

THE POWER OF DARKNESS

by Leo Tolstoy

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DRAMATIS PERSONA. OF ACT I.

Peter, a rich peasant, forty-two years of age; married for the second time; sickly.

Anisya, his wife, thirty-two years of age; a dandyish woman.

Akulina, Peter's daughter by his first marriage, sixteen years of age; hard of hearing and silly.

Anyutka, a second daughter, ten years old.

Nikita, their hired hand, twenty-five years old ; a fop.

Akim, Nikita's father, fifty years old; homely, and Godfearing.

Matrena, his wife, fifty years old.

Marina, an orphan girl, twenty-two years old.

ACT I.

The action takes place in a large village, in autumn. The scene represents the inside of Peter's spacious hut. Peter is seated on a bench, mending a horse-collar. Anisya and Akulina are spinning.

Scene I. Peter, Anisya, and Akulina (the last two singing together).

Peter (looking through the window'). The horses have gone away again. Before we know it the colt will be killed. Nikita! Oh, Nikita ! Are you deaf ? (Listens. To the women.) Stop your singing, – I can't hear a thing!

Nikita's voice, in the yard. What?

Peter. Drive in the horses !

Nikita's voice. I will! Only give me a chance !

Peter (shaking his head). Oh, these hired hands! If I were a well man, I would not have one for the world. There is only worry with them. (Gets up and sits down again.) Nikita! I shall get no answer.

I wish one of you would go. Akulina, go and drive them in!

Akulina. What, the horses ?

Peter. What else did I say ?

Akulina. Bight away. (Exit.)

Scene II. Peter and Anisya.

Peter. The young ^camp is not much of a farmer. It takes him an age to do a thing.

Anisya. You aren't very lively yourself. From the oven to the bench, that's as far as you can go. You are only hard on people.

Peter. If I were not hard on you, I should not be able to find a thing in a year. Oh, what people!

Anisya. You make one attend to a dozen things at once, and you scold all the while. It is easy enough to command when you are lying on the oven.

Peter (sighing). If it were not for this sickness of mine I should not keep him a day.

Akulina's voice behind the scene. Here, horsy, here, horsy ! (One hears the neighing of a colt and horses running in through the gate. The gate creaks.)

Peter. All he knows is to prattle. Really, I would not keep him.

Anisya (mocking him). I won't keep him. Move about and then talk!

Scene III. The same and Akulina.

Akulina (entering). I had the hardest time driving them in. The dappled gray -

Peter. And where is Nikita ?

Akulina. Nikita ? He is standing in the street.

Peter. What is he standing there for ?

Akulina. What is he standing there for ? He is standing around the corner, and is talking.

Peter. I can't get anything out of her. With whom is he talking ?

Akulina (not hearing him). What? (Peter waves his hand to Akulina ; she goes back to her spinning.)

Scene IV. The same and Anyutka.

Anyutka (running in. To her mother). Nikita's parents have come to see him. Indeed, they are taking him home to get married.

Anisya. Are you telling the truth ?

Anyutka. May I die on the spot if I am not! (.Laugh-ing.) I was going by when Nikita called me: " Goodbye," says he, " Anna Petrovna ! Come to my wedding ! I," says he, " am going away from you." And he laughed.

Anisya (to her husband). They are in great need of you. There he is going away of his own accord. And you say: " I'll drive him away ! "

Peter. Let him go. I will find somebody else.

Anisya. But haven't you paid the money in advance ?

(.Anyutka walks up to the door and listens to what they are saying. Exit.)

Scene V. Anisya, Peter, and Akulina.

Peter (frowning). What money he owes me he will work off in the summer.

Anisya. Yes, you are only too glad to let him go. You save so much. In winter you want me to do all the work by myself, like a horse. The girl is not much good for work, and you will be lying on the oven. I know you !

Peter. What sense is there in wagging your tongue for nothing ?

Anisya. The yard is full of cattle. You did not sell the cow, and you have left all the sheep for winter. There is enough work to do to feed and water them, and you want to send the hired hand away. I am not going to do a man's work! I will lie down on the oven, as you do, and let everything go to perdition, - I don't care what you do.

Peter (to Akulina). Go for the feed! I think it is time.

Akulina. For the feed ? All right. (Puts on a caftan and takes a rope.)

Anisya. I will not work for you! You may be sure I won't. Go and work yourself.

Peter. Stop. Don't carry on like a crazy sheep!

Anisya. You are yourself a mad dog! There is no work in you, and I don't get any joy out of you. You do nothing but eat all the time. A lazy dog you are, upon my word.

Peter (spits out and puts on his coat). Pshaw, the Lord be merciful

to you! I must go and find out what is up. (Exit.)

Anisya (crying after him). Rotten, long-nosed devil!

Scene VI. Anisya and Akulina.

Akulina. Why are you scolding father ?

Anisya. Shut up, you fool!

Akulina (walking up to the door). I know why you are. You are yourself a fool, and a dog. I am not afraid of you.

Anisya. What do you say? (Jumps up and looks around for something to throw at her.) If you don't look out I will hit you with the plough-handle.

Akulina (opening the door). You are a dog, a devil, that's what you are! A devil, a dog, a dog, a devil! (Runs away.)

Scene VII. Anisya (alone).

Anisya (in thought). " Come to the wedding," says he. What are they up to ? To marry him ? Look out, Nikita! If that is your trick, I will – I cannot live without him. I will not let him.

Scene VIII. Anisya and Nikita.

Nikita (enters, looking about him. Seeing that Anisya is alone, he walks over to her. In a whisper). What am

I to do, my dear ? Father has come to take me away. He commands me to go home. " We want to marry you by all means," says he, " and have you stay at home."

Anisya. Well, get married. What is that to me ?

Nikita. I declare! I was hoping to consult with you, and you tell me to get married! What is the matter ? (Winking.) Or have you forgotten ?

Anisya. Get married. What do I care ?

Nikita. What are you snorting about ? I declare! She won't let me pat her. What is the matter with you ? ,

Anisya. As to your wishing to leave, go if you want to ! I don't need you ! That is what I have to say to you.

Nikita. Stop, Anisya. Did I say I wanted to forget you ? Not on my life. I sha'n't leave you for anything. I was thinking like this: let them marry me, but I will come back to you. If they will only not keep me at home!

Anisya. You won't be of much use to me when you are married.

Nikita. But what am I to do, my dear ? It is not possible to oppose father's will.

Anisya. You are putting it on your father, but it is your trick. You have been carrying on all the time with your sweetheart, Marina. It is she who has put you on to it. I see now why she came here the other day.

Nikita. Marina ? What do I care for her ? I can't help her sticking to me !

Anisya. Then why did your father come ? You told him to. You have deceived me I (Weeping.)

Nikita. Anisya, do you believe in God, or not? I have not even dreamt of this. I have absolutely no knowledge of it. My dad thought it all out himself.

Anisya. If you did not want it yourself, could they catch you in a sling ?

Nikita. I have considered that it is impossible to oppose father's will, although I have no desire to marry.

Anisya. Refuse, and that's all.

Nikita. There was a fellow who did refuse, and so they gave him a walloping. I do not want that either: they say it is ticklish -

Anisya. Stop jesting. Listen, Nikita: if you are going to take Marina for a wife, I do not know what I shall do to myself. I will take my life! I have sinned, and have violated the Law, but that cannot be remedied now. If you go away, I will do harm to myself -

Nikita. Why should I want to go away ? I could have gone long ago, if I had wanted to. The other day Ivan Sem^nych offered me a coachman's place. What a fine life that would be! But I did not go, for I considered that others like me. If you did not love me, that would be a different matter.

