

LÍZA. Oh, don't dodge. We know, too ....[*She goes out behind the shrubs.*]

LEONÍD. And so you will let me kiss you? [*He kisses her timidly*] No, no, let me kiss your hand.

NÁDYA. [*Hides her hand*] No, no, how could you! What do you mean ....

LEONÍD. Why not? I'll tell you what, you are the most precious thing on earth to me.

NÁDYA. Is that really so?

LEONÍD. You see, no one ever loved me before.

NÁDYA. Aren't you fooling?

LEONÍD. No, truly!.... Truly, no one has ever loved me. Honest to God....

NÁDYA. Don't swear; I believe you without it.

LEONÍD. Let's go sit down on the bench.

NÁDYA. Yes, let's.

LEONÍD. Why do you tremble so?

NÁDYA. Am I trembling?

LEONÍD. You are. [*They sit down.*]

NÁDYA. Then, it must be that I feel a bit chilly.

LEONÍD. Just let me wrap you up.

*[He covers her with one side of his cloak, embracing her as he holds it around her. She takes his hand and holds it.]*

NÁDYA. And now let's sit this way and talk.

LEONÍD. What are we going to talk about? I shall say only one thing to you: I love you.

NÁDYA. You will say it, and I shall listen.

LEONÍD. You'll get tired of one and the same thing.

NÁDYA. Maybe you'll get tired of it; I never shall.

LEONÍD. Then let me speak. I love you, little Nádyá.

*[He rises and kisses her.]*

NÁDYA. Why do you do that? Just sit quietly, as we said we would.

LEONÍD. Shall we sit like this, with our hands folded?

NÁDYA. [*Laughing*] Like that. Hear, a nightingale is singing in the thicket. Sit down and listen. How nice it is to listen!

LEONÍD. Like this?

NÁDYA. Yes. as we sit together. It seems as if I could sit here all my life and listen. What could be better, what more could one want? ....

LEONÍD. Nádyá, dear, that would really be a bore.

NÁDYA. What fellows you men are! You get sick of things in no time. But I, you see, am ready to sit out the whole night, to look at you, without lowering my eyes. It seems as if I should forget the whole world!

[*Tears start in her eyes, she bends her head, and then looks at LEONÍD fixedly and musingly.*]

LEONÍD. Now it would be nice to go rowing; it is warm, the moon is shining.

NÁDYA. [*Absently and almost mechanically*] What is it, sir?

LEONÍD. To go rowing; I should row you out to the little island. It is so pleasant there, on the island. Well, let's go. [*He takes her by the hand*]

NÁDYA. [*In a reverie*] Where, sir?

LEONÍD. Where, where? I told you; didn't you hear me?

NÁDYA. Oh, forgive me, dearest master. I was thinking and didn't hear anything. Dearest master, forgive me! [*She lays her head upon his shoulder.*]

LEONÍD. I say, let's go to the island.

NÁDYA. [*Nestling up to him*] Oh, wherever you please! Even to the end of the world! If only with you. Take me wherever you want.

LEONÍD. Nádyá. you are so good, so sweet, that it seems as if I must burst out crying, just to look at you. [*They approach the boat*] Good-by, Líza.

LÍZA. [*Coming from the bushes, she makes a warning gesture.*] Look out, you two! [*LEONÍD and NÁDYA sit down in the boat and move away*] There, they've gone! And I must wait here for them! This is awful, simply awful! At night, in the garden, and all alone, too! What a fix for me—afraid of everything, and .... [*She glances about her*] Heavens, this is deadly! If there were only somebody here, it would be all right, I'd have somebody to talk to. Holy Saints! Somebody's coming! [*She looks*] Oh, all right; just our old folks from the fair. [*She hides herself.*]

### SCENE III

*Enter POTÁPYPCH in an overcoat and a broad-brimmed hat, and with a cane, somewhat tipsy; GAVRÍLOVNA in an old-fashioned bonnet. They sit down on the bench.*

POTÁPYPCH. No, Gavrílovna; not that.... Don't say that!.... Our lady is so.... Such a kind mistress!.... Here, we asked if we could go to the fair, and she said to go along.... But what they say about her.... That I don't know: it's not my business and so I don't know anything about it.