Anisya. Keep this in mind! The old man can't live long, and so, I think, we might be able to cover up our sin. I thought I might wed you, and you would be the master.

Nikita. What is the use saying this ? What difference does it make to me ? I work as though for myself. My master likes me, and, of course, my mistress loves me. But I can't help women's liking me, - that's all.

Anisya. Will you love me ?

Nikita (embracing her). Like this ! You are deep in my heart –

Scene IX. The same and Matrdna (entering and crossing herself before the images for a long time. Nikita and Anisya rush away from each other).

Matrena. I have neither seen nor heard a thing. You have been disporting with the woman, – what of it ? A calf, you know, likes to play, too. Why not ? You

are young yet. My son, the master has been asking for you in the yard.

Nikita. I just came to get the axe.

Matrena. I know, I know, my friend, what kind of an axe you mean. That kind of an axe is mostly near women.

Nikita (bending down and picking up the axe). Well, mother, do you really intend marrying me off ? I consider it all useless. And, then, I have no desire.

Matrena. My darling, what is the use of marrying ? You had better go on living as you do, but it is the old man who wants it. Go, my dear, we will fix matters without you.

Nikita. This is remarkable: now I am to marry, and now again I am not. I can't make it out at all. (Exit.)

Scene X. Anisya and Matrena.

ANiSYa. Well, Aunt Matrena, do you really want to get him married ?

Matrena. What are we to marry him with, my dear ? We have no means, you know. My old man is just a-talking, without any sense whatsoever. He keeps insisting that he should marry. But this is a matter above his mind. Horses, you know, do not gallop away from oats, and people ought not to look out for other things, while they have something good at hand, – just so it is in this case. Can't I see (winking) what is up here ?

Anisya. Why should I conceal it from you, Aunt Matr&aa ? You know everything. I have sinned: I love your son.

Matrena. You did tell me some news : Aunt Matrena did not know it. But I tell you, woman, Aunt Matrena is sly, oh, so sly. Let me tell you my dear, – Aunt Matrena can see a yard below ground. I know everything, my dear! I know what women want sleeping powders for. I have brought some. (Unties the knot in her handkerchief and, takes out some powders in a piece of paper.) What is good for me, I see; and what I ought not to know, I neither see nor hear. That's the way it is with me. Aunt Matrena was once young herself. You see, one must know how to get along with a fool. I know all the ropes. I see,

my dear, your old man is pretty far gone. What strength has he ? Stick a fork into him, and no blood will come out. I think you will bury him by spring. You will have to take somebody on your farm. And is not my son as good a peasant as any? Then, what advantage could I gain from driving him away from a good thing ? You do not suppose I am my son's enemy ?

Anisya. If he only would not leave us.

Matrena. He will not, my birdie. That is all . * on sense. You know my old man. His brain is all cracked. At times he fills it up, and braces it with a post that you can't knock out from under him.

Anisya. What caused all this ?

Matrena. You see, my dear, my boy has a weakness for women, and, it must be said, he is a fine-looking fellow. So, you see, he has worked on the railroad. At that time a certain orphan girl was serving there as a cook, and she was all the time after him.

Anisya. Marina ?

Matrena. The same, – may she be paralyzed. I do not know whether anything happened or not, only my old man found it out. He heard it from others, or she herself told him –

Anisya. But she was bold, – that accursed one !

Matrena. So my old man – the stupid fellow he is – insists upon my son's marrying her so as to cover the sin. " We will take our boy home," says he, " and get him married." I tried every way to dissuade him, but all in vain. Well, thought I, let it be. I will try in a dif-

ferent manner. These fools, my dear, have to be enticed. You have to pretend to agree with them, but the moment it comes to business, you switch them off. A woman, you see, comes a-flying down from the oven, having thought out a hundred thoughts – so how is he to find it out? " Yes, old man," says I, " that is good; only we must consider it well. Come," says I, " let us go to our son, and let us consider the matter with Peter Ignaty ch. Let us hear what he has to say." And this is why we have come.

Anisya. Oh, aunty, what will happen now ? If his father commands him ?

Matrena. Commands? To the dogs with his command. Don't have any fears! It will not happen. I will soon thresh out the whole matter with your old man, so that nothing will be left of it. This is the very reason why I have come along with him. How stupid it would be for me to have my son marry a slut, while he is living in happiness here, and happiness is ahead of him ! I am not such a fool as all that.

Anisya. Marina has been coming to see him here, too. Would you believe it, aunty, – when I was told that he was to get married, I felt as though somebody had stuck a knife into my heart. I thought he had a liking for her.

Matrena. Not at all, my dear. He is not such a fool. He would not think of loving a homeless vagabond. You must know Nikita is a clever fellow. But you, my dear, have no fear! We shan't take him away in a lifetime. We will not marry him off. As long as you let him have money, let him stay here.

Anisya. I feel that if Nikita went away I should not want to live.

Matrena. That is the way with young people ! And it is no wonder. You are a healthy young woman, and have to live with such a worthless rag –

Anisya. Believe me, aunty, I am tired, dreadfully tired of my old man, that long-nosed dog. I wish my eyes did not see him.

Matrena. Yes, that is the way it goes. Come, see this. (In a whisper, looking around.) You see I went to see an old man for some powders, and he gave me two kinds. Look here. " This," says he, " is a sleeping powder. Give him one," says he. " It will make him sleep so hard that you can do anything you please. And this," says he, " is such a drug that if you give it in a drink it cannot be discovered, but its strength is great. It is to be given seven times," says he, " and every time a pinchful. Itepeat it seven times. And freedom," says he," will soon come to her."

Anisya. Oh, oh, oh! What is this ?

Matrena. " It leaves no traces," says he. lie took a rouble for it. «I can't do it for less," says he. Because, you see, it is hard to get. My dear, I gave him my money for it. I thought to myself I would take it down to Anisya, whether she wanted it or not.

Anisya. Oh, oh! But maybe something bad will come of it ?

MATRENA. What bad can there be, my dear ? It would be different.if your husband were a healthy man; but as it is he barely lives. He is not a live fellow. There are many such.

Anisya. Oh, my wretched head! I am afraid, aunty, there might be some sin in it. No, I do not like it.

Matrena. I can take it back.

Anisya. Are these to be dissolved in water, like the other ?

Matrena. " In tea," says he, " it is better. It can't be detected," says he. "They leave no smell, nothing." He is a clever fellow.

Anisya (taking the powders). Oh, my wretched head! Would I have

thought of such things if my life were not so hard ?

Matrena. Don't forget the rouble. I promised the old fellow I would bring it to him. He is worried about it.

Anisya. Of course. {Goes to a coffer and conceals the powders.}

Matrena. You must keep them so, my dear, that people do not find them out. If, God for fend, something should be discovered, say they are for cockroaches. (Takes the rouble.) They are also good for cockroaches – (Interrupts her speech.)

Scene XI. The same, Peter, and Akim.

Akim (enter. Crosses himself before the image').

Peter (enter. Sits down). So what is it, Uncle Akim ?

Akim. 'Twere better, Ignatykh, 'twere better, so to speak – for, otherwise, you know, it may lead to badness – I should like, so, to take my son away, for work. And if you permit it, so – 'Twere better –

Peter. All right, all right. Sit down, and let us have a chat. (Akim sits down.) Well ? Do you want to get him married ?

Matrena. As for marrying, Peter Ignatykh, we can put it off. You know yourself, Ignatykh, what want we live in. We have barely enough to live on, so how are we to get him married ? How are we to marry him ?

Peter. Consider what is best.

Matrena. There is no hurry about getting married. It is like this: it is not a raspberry that will drop off.

Peter. It is a good thing to get married.

Akim. I should like to, so to speak – Because, so to speak – there is some work in the city, some profitable work I have there, you know.

Matrena. Work ! To clean privies. When he came home the other day, pshaw, I just vomited and vomited!

Akim. That is so: at first, so to speak, it takes your breath away; but when you get used to it, it is all right. It is just like the swills, so to speak, very much like it. And as to the smell, so to speak, fellows like us must not be offended by it. We can change our clothes, for all that. I wanted Nikita to go home and, so to speak, look after things. Let him look after the house, and so I will earn something in town –

Peter. You want to leave your son at home, – that is all right. But how about the money you have taken on account ?

Akim. That's so, that's so, Ignaty ch. You have said that correctly, so to speak, because if you have hired yourself out you have sold yourself, and you have to abide by it, so to speak. But, if he could get married, so to speak, would you let him off for awhile ?

Peter. There is no objection to that.

Matrena. Only we do not agree upon it. I will lay everything before you, Peter Ignaty ch, as I would before God. You will judge between my old man and me. He has taken it into his head to marry him off. And to whom is it he marries him ? If she were a decent girl, I would not be my son's enemy; but this one has a fault.

Akim. Now this is not right. You are accusing the girl for nothing, so to speak, for nothing. Because this girl has been wronged by my son do you see. The same girl, you see.

Peter. How has she been wronged ?

Akim. It appears, so to speak, she has been wronged by Nikita, – by Nikita, you see.

Matrena. Stop a moment. I can express myself better than you, so let me tell it. You know yourself that our son used to work on the railroad before he came to your house. Now a girl, Marina by name, who was a cook for the workmen, – she is not very clever, – has been after him. This same girl accuses our son Nikita of having betrayed her.

Peter. That is not good.

Matrena. She is herself not much good. She, the slut, is running around among people.

Akim. Again, old woman, you are not saying so, not at all so, so to speak, not so –

Matrena. All my eagle here can say is " so, so," but what that " so " is, he does not know himself. Peter Ignaty ch, ask other people about this girl, and you will hear the same as I have been telling you. She is a homeless vagabond.

Peter (to Akim). If it is like that, Uncle Akim, there is no reason for his marrying her. A daughter-in-law is not a bast shoe that you can take off your leg.

Akim (excitedly). It is false, old woman, just so, what you say about the girl is false. Because the girl is very good, so, very good, so to speak, I am sorry for her, so to speak, for the girl.

Matrena. He is just like Maremyana the mendicant, who weeps for the whole world, and sits breadless at home. You are sorry for the girl, but you are not sorry for your son. Tie her around your neck, and

walk about with her. What good is there in talking such nonsense ?

Akim. No, it is not nonsense.

Matrena. Don't interrupt me! Let me finish!

Akim (interrupting her). No, it is not nonsense. You are coming back to yourself, so to speak, whether you are speaking of the girl or of yourself; you are coming back to yourself, but God will come back to His own, that's so. And so it is in this case.

Matrena. Oh, it only makes my tongue ache to speak with you.

Akim. She is a hard-working girl, and, so to speak, looking well after herself, so to speak. And, so, in our poverty she would be a great hand for us. The wedding expense is not great; but the wrong done is great to the girl, so to speak. The girl is an orphan, that's it. And there was a wrong done.

Matrena. They all tell the same story.

Anisya. Uncle Akim, you ought to hear what we women have to say. We can tell you something.

Akim. Lord, 0 Lord! Is not the girl a human being ? Before God, so to speak, she is a human being, too. What do you think ?

Matrena. There is no stopping him -

Peter. Uncle Akim, you cannot believe everything the girls say. The young fellow is alive. He has something to say about it. Let us send for him and ask him whether it is true. He will not ruin a soul. Call the young fellow! (Anisya gets up.) Tell him his father wants to see him. (Anisya exit.)

Scene XII. The same, without Anisya.

Matrena. Now, our protector, this was a wise judgment to let the son decide. Nowadays they don't get people married by force. The young man ought to be considered. He will not be willing to marry her for anything in the world, for that would only disgrace him. It is my opinion that he had better stay with you and serve his master. There is no reason for taking him away in the summer, - we can hire somebody. You give us ten roubles, and let him stay with you.

Peter. That is still ahead. Let us take everything in order. First end one thing, and then take up another.

Akim. I have been saying all this, Peter Ignatyich, because, so to speak, things happen like this: You, so to speak, arrange matters so as to be best for yourself, and so forget about God. You think it is better to look out for yourself, but, behold, you have only burdened yourself with trouble. We, so to speak, think that it is better without considering God, but it is worse.

Petek. Of course, we must think of God.

Akim. It is really worse; but if everything is done according to the Law, according to God's way, it, so to speak, makes your heart glad. It, so to speak, was before me like a dream. And so I guessed, so to speak, that I had better get my son married, in order, so to speak, to save him from sin: and so he will be at home, so to speak, according to the Law, while I will try, so to speak, to find something to do in town. It is a work of love, and it is proper. According to God's way, so to speak, it is better. And she is an orphan at that. For example, last year they took some wood from the clerk in just such a manner. They thought they would cheat him. And so they did, but God, so to speak, they did not cheat, well, and –

Scene XIII. The same, Nikita, and Anyutka.

Nikita. Did you call me ? (Sits down, and takes out his tobacco.)

Peter (softly and reproachfully). Don't you know the proprieties ? Your father sent for you, and you take out your tobacco, and seat yourself. Come here, and stand up!

(Nikita stands up near the table, leaning carelessly against it, and smiling.)

Akim. There is, so to speak, Nikita, a complaint against you. •

Nikita. Who complains ?

Akim. Who? A girl, an orphan, so to speak, complains. There is a complaint against you, so to speak, from that same Marina.

Nikita (laughing). Marvellous ! What kind of a complaint is it ? Who has told you about it ? Maybe she herself ?

Akim. I am now putting the questions, so to speak; and you must give the answers, so to speak. Did you tie yourself, so to speak, with the girl ?

Nikita. I can't positively make out what it is you are asking.

Akim. That is foolishness, so to speak, foolishness, I say; was there any foolishness between her and you, so to speak ?

Nikita. How do you mean it? Feeling lonely, I passed the time with the cook: I would play the accordion, and she would dance. What other foolishness do you mean ?

Peter. Nikita, don't beat about the bush. Answer straight to your father's questions.

Akim (solemnly). Nikita! You may conceal it from men, but you will not conceal it from God. Nikita, you must not, so to speak, lie !

She is an orphan, so to speak, and it is easy to offend her. She is an orphan, so to speak. You tell me how it was.

Nikita. I have nothing to tell. I am positively telling you ever} 7thing, and there is nothing to tell. (Getting excited.) Of course, she may tell anything she pleases. Say anything you wish, – it does not affect me. Why did she not tell on Fddka Mikishkin ? How is it nowadays ? A person may not jest even. Nothing prevents her talking.