GAVRÍLOVNA. Why not let us go, Potápych? You and I are not youngsters; we shan't be spoiled!

POTÁPÝCH. You can't let the young folks go, because you must have models for everything, Gavrílovna. Whatever models a person has in front of him, he may, very likely.... most probably....

GAVRÍLOVNA. Well, why did she let Grísha go? She said she wouldn't; well, and then she ought not to have done it.

POTÁPÝCH. Vasilísa Peregrínovna stirred me up a lot on Grísha's account a while ago.... She stirred me up a lot, but I don't know. It's not my business, so I don't know anything about it.

GAVRÍLOVNA. What's this you were saying about models? It would be better for her to show a better example herself! As it is, she only keeps shouting: "Watch, I tell you, watch the girls!" But what's the use of watching them? Are they all babies? Every person has his own brains in his head. Let everyone think for himself. All you need to do is to look out for the five-year-olds, that they don't spoil something or other. What a life for a girl! There's nothing worse on earth! But the mistress doesn't want to consider whether a girl gets much fun out of life. Well, does she get much? Say!

POTÁPÝCH. [*Sighs*] A dog's life.

GAVRÍLOVNA. It surely is! Consequently one ought to pity them and not insult them at every step. As it is, it's simply awful! Nobody trusts them at all; it's just as if they weren't human beings. Just let a girl poke her nose out. and the guards are on the job!

POTÁPÝCH. But you can't....

GAVRÍLOVNA. Can't what? You can do everything. That'll do, Potápych! You're used to saying over other people's words like a magpie: but just think for yourself.

POTÁPÝCH. But I don't know.... I don't know anything.

GAVRÍLOVNA. You won't gain anything through severity. You may tell 'em, if you please, that they'll be hung for such-and-such; they'll go and do it anyway. Where there's the greatest strictness, there's the most sin. You ought to reason like a human being. No matter if our masters pay money for their wits while we have only what we're born with, we have our own way of thinking, all the same. It's all right to lay down the law strictly; but don't always punish a fellow who makes a slip; let him off now and then. Some bad comes from spoiling people; but now and then you can't help going wrong.

POTÁPÝCH. Now, if you ask me.... What can I answer to that? How can I answer you?

GAVRÍLOVNA. Well, how?

POTÁPÝCH. Just this: I don't know anything about it, because it isn't my business.... it's the Mistress's business.

GAVRÍLOVNA. Bah, you old idiot! you've lost your wits in your old age.

POTÁPÝCH. Why should I.... I, thanks to the lady's kindness now in her employ.... I carry out all

her orders.... But I don't know.

GAVRÍLOVNA. Well, let's go home. She may have thought up something or other about even you and me.

[*They go out.*]

#### SCENE IV

LÍZA. [*Enters*] Alone again! Where are those precious darlings of mine? I suppose they've forgotten about me! But, then, why should they remember me? Saints alive, it'll soon be daylight. This night is shorter than a sparrow's beak. How can we go home then? How brave that Nádyá is!

[*Enter VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA.*]

#### SCENE V

LÍZA and VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA

VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA. What are you doing there, dearest?

LÍZA. Can't you see? I'm taking a stroll.

VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA. I see! How can I help it? But what kind of a night-walk is this?

LÍZA. Well, when can we go walking? We work all day and wait on the gentry, and we go walking at night. But I am surprised at you! Don't you walk enough daytimes that you still want to wander around at night and scare people, just like....

VASILISA PEREGHINOVNA. Just like what?.... Well, say it, say it!

LÍZA. What? Oh, nothing.

VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA. No, you said, "Just like".... well. say it now: just like who?

LÍZA. I said what I said.

VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA. No, don't you dare sneak out of it! Come, speak up!

LÍZA. Why did you stick to it? All right, I'll tell you: like a spook.

VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA. What, what! Like a spook!.... How do you dare, you dirty hussy. ha? What's this! You want to push me alive into the grave! But I'll find your lover here, and take you to the mistress. Then we'll see what song you'll sing.