Akim. O Nikita, look out! The lie will come to the surface. Was there anything or not ?

Nikita (aside). I declare he is persistent! (To Akim.) I told you that I know nothing. There has been nothing between us. (Angrily.) May Christ not allow me to come off this plank. (Crosses himself.) I know absolutely nothing. (Silence. Nikita proceeds more excitedly.) Why do you insist on my marrying her ? This is really a scandal There is no law to compel a man to marry against his will. I have sworn that I know nothing.

Mathena (to her husband). You foolish, stupid man! You believe everything they tell you. You have disgraced your son for nothing. Better let him stay with the master, as he has been doing. The master will now give us ten roubles in advance. When the time comes –

Peter. Well, how is it now, Uncle Akim ?

Akim (clicking his tongue, to his son). Look out, Nikita! A tear of offence does not flow past, but, so to speak, upon a man's head. Look out, or the same will happen with you.

Nikita. I have nothing to look out for. You had better look out yourself. (Sits down.)

Anyutka. I shall run and tell mother. (Runs away.)

Scene XIV. Peter, Akim, Matrena, and Nikita.

Matrena (to Peter). So this is all there is to it, Peter Ignatych. He is a riotous fellow: if something gets into his head, you can't drive it out. We have troubled you in vain. Let my son live with you as he has heretofore. Keep my son, – he is your servant.

Peter. How is it now, Uncle Akim ?

Akim. I did not force my son, – if only it is not so!

I wanted, so to speak –

Matrena. You don't know yourself what you are talking about. Let him stay here, as he has until now. Our son does not want to go to the house. And we do not need him: we shall get along without him.

Peter. I must say this much, Uncle Akim: if you take him away for the summer, I do not need him in winter. If he is to stay here, it must be for a year.

Matrena. He will hire out for a year. If we need anybody during harvest time, we shall hire somebody.

Let our son stay here, and you give us ten roubles now –

Peter. Is it, then, for another year ?

Akim (sighing). Well, if it has to be, I suppose, so to speak.

Matrena. Again for a year, from the Saturday of St. Demetrius. You will not offend us about the price, but in the meantime let us have ten roubles. Excuse us now. (Rises and bows.)

Scene XV. The same, Anisya, and Anyutka.

Anisya (sits down at a distance away).

Peter. Well ? If it is thus, let us go to the inn and celebrate the occasion. Come, Uncle Akim, and have some brandy.

Akim. I do not drink, that is, no liquor.

Peter. Well, then you will have some tea.

Akim. Tea is my weakness. I will take some.

Peter. And the women, too, will drink tea. You, Nikita, drive in the sheep, and pick up the straw.

Nikita. All right. (All exeunt, except Nikita. It is growing dark.)

Scene XVI. Nikita alone.

Nikita (lighting a cigarette). I declare, they insisted upon my telling them how I passed my time with the girls. It would take a long time to tell about that. "Marry her," says he. If I were to marry them all, I should have plenty of wives. What sense is there in my marrying, when I am living better than any married man, and people envy me ? It was as though somebody pushed me to swear by the holy image. And thus I put a stop to the whole matter. They say it is dangerous to swear to an untruth. That is all foolishness, – nothing but talk. That is all.

Scene XVII. Nikita and Akulina.

A K ULIN A (enter, in caftan. Puts down the rope, takes off her caftan, and goes into the storeroom). Why don't you strike a light ?

Nikita. To look at you? I can see you without a light.

Akulina. Go to!

Scene XVIII. The same and Anyutka.

Anyutka (running in, in a whisper to Nikita). Nikita, go quickly, there is some one asking for you truly.

Nikita. Who ?

Anyutka. Marina from the railroad. She is standing around the corner.

Nikita. You are fibbing.

Anyutka. Truly.

Nikita. What does she want ?

Anyutka. She wants you to come out. " I have but a word to say to Nikita," says she. I began to ask her what it was, but she would not tell me. She asked me whether it was true that you are going to leave us. I told her that it was not true, that your father wanted to take you home and get you married, but that you had refused, and would stay another year with us. Then says she: " Send him to me, for Christ's sake. I must by all means speak one word to him." She has been waiting for quite awhile. Go to her.

Nikita. God be with her,— I won't go.

Anyutka. She says that if you do not come she will go into the house to you. " Truly, I will," says she.

Nikita. Never mind. She will stay there awhile, and then she will go away.

Anyutka. She asked me whether they wanted to marry you to Akulina.

Akulina (walks up to Nikita, lack of her spinning-wheel). Who is to marry Akulina ?

Anyutka. Nikita.

Akulina. I declare! Who says so ?

Nikita. Evidently people say so. (Looks at her and laughs.) Akulina, will you marry me ?

Akulina. You ? Sometime ago I might have married you perhaps, but now I won't.

Nikita. Why not now ?

Akulina. Because you will not love me.

Nikita. Why not ?

Akulina. Because you are told not to. (Laughs.)

Nikita. Who tells me not to ?

Akulina. My stepmother. She is scolding all the time, and all the time watching you.

Nikita (laughing). I declare ! But you are shrewd.

Akulina. Who, I ? Why shrewd ? Am I blind ? She gave father a terrible tongue-lashing to-day, that bigsnouted witch. (Exit to the storeroom.)

ANYUTKA. Nikita' Look there. (Looks through the window.) She is coming. Truly, she is. I am going away. (Exit.)

Scene XIX. Nikita, Akulina (in the storeroom), and Marina.

Marina (enter). What are you doing with me ?

Nikita. What am I doing ? Nothing.

Marina. You want to abandon me.

Nikita (getting up, angrily). What good is there in your coming ?

Marina. Ah, Nikita!

Nikita. Really, you are all queer— What did you come for ?

Marina. Nikita!

Nikita. What about Nikita? I am Nikita. What do you want ? Come now, talk !

Marina. I see you want to give me up and forget me.

Nikita. What is there to remember? You don't know yourself. There you were standing around the corner, and you sent Anyutka for me. I did not come, so you ought to have known that I did not want you, very simply. Go away now !

Marina. You don't want me ! Now you don't want me. And I believed you that you would love me. First you ruin me, and then you do not want me.

Nikita. You are saying all this to no purpose and in vain. You have been talking to my father, too. Do me a favour and go away.

Marina. You know yourself .that I have not loved anybody but you. I would not feel any worse for it, if you did not marry me. I am not guilty of anything before you, so why do you no longer love me ?

Why ?

Nikita. There is no sense in threshing out all this. Go away ! O foolish women !

Marina. I am not pained because you have deceived me, having promised to marry me, but because you no longer love me. And not so much because you no longer love me as because you have exchanged me for another, – I know for whom.

Nikita (angrily walks up to her). What good is there in discussing matters with a woman ? She won't listen to reason. Go away, I say, or something bad will come of it.

Marina. Something bad ? Well, you will beat me ? Strike me ! Don't turn your face away. O Nikita !

Nikita. It is not good. People might come upon us. What good is there in such useless talk ?

Marina. So this is the end. What has been is not to be. You command me to forget. Remember, Nikita!

I had guarded my maiden honour like the apple of my eye; you have ruined me for nothing, – you have deceived me. You have not taken pity on an orphan (weep-ing); you have abandoned me. You have killed me, but I wish you no evil. God be with you ! If you find some one better, you will forget me; if some one worse, you will think of me— You will think of me, Nikita! Good-bye, if it has to be so. I have loved you so much! Good-bye for the last time. (Wants to embrace him, and grasps his head.)

Nikita (tearing himself away). Oh, what a bother you are ! If you do not go away, I will, and you can stay here.

Marina (crying aloud). You are a beast! (In the door.) God will not give you happiness! (Goes away weeping.)

Scene XX. Nikita and Akulina.

Akulina (coming out of the storeroom). You are a dog, Nikita !

Nikita. How so ?

Akulina. How she wept! (Weeps.)

Nikita. What is the matter with you ?

Akulina. What ? You have wronged her. You will wrong me the same way, you dog! (Goes into the storeroom.)

Scene XXI. Nikita alone.

Nikita (after a silence). It is a muddle. I love women like sugar;

but when you have sinned with them it is terrible 1

Curtain.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE OF ACT II.

Peter.

Anisya.

Akulina.

Anyutka.

Nikita.

Matrona.

Sponsor, a neighbour.

People.

ACT II.

The scene represents a street and Peter's hut. On the left of the spectators is the hut in two parts, and the vestibule, with a porch in the middle; on the right are the gate and a corner of the yard. In the corner of the yard Anisya is beating hemp. Six months have passed since the first act.

Scene I. Anisya alone.

Anisya (stops working, and listens). He is again growling. He must have climbed down from the oven.

Scene II. Anisya and Akulina (enter, with pails on a yoke).

Anisya. He is calling. Go and see what is the matter with him ! Hear him howling !

Akulina. What about you ?

Anisya. Go, I tell you ! (Akulina goes into the hut.)

Scene III. Anisya alone.

Anisya. He is wearing me out: he will not tell me where the money is, and that is the end of it. The other day he was in the vestibule, so he must have hidden it there. Now I do not know myself where. He is evidently afraid to part from it. It must be somewhere in the house. If only I could find it. He did not have it with him yesterday. He has completely worn me out.

Scene IV. Anisya and Akulina (who comes out, tying her kerchief on her head).

Anisya. Where are you going ?

Akulina. Where ? He told me to call Aunt Marfa.

" Go and call sister," says he. " I am dying," says he, " and I want to tell her something."

Anisya (aside). He is calling his sister. Oh, my wretched head! He, no doubt, wants to give it to her. What am I to do ? Oh! (To Akulina.) Don't go! Where are you going ?

Akulina. For aunty.

Anisya. Don't go, I say. I will go myself, and you take the washing to the river. Else you will not get done before evening.

Akulina. But he told me to go.

Anisya. Go where I tell you. I told you I would go myself for Marfa. Take the shirts down from the fence.

Akulina. The shirts ? But I am afraid you won't go. He told me to.

Anisya. I told you I would. Where is Anyutka ? Akulina. Anyutka ? She is watching the calves. Anisya. Send her here: the calves won't run away.

(Akulina takes up the washing and goes out.)

Scene V. Anisya alone.

Anisya. If I don't go, he will curse me. If I do, he will give his sister the money. All my labours will be lost. I don't know what to do. My head is bursting. (Continues to work.)

Scene VI. Anisya and Matrdna (entering with a staff and a bundle, as though from a journey).

Matrena. God bless you, my dear !

Anisya (looking around, throws down her work and claps her hands from joy). I did not expect you, aunty. God has sent me a precious guest in proper time.

Matrena. What is up ?

Anisya. I am all mixed up. It is just terrible!

Matrena. I understand he is still alive.

Anisya. Don't mention it. He is neither alive nor dead.

Matrena. Has he given up his money to any one ?

Anisya. He has just sent for his sister Marfa. No doubt, he wants to talk to her about the money.

Matrena. Of course. But has he not in the meantime given it to anybody ?

Anisya. No. I have been watching him like a hawk.

Matrena. Where is it ?

Anisya. He will not tell, and I cannot find out. He is hiding it now in one place, now in another, and I can't do anything in Akulfna's presence. She is a silly girl, but she keeps a sharp lookout. Oh, my head! I am all worn out.

Matron a. Oh, my dear, if he gives the money away to any one but you, you will have to weep all your life. They will kick you out of the farm with nothing. You have worried your life away with an unpleasant man, and now you will have to go a-begging as a widow.

Anisya. Don't say that, aunty! My heart is aching, and I do not know what to do, and there is nobody who can advise me. I told Nikita about it, but he is afraid to take part in it. He told me yesterday that it was under the floor.

Matrena. Well, did you go to see ?

Anisya. It is impossible, – he is there himself. I notice that he sometimes has it on his person, and sometimes hides it.

Matrena. Remember, woman: once you make a mistake, you will not correct it in a lifetime. (In a whisper.) Well, did you give him the strong tea ?

Anisya. Oh ! (Wants to answer, but, seeing her neighbour, grows silent.)

Scene VII. The same and Sponsor (who passes near the hut and listens to the voice calling in the house).

Sponsor (to Anisya). Friend! Anisya, oh, Anisya! Your man is calling!

Anisya. He is just coughing, though it sounds as though he were calling. He is in a pretty bad shape.

Sponsor (walking up to Matrena). Good day, mother ! Whence does God bring you ?

Matrena. From the farm, my dear. I have come to see my son and to

bring him some shirts. One naturally thinks of one's own child.

Sponsor. Yes, that is so. (To Anisya.) Friend, I wanted to bleach the linen, but I thought it was too early yet. The people have not begun to bleach yet.

Anisya. What is the use in hurrying ?

Matrena. Well, has he made his confession?

Anisya. Certainly. The priest was here yesterday.

Sponsor (to Matrena). I saw him yesterday, and I can't see what his soul is holding on to. He is so haggard. The other day, motherkin, he was almost dead, and they placed him under the images. They were already lamenting over him, and were getting ready to wash him.

Anisya. He came to and got up again. Now he is walking about.

Matrena. Well, are you going to give him the extreme unction ?

Anisya. People ask us to. If he is alive to-morrow, we will send for the priest.

Sponsor. It must be hard for you, Anisya! The proverb says not in vain: Not he who is ailing is sick, but he who watches over the ailment.

Anisya. If there were only an end to it!

Sponsor. Of course. It is no small matter to see him dying for a year. He has tied your hands.

Matrena. Bitter is a widow's lot. It is all right if she is young, but who will pity her in her old age ? Old age is no joy. Look at me! I have walked but a short distance, and I am so tired that my feet are numb. Where is my son ?

Anisya. He is ploughing. Come in. We shall have the samovar ready, and you will ease your heart with some tea.

Matrena (sits down). I am dreadfully tired, my dear ones. You must be sure and give him the extreme unction. People say it is good for the soul.

Anisya. Yes, we shall send for him to-morrow.

Matrena. It will be better so. We have had a wedding, my dear.

Sponsor. What, a wedding in spring ?

Matrena. There is evidently good sense in the proverb : Night is too short for a poor man to marry. Seifn Matvy^evich has married Marina.

Anisya. So she has found her happiness !

Sponsor. He is a widower, so she has married him for the children.

Matrena. There are four of them. What decent girl would marry him ? So he has taken her. She is happy. We drank a glass, – you see it was not strong liquor, – because they poured it out for me.

Sponsor. I declare ! Has he any means ?

Matrena. So far they are getting on well.