LÍZA. I haven't any lover! There's no use in your looking. Search the whole garden if you want to!

And even if I had, it's none of your business! It's shameful for you even to speak of it. You ought not even to know about it: you're an old maid. You ought to be ashamed of yourself.

VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA. Sing on, sing on, my dear; you sing very finely on the wing: but you'll perch pretty soon! You're not going to roam about at night for nothing. I know your tricks. I'll show you all up! I'm so mad now, that even if you bow down to my feet, I'll not forgive you.

LÍZA. Just wait! I see myself bowing before you! Don't count on it!

VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA. No, now I'm going to look around every bush.

LÍZA. Do it!

[VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA *looks about on both sides, then approaches the pond.*]

VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA. Ha, what's this? Do tell, what tricks they're up to! In the boat! Hugging each other! How tender that is! Just like a picture! You ought to have thought to take a guitar along and sing love songs!... They're kissing each other! Very good! Delightful! Again! Excellent! What could be better? Phew, what an abomination! It's disgusting to look at! Well, my dears, you will remember me. Now I have nothing to say to you. To-morrow I shall! [*She goes out*]

LÍZA. What devil brought her here? You can't clear up the mess now!  
[LEONÍD and NÁDYA *reach the shore and disembark from the boat.*]

## SCENE VI

LÍZA, NÁDYA, *and* LEONÍD

LÍZA. What have you done, what have you done!....

NÁDYA. [*Not listening to her, softly to LEONÍD*] you will come to-morrow?

LEONÍD. I will.

LÍZA. What's the matter, don't you hear?

NÁDYA. If I can't come, I'll send a note somehow or other.

LEONÍD. Good!

NÁDYA. Well, good-by. [*They kiss.*]

LÍZA. [*Loudly*] Nádyá!

NÁDYA. [*Goes up to LÍZA. LEONÍD sits down upon the bench*] What's the matter?

LÍZA. Vasilísa Peregrínovna saw you rowing on the pond.

NÁDYA. Well, deuce take her!

LÍZA. My dear girl, don't carry your head too high!

LEONÍD. Nádyá! [NÁDYA goes to him] Oh, Nádyá, what a vile, good-for-nothing fellow I am!

NÁDYA. What do you mean?

LEONÍD. Little Nádyá! [*He whispers in her ear.*]

NÁDYA. [*Shakes her head*] Oh, my precious darling, why did that come into your head? I'm not sorry for this, but you are. How kind you are! Now, good-by! It's high time. I shouldn't leave you, but I can't help it; I'm not my own mistress.

LEONÍD. Good-by, then! [*Slowly as if unwillingly, they separate. NÁDYA returns, overtakes LEONÍD and gazes into his eyes.*]

NÁDYA. Do you love me?

LEONÍD. I do love you, indeed I do!  
[*They kiss and go out in different directions.*]

#### ACT IV

*Same room as in second picture [??]*

#### SCENE I

POTÁPÝCH is leaning against the door-jamb, his hand to his head. VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA enters quietly. [*The whole scene is in a whisper*]

VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA. Result of yesterday evening, I suppose, my friend?

POTÁPÝCH. Wha-a-t?

VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA. Your head aches.

POTÁPÝCH. Did you put up the money?

VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA. You haven't any money for anything else; but you have for such things.

POTÁPÝCH. Well, anyhow, it ain't your business.

VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA. Of course, Potápych, you're an old man, why shouldn't you take a drink once in a while?

POTÁPYCH. Sure, I guess I work for it.

VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA. Just so, Potápych!

POTÁPYCH. I'm tired of being lectured by you!

VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA. I wish you well, Potápych.

POTÁPYCH. No need for it! [*Silence*] But you keep upsetting the mistress so! If you'd only put in a word for us when she's in a good humor; but you just look for the wrong time, in order to complain of us.

VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA. What do you say, Potápych? God preserve me!

POTÁPYCH. What's that! No matter how much you swear, I know you! For instance, why are you coming to the mistress now?

VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA. To wish the benefactress good morning.

POTÁPYCH. You'd better not come.

VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA. Why so?