Sponsor. That's so, who would want to marry a man with children ? Take, for example, our Mikhaylo. He is a fine man, motherkin –

A Peasant's Voice. Oh, Mavra, whither has the devil taken you ? Go and drive in the cow. (Neighbour exit.)

Scene VIII. Anisya and Matrena.

Matrena (while the neighbour is tearing, she speaks in an even voice). She has been married sinfully, my dear ; at least the silly woman will not be thinking about Nikita. (Suddenly changing her voice to a whisper.) She is gone! Well, did you give him the tea ?

Anisya. Don't mention it. I wish he would die without it. He is not dying anyway, and I have taken a sin upon my soul. Oh, my head ! Why did you give me those powders ?

Matrena. What about the powders ? My dear, those are sleeping powders, and why not give them ? There is no harm in them.

Anisya. I am not speaking of the sleeping powders, but of the other, the whitish powders.

Matrena. But those, my dear, are medicinal powders.

Anisya (sighing). I know; but it makes me tremble. He has worn me out.

Matrena. Well, how many times have you given it to him ?

Anisya. Twice.

Matrena. Did they have any effect ?

Anisya. I put my lips to the tea, – it is slightly bitter. He drank it with the tea, and said : " I loathe the tea, too." And I said: " Everything tastes bitter to an ill man." But it made me shudder, aunty.

Matrena. Don't think of it! It is not good to think of it.

AnIsya. I wish you had not given it to me, and had not tempted me to sin. It makes me shudder when I think of it. Why did you give them to me ?

Matrena. Don't say that, my dear! Christ be with you ! Don't put it on me ! Woman, it will not do to take it oil a guilty head and put it on an innocent one. When it comes to anything, I shall stand aside. I shan't know a thing: I will kiss the cross that I have not given any powders and that I have not seen any, and that I have heard of no powders. Woman, think for yourself! We were talking the other day about you and how you are suffering. Your stepdaughter is a fool, and your husband is rotten, – a real curse. What will one not do with such a life ?

Anisya. I sha'n't deny it. Such a life will only make me hang myself or kill him. What life is this ?

Matrena. That's it. There is no time to lose. You must find the money, and give him the tea to drink.

Anisya. Oh, my wretched head! I do not know myself what to do, and I feel so much afraid: I wish he would die by himself. I do not wish to take the sin upon me.

Matrena (angrily). Why does he not reveal his money ? Does he intend to take it with him, so that no one may get it ? Is it proper ? God forbend that such a lot of money should be lost for nothing. Is not this a sin ? What is he doing ? Is it not a shame to look at him ?

Anisya. I do not know. He has worn me out completely.

Matrena. Why don't you know ? The thing is clear enough. If you don't look out now, you will repent it all your life. He will give the money to his sister, and you will be left without any.

AnIsya. Oh, oh! He has sent for her, and I have to go and fetch her!

Matrena. Wait awhile! First have the samovdr ready. We will fill him with the tea, and then we will look him all over, – maybe we shall find the money.

Anisya. Oh, oh! I am afraid something might happen.

Matrena. What will happen ? What are you wasting your time for ? You are having your eyes all the time on the money, but it does not get into your hands. Go and do as I tell you 1

Anisya. So I will have the samovar made.

Matrena. Go, my dear, and do things so as not to have cause for regret later. That's it! (Anisya walks away ; Matrena calls after her.) By the way, don't tell Nikita about it. He is silly about such things ! God forbend that he should find out about the powders. God knows what he will do if he hears of it. He is compassionate : he

could not kill a chicken even. Don't tell him! He will not consider it rightly. (Stops in terror ; Peter appears on the threshold.)

Scene IX. The same and Peter (holding on to the wall, crawls out on the porch and calls in a weak voice).

Peter. Will you ever hear me ? Oh, oh ! Anisya, who is here ? (Falls down on the bench.)

Anisya (coming out from around the corner). What did you come out for? Why did you not stay where you were ?

Peter. Has the girl gone for Mdrfa ? 'Tis hard – Oh, if death would only come!

Anisya. She is busy: I sent her to the river. Give me a chance, and I will go there myself.

Peter. Send Anyutka. Where is she ? Oh, 'tis hard ! Oh, my death !

Anisya. I have sent for her.

Peter. Oh, where is she ?

Anisya. Where is she ? The paralysis take her !

Peter. Oh, I have no strength. It burns me within. I feel as though they were turning an auger within me. Why did you abandon me like a dog ? There is nobody to give me a drink. Oh, send Anyutka to me!

Anisya. Here she is. Anyutka, go to father!

Scene

The same and Anyutka (running in. Anisya walks around the corner).

Peter. Go, oh, to Aunt Marfa! Tell her, father wants her to come: he needs her.

Anyutka. Well ?

Peter. Wait. Tell her I need her at once. Tell her I am dying. Oh, oh !

Anyutka. I will take my kerchief and will go there at once. (Exit running.)

Scene XL Peter, Anisya, and Matr dna.

Matrena (winking). Well, woman, remember your business ! Go into the hut and hunt everywhere ! Hunt, as a dog hunts for fleas! Turn everything upside down, and I will go through him here at once.

Anisya (to Matrena). I have more courage when you are around.
(Walks up to the porch. To Peter.) Don't you want the samovar ?
Aunt MatnSna has come to see her son, – so you drink tea with her.

Peter. All right, have it made! (Anisya goes into the vestibule.)

Scene XII. Peter and Matrena (walking over to the porch).

Peter. Good day!

Matrena. Good day, benefactor! Good day, my dear!

You are evidently sick. My old man is very sorry for you. He told me to go and find out how you were. He sent his regards. (Boivs again.)

Peter. I am dying.

Matrena. As I look at you, Ignatykh, I see that suffering is not abroad in the woods, but keeping close to people. You are thin, my dear, very thin, as I see. Sickness does not make one look better, that is evident.

Peter. My death has come.

Matrena. Well, Peter Ignatykh, that is God's will. You have confessed, and you will receive the extreme unction, if God grants it. You have a clever wife, thank God, and you will be buried in honour, and mass will be said for you. And my son will in the meantime look after the house as much as he can.

Peter. There is no one to whom I can give an order. The woman is not reliable, and busies herself with foolish things. I know all– I know– The girl is silly and young. I have fixed all this house, but there is no one to take care of it. It is a pity. (Groans.)

MATRENA. If there is anything about money matters, you can order others –

Peter (to Anisya in the vestibule). Has Anyutka gone ?

MatrSna (aside). I declare, he has not forgotten it.

Anisya (in the vestibule). She has gone long ago. Go into the house ! I will take you in.

Peter. Let me sit here for the last time! The air is close within. It is hard for me – Oh, I am all burning up inside – If death would only come !

Matrena. If God does not take away the soul, it will not fly away by itself. God has power over life and death, Peter Ignatykh. You can't foresee death. There are cases when a man gets up again. There was once a man in our village, who was almost dead –

Peter. No. I feel that I am going to die to-day. (Leans back and closes his eyes.)

Scene XIII. The same and Anisya.

AnIsya (enter). Well, will you go in, or not ? I am tired waiting for you. Peter, oh, Peter'

Matron A (walks away and beckons with her finger to Anisya). Well ?

AnIsya (walks down from the porch, to Matrena). Nothing.

Matrena. Have you looked everywhere ? Under the floor ?

Anisya. Nothing there, either. Maybe in the loft. He was climbing there yesterday.