POTÁPYCH. It must be she got out the wrong side of the bed: she's out of sorts. [VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA *rubs her hands with pleasure*] Here now, I see that you're happy; you're dying for some devilry or other. Phew! Lord forgive us! What a disposition!

VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA. You are saying insulting words to me, Potápych, insulting to my very heart. When did I ever say anything about you to the mistress?

POTÁPYCH. If not about me, then about somebody else.

VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA. But that's my business.

POTÁPYCH. Your spite's always getting in its work.

VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA. Not spite, not spite, my friend! You're mistaken! I have just been so insulted that it's impossible to live in this world after it. I shall die, but I shall not forget.

[MADAM ULANBÉKOV *enters*. POTÁPYCH *goes out*.]

SCENE II

MADAM ULANBÉKOV *and* VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA

VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA. [*Kissing both of MADAM ULANBÉKOV'S hands*] You have risen early, benefactress. You must have an awful lot of things on your mind.

MADAM ULANBÉKOV. [*Sitting down*] I didn't sleep much. I had a bad dream.

VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA. What, a dream, benefactress? The dream, may be terrible, but God is merciful. Not the dream, but what is going on in reality, disturbs you, benefactress. I see that: I've seen it a long time.

MADAM ULANBÉKOV. Bah, what is it to me what's going on?

VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA. Why, benefactress, don't we know that your son, dear little soul! Is struck with every creature he meets?

MADAM ULANBÉKOV. You make me tired.

VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA. I'm so sorry for you, benefactress! Don't look for any consolation in this life! You scatter benefactions upon every one; but how do they repay you? The world is full of lust.

MADAM ULANBÉKOV. Go away!

VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA. [*Weeping*] I can't keep back my tears when I look at you! My heart bleeds that they don't respect you, that they don't respect you even in your own house! In your honorable house, in such pious premises as these, to do such things!

MADAM ULANBÉKOV. [*Frowning*] You silly crow! You want to croak about something or other. Well croak away!

VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA. Benefactress, I'm afraid it might upset you.

MADAM ULANBÉKOV. You've upset me already. Talk!

VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA. [*Glances about in all directions and sits down on a stool at the feet of MADAM ULANBÉKOV*] Yesterday, benefactress, I was ending my evening prayer to the Heavenly Creator, and went out to stroll in the garden, and to occupy myself for the night with pious meditations.

MADAM ULANBÉKOV. Well!

VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA. And what did I see there, benefactress! How my legs held me up, I don't know! That Líza of yours was running through the bushes with a depraved look; it must be she was seeking her lovers. Our master, the little angel! was rowing in the boat on the pond, and Nádyá, also with a depraved expression, was clinging to him with her arms about his neck, and was kissing him. And

it was easy to see that he, because of his purity, was trying to thrust her away; but she kept clasping him about the neck, kissing and tempting him.

MADAM ULANBÉKOV. Are you lying?

VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA. You may quarter me, benefactress.

MADAM ULANBÉKOV. It's enough if there is one grain of truth in your words.

VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA. It's all true, benefactress.

MADAM ULANBÉKOV. Fiddlesticks! not all—it can't be! You always make up more than half. But where were the servants?

VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA. All of them, benefactress, were more or less drunk. No sooner had you gone to bed, than they all went to the fair and got tipsy. Gavrílovna, Potápych, all were drunk. What an example to the young!

MADAM ULANBÉKOV. This must be looked into thoroughly. Of course, I shouldn't have expected the least mischief of Leoníd. Quiet lads like him! Well, if he'd been a soldier, it would be pardonable; but as it is .... [*She muses*]

VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA. And furthermore, benefactress, so far Grísha hasn't come back from the fair.

MADAM ULANBÉKOV. How's that? He didn't sleep at home?

VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA. He did not, benefactress!

MADAM ULANBÉKOV. You lie, you lie, you lie! I'll drive you off the place!

VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA. May I die in my tracks!

MADAM ULANBÉKOV. [*Sinking back in her chair*] You want to kill me. [*Raising herself from the chair*] You simply want to kill me. [*She rings. Enter POTÁPYPCH*] Where's Grísha?