Matrena. Look for it, look for it more carefully than ever, as though licking it clean with your tongue. I see he will die to-day anyway: his nails are blue, and his face is ashen gray. Is the samovar ready ?

AnIsya. It will boil in a minute.

Scene XIV. The same and Nikita (coming from the other side. If possible he rides on a horse to the gate. He does not see Peter).

Nikita (to his mother). Good day, mother! Are you all well at home ?

Matr&na. Thank God we are alive and have something to eat.

Nikita. Well, how is the master ?

Matrena. Softly, – he is sitting there. (Points to the porch.)

Nikita. Well, let him sit! What do I care ?

Peter (opening his eyes). Nikita, oh, Nikita, come here !

(Nikita walks over to him. Anisya whispers to Matrena.) Peter. Why did you come back so soon ?

Nikita. I have done the ploughing.

Peter. Have you ploughed up the strip back of the bridge ?

Nikita. It is too far to go there.

Peter. Too far ? It is farther from the house. You will have to go there especially, – so you might have done it at once. (Anisya, standing a distance off, is listening.)

Matrena (coming up). Oh, son, why don't you try to do better for

your master? Your master is ill, and is depending on you; you ought to exert yourself for him as for a father. Why don't you serve him as I told you to ?

Peter. So you had better – oh! – dig up the potatoes, and the women – oh! – will pick them over.

Anisya (aside). So he wants me to go, too. He wants to send us all away, because he has the money with him. He wants to hide it somewhere.

Peter. Because – oh ! – it will soon be time to set them out, and they will be rotten. Oh, I have no more strength. (Pises.)

Matrena (runs up on the porch and supports Peter). Shall I take you to the house ?

Peter. Yes. (Stops.) Nikita!

Nikita (angrily). What else is it ?

Peter. I won't see you again – I shall die to-day – Forgive me, for Christ's sake, forgive me if I have sinned before you – I have sinned in deeds and words – Yes, I have. Forgive me.

Nikita. There is nothing to forgive. I am sinful myself.

Matrena. O son, show more feeling!

Peter. Forgive me, for Christ's sake– (IPeeps.)

Nikita (snuffing). God will forgive you, Uncle Peter. I have not been offended by you. I have not been wronged by you. You forgive me, for I may be more sinful than you. (Weeps. Peter goes away moaning. Matrena supports him.)

Scene XV. Nikita and Anisya.

Anisya. Oh, my wretched head • There is something behind his words. (Walks over to Nikita.) You said that the money was under the floor, but I did not find it there.

Nikita (weeping, does not answer). I have never been wronged by him. See what I have done to him '

Anisya. Stop that. Where is the money ?

Nikita (angrily). Who knows ? Look for it yourself!

Anisya. You are dreadfully compassionate.

Nikita. I am sorry for him. I am so sorry. How he wept! Oh !

Anisya. I declare, you are soft-hearted! A good person you have

found to pity! He has been scolding you and even now he ordered me to drive you away from the farm. You had better pity me.

Nikita. What am I to pity you for ?

Anisya. He will hide the money, and then die.

Nikita. No, he won't.

Anisya. O Nikita! He has sent for his sister, – he wants to give it to her. It will be our misfortune. How shall we live if he gives the money away ? They will send me away from the farm. He ought to help me in this. Did you not tell me that he climbed into the loft yesterday ?

Nikita. I saw him coming out of it; but I do not know where he put the money.

Anisya. Oh, my head! I will go and look there. (Nikita walks away.)

Scene XVI. The same and Matrena (comes out of the hut. Walks down the steps to Anisya and Nikita, in a u'hispcr).

Matrena. Don't go anywhere! He has the money on his person. He has it on his baptismal cross.

Anisya. Oh, my wretched head !

Matrena. If you miss the opportunity now, you might as well look for it under the eagle's right wing. His sister will come, and then good-bye.

Anisya. If she comes, he will give it to her. What am I to do ? Oh, my head !

MATRENA. What are you to do ? Look here: the samovar is boiling now, so you go and fix the tea and pour in (in a whisper) the whole lot of it. He will drink a cup, and then you take it away. Don't be afraid! He will not tell.

Anisya. It makes me tremble!

Matrena. Don't discuss now. Do it right away, while I am on the lookout for his sister. Don't make a blunder! Take the money and bring it here, and Nikita will hide it!

Anisya. Oh, my head I How am I to begin it ?

Matrena. I tell you not to discuss now. Do as I tell you, Nikita!

Nikita. What ?

Matrena. You stay here! Sit down on the mound for awhile, – you will be needed.

Nikita (waving his hand). What these women will think out! They will positively ruin me! Go to! I will go and dig out the potatoes.

Matrena (takes his hand). I tell you to stay !

Scene XVII. The same and Anyutka (enter).

AnIsya. Well ?

Anyutka. She was in her daughter's garden. She will be here at once.

Anisya. What shall we do if she comes ?

MATRENA (to Anisya). You will have plenty of time. Do as I tell you !

Anisya. I do not know what. I know nothing,— everything is mixed in my head. Anyutka! Go, darling, to the calves! They may have run away. Oh, I won't have the courage.

Matrena. Go ! The samovar is running over by this time.

AnIsya. Oh, my wretched head ! (Exit.)

Scene XVIII. Matrdna and Nikita.

Matrena (goes up to her son). Yes, my son! (Sits down on the mound, near him.) Your affair, too, has to be considered. It must not be left out.

Nikita. What affair ?

Matrena. Namely, how you are to get on in the world.

Nikita. How to get on in the world ? I shall live just as other people do.

Matrena. The old man is going to die to-day.

Nikita. If he does, the kingdom of heaven be his. What is that to me ?

Matrena (looking all the time at the porch while speaking). Oh, my son! A living person thinks of living tilings. My dear, it takes much thinking here. I have been in all kinds of places, attending to your affairs; I have worn out my legs running errands for you. Don't forget me for it!

Nikita. What is it you attended to ?

Matrena. To your affair, to your fate. If I did not attend to it in time, nothing would come of it. You know Ivan Mosdich ? I go to see him now and then. The other day I attended to some business of his;

I stayed there awhile and chatted with him. " Explain to me, Ivan Mosdich," says I, " a certain matter. For example," says I, " there is a widower, and he has taken unto himself a second wife, and, let us say, he has children by both wives. Suppose now," says I, " the man dies; can another man," says I, " step in and marry the widow ? Can he," says I, " marry off the daughters and himself remain on the farm ? " " He can," says he, " only," says he, " it will take much trouble and money," says he; " it can be done, – but without money," says he, "there is no use trying."

Nikita (laughing). Of course, if you give them money. Everybody wants money.

Matrena. Well, my dear. I told him the whole affair. " In the first place," says he, " your son must inscribe himself in that village; for this you need money to treat the old men to drinks. Then they will put down their signatures. Everything," says he, " has to be done cautiously." Look here ! (Takes out a paper from her kerchief.) He has written up a paper. Read it, for you know how to read. (Nikita reads it.)

Nikita. This paper is an official document. There is no great wisdom in it.

MATRENA. Listen to what Ivan Mos&ch has told me. "Above everything else," says he, "let him not miss the money. If she does not get the money," says he, " they will not let her get a son-in-law. Money," says he, " is the chief thing." So look out! My son, the business will soon begin.

Nikita. What do I care ? It is her money, so let her trouble herself about it.