POTÁPYPCH. Just came, ma'am.

MADAM ULANBÉKOV. Send him here! [*POTÁPYPCH goes out*] This certainly beats all!

VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA. You'll not find anybody more devoted than I, benefactress; only I am unhappy in one respect: that my disposition displeases you. Enter GRÍSHA, his hair tousled and disheveled.

**SCENE III**

*The same, and GRÍSHA*

MADAM ULANBÉKOV. Where've you been?

GRÍSHA. [*Now opens, now closes his eyes. Not sure of his tongue, and unsteady on his legs*] At the fair, ma'am.

MADAM ULANBÉKOV. Just come from it? [GRÍSHA *is silent*] Why don't you talk! [*Silence*] Am I going to get a word out of you, or not?

VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA. Answer the mistress.

GRÍSHA. What's that to you?

MADAM ULANBÉKOV. Answer me! Where have you been all this time?

GRÍSHA. I've done wrong, ma'am.

MADAM ULANBÉKOV. I'm not asking you whether you've done wrong or not; I'm asking you where you were!

GRÍSHA. [*Looks at the ceiling with a vacant stare*] Why, where should I be? The idea! The same place as usual!

MADAM ULANBÉKOV. Well, where's that?

GRÍSHA. I just informed you that I was there all the time, ma'am.

MADAM ULANBÉKOV. You'll drive me out of patience! Where's there?

GRÍSHA. But. Really, ma'am! Your will in everything ma'am. What did I, ma'am.... I've done wrong, ma'am.

MADAM ULANBÉKOV. Good Lord! You're still drunk, I guess.

GRÍSHA. Not a bit, ma'am.

MADAM ULANBÉKOV. Nonsense! I can see.

GRÍSHA. But, really, ma'am! One can say anything about a man.

MADAM ULANBÉKOV. Bah. you disgraceful scamp! He still denies it! This is awful! This is awful! Now, speak up, where've you been?

GRÍSHA. Why, really, ma'am! I just informed you, ma'am.

MADAM ULANBÉKOV. Were you at the fair all night?

GRÍSHA. I just informed you so, ma'am.

MADAM ULANBÉKOV. How did you dare, when I let you go for only a short time?

GRÍSHA. Well, really, ma'am! I did want to go home, but they wouldn't let me, ma'am.

MADAM ULANBÉKOV. Who wouldn't let you go?

GRÍSHA. My friends wouldn't, ma'am.

MADAM ULANBÉKOV. Who are these friends of yours?

GRÍSHA. Why, really, ma'am! Government office clerks.

MADAM ULANBÉKOV. Great heavens! Clerks! Do you understand what kind of people they are?

GRÍSHA. Who, ma'am, clerks? Understand what about them, ma'am?

MADAM ULANBÉKOV. And you prowled about with them all night! It would have been better if you hadn't told me, nasty scamp that you are! I know how they act! They'll teach you all sorts of things! What does this mean? Begone! And don't you dare show yourself before my eyes!

VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA. Ask forgiveness, you blockhead! Kiss the dear lady's hand!  
[GRÍSHA waves his hand impatiently and goes out.]

MADAM ULANBÉKOV. What an affliction! It'll simply make me ill! Already I feel my spasms are beginning. What a worthless scamp! He went out just as if he had no responsibilities! And without a sign of repentance!

VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA. Ah, benefactress, you see he's still a child; he did it just out of stupidity.

MADAM ULANBÉKOV. No, he needs a good ....

VASILISA PEREGRINOYNA. What do you say, benefactress? He's still a regular booby!<sup>23</sup> What can you expect of him! He'll get wiser, then it will be altogether different.

MADAM ULANBÉKOV. What offends me most is ingratitude! It seems to me he ought to feel what I am doing for him. I'm positively sick. Go for the doctor!

VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA. Calm yourself, benefactress; as if that rabble were worth your getting upset over!

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<sup>23</sup> Stupid or childish person.

MADAM ULANBÉKOV. Hand me the smelling salts.

VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA. [*Hands her them*] Snap your fingers at them, that's all. Now, if only those girls....

MADAM ULANBÉKOV. Oh, here's another affliction! Now I certainly can't collect my thoughts; I'm completely distracted, and now she begins on the girls! I shall take to my bed at any moment.

VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA. Lust, benefactress, is beyond all endurance.

MADAM ULANBÉKOV. No, they needn't expect any mercy from me. As it is, I forgive one, then another, and so the whole crowd is spoiled. [*She rings; enter POTÁPÝCH*] Call Nadézhda, and come here yourself! [*POTÁPÝCH goes out*] That's what is to be a woman. If I were a man, would they dare be so willful?

VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA. They don't give a fig for you, benefactress, not a fig. They aren't a little bit afraid of you.

MADAM ULANBÉKOV. They're going to find out pretty quick whether I amount to anything. [*Enter POTÁPÝCH and NÁDYA. GAVRÍLOVNA and LÍZA look through the door.*]

#### SCENE IV

*The same, POTÁPÝCH and NÁDYA*

MADAM ULANBÉKOV. Nadézhda! Vasilisa Peregrínovna says she saw you in the garden last night with the master. Is that so? [*NÁDYA is silent*] You're silent, that means it's true. Well, now, you can thank yourself. I'm not a conniver at loose conduct, and I won't endure it in my house. I can't turn you out as a vagabond, that would weigh upon my conscience. I am obliged to marry you off. [*To POTÁPÝCH*] Send to town and tell Negligéntov that I shall marry Nádyá to him; and let the wedding be just as soon as possible. [*She rises from her chair and is about to leave.*]

NÁDYA. [*Falling at her feet*] Whatever you wish, only not marriage with him!

MADAM UANBEKOV. Fiddlesticks! What I have once said is sacred. And what do you mean by this scene? Can't you see that I'm not well? To keep on plaguing me! Potápých! She has no father; you be a father to her instead; and impress upon her in fatherly fashion the baseness of her conduct, and the fact that she must obey my commands.

POTÁPÝCH. You listen, Nadézhda, to what the mistress commands! Because when she entrusts you to me, it means that I must show my authority over you. If you command it, mistress, I can at once, in your presence, give her some moral instruction with my own hand! Here, if you dare to say one tiny word to the contrary, I'll drag you off by the hair, no matter what anyone says.

[*He raises his hand threateningly.*]

NÁDYA. Oh!... . [*She crouches.*]

MADAM ULANBÉKOV. Don't strike her! What disgusting scenes!

POTÁPÝCH. But mistress! You can't get results by talking! Besides, if I'm her father, that's the regular thing! That's the law, and according to that, since she is rebelling against you now, I ought to give you that satisfaction.

NÁDYA. [*Weeping*] Mistress, don't ruin me!

MADAM ULANBÉKOV. Oh, my God! You don't spare me at all. Tears, squabblings! Send for the doctor at once! How many times have I got to say it? It's your own fault, you've nobody to blame for your tears. Potápých! get this business over with! I don't like to repeat the same thing ten times over.  
[*She goes out, GAVRÍLOVNA after her. Silence. GAVRÍLOVNA returns.*]

GAVRÍLOVNA. She's gone to bed, and banged the door behind her.

POTÁPÝCH. [*At the window*] Antoshka! Antoshka! Post boy! Saddle the horse and ride to town for the doctor. Oh, you! Lord!

NÁDYA. [*Rising from her knees*] Don't you think it's a sin for you to abuse me, Potápých? What have I ever done to you?

POTÁPÝCH. What do I care? What do I care about you? When the mistress really wants something, I have to try to please her in every way; because I was born her servant.

NÁDYA. If she had commanded you to kill me, would you have done it?

POTÁPÝCH. That's not my affair, I can't argue about that.

GAVRÍLOVNA. That's enough, Nádyá, don't cry! God doesn't abandon orphans.  
[*NÁDYA falls upon GAVRÍLOVNA'S bosom.*]

LÍZA. [*To VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA*] Well, is your heart content now?

VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA. Wait, my dear, your turn will come.  
[*LEONÍD enters.*]

**SCENE V**  
*The same and LEONÍD*

LEONÍD. What's this? What has happened?

VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA. You made all the trouble yourself, and then ask what has happened.

LEONÍD. What trouble did I make? What are you continually thinking up?

VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA. Now, don't pretend! The whole truth has come out. You've been having a little fun. What of it? At your age, why shouldn't you have?

LÍZA. She's reported the whole thing to the mistress. The mistress got so angry that it was awful! And now, sir, she is going to marry Nádyá to that government clerk.

LEONÍD. Are you sure?

NÁDYA. The thing's settled, dearest master! I have to answer for last evening's sport.

LEONÍD. Is mamma very angry?

GAVRÍLOVNA. No one dares go near her.

LEONÍD. But how can that be? Isn't it possible to talk over somehow or other?

GAVRÍLOVNA. Just go and try. No, she won't come out of her room now for five days; and she won't let anyone at all see her there.

VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA. Do you want to talk your mamma over?

LEONÍD. Yes.

VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA. Do you want me to tell you how?

LEONÍD. Please be so kind, Vasilísa Peregrínovna.

VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA. Well, permit me. Our benefactress is very much hurt at Grísha, because he didn't spend the night at home: he came in drunk, and didn't even ask forgiveness nor kiss her hand. It was this vexation that made her sick. And then this Nadézhda happened to come her way when she was angry. Now our benefactress won't even come out of her room, and won't allow anyone to go to her, so long as that stubborn Grísha doesn't beg forgiveness.

GAVRÍLOVNA. How contrarily everything happened! Grísha will keep up his character, too. Although he is a blockhead, he has some sense. Now he'll flop down on the hay and he'll lie there on his belly for four days.

POTÁPÝCH. Somebody ought to take Uncle Gerasim's club and dress him down from top to toe.

VASILÍSA PEREGRÍNOVNA. Now, our dear master, wouldn't you like to go present your compliments to him, in order that he might hurry up and ask your mamma's forgiveness?

LEONÍD. [*Upon reflection*] That would be too great an honor for him. But see here, Gavrílovna, is mamma actually very angry?

GAVRÍLOVNA. So angry, sir, that it's terrible!

LEONÍD. Well, what's to be done now!

NÁDYA. Why are you bothering? You see, there's nothing you can do: better leave me! Now you'll soon go away to Petersburg; you will be happy: why should you think about such trifles, or disturb yourself?

LEONÍD. Why, you see, I'm sorry for you!

NÁDYA. Don't be sorry, if you please! I ran to my own destruction of my own free will, like a mad girl, without once stopping to think.

LEONÍD. What are you planning to do now?

NÁDYA. That's my business.

LEONÍD. But, you see, it's going to be very hard for you.

NÁDYA. What business is it yours? It will be all the happier for you.

LEONÍD. But why do you talk like this?

NÁDYA. Because you're still a boy!.... Leave me!

LEONÍD. But, you see, he's such a drunken, vile fellow.

NÁDYA. Oh, my God! It would be better for you to go off somewhere: out of my sight.

LEONÍD. Yes, really, it would be better for me to spend a week with our neighbors.

NÁDYA. For God's sake, do!

LEONÍD. But Nádyá, if it should be awfully hard for you to live with your husband, what then?

NÁDYA. [*Weeping*] Oh, leave me alone! Be good enough to leave me alone! [*Sobbing*] I beg only one thing of you: leave me, for God's sake! [*She sobs.*]

GAVRÍLOVNA and LÍZA. [*Motioning with their hands*] Go away! Go away!

LEONÍD. Why do you drive me out? I guess I'm sorry enough for her! I keep thinking somehow or other, that it may still be possible to help her in some way.

NÁDYA. [*With desperation*] I don't want any helpers or defenders! I don't want them! If my patience fails, that pond of ours isn't far off!

LEONÍD. [*Timidly*] Well, I'll go away if you wish .... Only what is she saying? You folks, look after her, please! Good-by! [*He goes to the door.*]

NÁDYA. [*After him, in a loud voice*] Good-by!  
[LEONÍD *goes out.*]

LÍZA. And so the old proverb is true: What's fun for the cat is tears for the mouse.

**THE END**