MATRENA. My son, you do not judge rightly. Can a woman consider rightly ? Suppose even she takes the money, how is she to dispose of it? That is not a woman's business, but a man's. You can hide it, and all such things. You have more sense in matters like this.

Nikita. The reasoning of you women is not correct!

Matrena. Why not correct ? You only take the money. Then the woman will be in your hands. If, by any chance, she should get saucy, or something of that kind, you can pull in the reins.

Nikita. Go to ! I will go away.

Scene XIX. Nikita, Matrena, and Anisya {pale. Running toward Matrena from the hut around the corner}.

Anisya. It was on his person. Here it is. (Shows it under her apron.)

Matrena. Give it to Nikita! He will hide it. Nikita, take it and put it away somewhere!

Nikita. All right! Let me have it!

Anisya. Oh, my head! I will put it away myself! (Walks over toward the gate.)

Matrena (seizing her hand). Where are you going ? They will find it out, and his sister is coming. Give it to him: he knows what to do with it. Senseless woman!

Anisya (stops in indecision). Oh, my head !

Nikita. Well, let me have it! I will put it away safely.

Anisya. Where will you put it ?

Nikita. Are you afraid ? (Laughs.)

Scene XX. The same and Akulina (coming with the washing).

Anisya. Oh, my wretched head! (Gives up the money.) Nikita, look out!

Nikita. What are you afraid of ? I will put it away so that I can't find it myself. (Exit.)

Scene XXL Matrena, Anisya, and Akulina.

Anisya (standing in fright). Oh, oh, when he – Matrena. Well, is he dead ?

Anisya. Yes, I think he is. He did not stir when I took it from him.

Matrena. Go into the hut! Akulina is coming.

Anisya. I have sinned, and he with the money –

Matrena. That will do. Go into the house ! Marfa is coming.

Anisya. I have trusted him. What will happen now ? (Exit.)

Scene XXII. Marfa, Akulina, and Matrena.

Marfa (coming from one side, and Akulina from the other. To Akulina). I should have come long ago, but I was at my daughter's. Well, how is the old man ? Is he going to die ?

Akulina (taking off the washing). I don't know. I was at the river.

Marfa (pointing to Matrena). Who is that ?

Matrena. I am from Zuev. I am Nikita's mother, from Zuev, my friend. Good day! Your brother has been asking for you. He came out himself. " Send for my sister," says he, " because," says he – Oh! I am

afraid he may be dead by this time.

Scene XXIII. The same and Anisya (running out of the house with a cry. Takes hold of a post and moans).

Anisya. Oh, oh! To whom has he left me ? Oh, oh, oh, to wlyjm has he abandoned me ? Oh, oh, oh, a wretched widow – for ever and ever – he has closed his clear eyes –

Scene XXIV. The same and friend. (The friend and Matrena take her under her arms. Akulina and Marfa go into the house. People gathering.)

A Voice from the throng. Call for old women to fix things.

Matrena (rolling up her sleeves). Is there any water in the iron pot ? I think the samovar has not been emptied yet. I will work myself.

Curtain.

DRAMATIS

Akim.

Nikita.

AkulIna.

Anisya.

PERSONS OF ACT III.

Anyutka.

Mitrich, an old hired hand, an ex-soldier.

AnIsya's Sponsor.

ACT III.

Peter's hut. Winter.

A7ine months have passed since the Second Act. Anisya, in every-day attire, working at the loom. Anyutka on the oven. Mitrich, the hired hand.

Scene I.

Mitrich (walks in slowly. Takes off his coat). 0 Lord, be merciful!

Has the master returned ?

Anisya. What ?

Mitrich. Has Nikita come back from town ?

Anisya. No.

Mitrich. He is evidently on a spree. 0 Lord!

Anisya. Have you done your work on the threshing-floor ?

Mitrich. Of course. I have fixed everything as is proper, and have covered it with straw. I don't like to do things by halves. 0 Lord! Merciful St. Nicholas! (Picking his callosities.) It is time for him to be back.

Anisya. Why should he be in a hurry ? He has money, so, I suppose, he is celebrating with a girl –

Mitrich. He has money, – then why not celebrate? What did Akulina go to town for ?

Anisya. You ask her why the unclean one has taken her there.

Mitrich. Why to town ? In town there is much of everything if you only have the means. 0 Lord !

Anyutka. I have heard it myself. " I will buy you a shawl," says he, " I will," truly, says he. " You shall pick it out yourself," says he. And she dressed herself up: she put on the plush sleeveless coat and the French kerchief.

Anisya. It is true: a girl's chastity goes as far as the threshold. Let her step across it, and she forgets everything. Shameless one!

Mitrich. Well, what is there to be ashamed of ? Celebrate as long as there is any money ! 0 Lord ! Is it too early for supper ? (Anisya keeps silent.) In the meantime I will warm myself. (Climbs on the oven.) 0 Lord ! Most Holy Mother of God ! St. Nicholas!

Scene II. The same and Sponsor.

Sponsor (enter). Your man has not come back yet ?

Anisya. No.

Sponsor. It is time he should have. I wonder whether he has not gone to our inn. Sister Ffkla told me that a number of sleighs from town were standing there.

Anisya. Anyutka, 0 Anyutka

Anyutka. What ?

Anisya. Run down, Anyutka, to the inn, and see whether he is not there, and drunk.

AnyIjtka (jumping down from the oven, and putting on her coat).
Right away !

Sponsor. Has he taken Akulina with him ?

Anisya. For what else would he go there ? She is the cause of it all. He said that he had to go to the bank to get some money, but it is only she who is taking him to town.

Sponsor (shaking her head). What is the use of talking about it ?
(Silence.)

Anyutka (at the door). If he is there, what shall I say to him ?

Anisya. Just find out whether he is there.

Anyutka. All right, I'll go quick. (Exit.)

Scene III. Anisya, Mftrich, and Sponsor. (Long silence.)

Mitricii (bellowing). 0 Lord ! Holy St. Nicholas !

Sponsor (shuddering). Oh, how he has frightened me ! Who is that ?

Anisya. Mftrich, the hired hand.

Sponsor. Oh, he has given me a fright ! I had forgotten about him. I have heard that somebody has been asking for Akulina's hand.

Anisya (coming out from behind the loom and seating herself at the table). The Dyddlov people hinted about it; but evidently they heard something. They hinted about it, and then they kept silent, - and that was the end of it. Who should want her ?

Sponsor. What about the Lizunovs from Zuev ?

Anisya. They made inquiries, but the inquiries did not come to anything. He did not even receive them.

Sponsor. You ought to get her married.

Anisya. I should say I ought to. I should like to get her away from the farm, but I do not know how to do it. He does not want to let her go, nor does she want to go herself. You see, he has not yet had enough of his beauty.

Sponsor. Oh, what sins ! What he is up to ! And he is her stepfather.

Anisya. Oh, friend ! They have cheated and deceived me so cleverly !

In my foolishness I did not notice anything and did not think about it, and so I married him. I did not suspect a thing, but they had an understanding long before.

Sponsor. Oh, oh, what an affair!

Anisya. The farther it went, the more they began to hide it from me. Ah, friend, I am tired, I am tired of my life. It would be different if I did not love him!

Sponsor. Yes, it is bad.

Anisya. It pains me, friend, to be wronged by him in such a manner. Oh, it pains me!

Sponsor. They say that he has become rough in his ways.

Anisya. Yes, that is so. Formerly he used to be peaceful when he drank; he used to strike me before, but he loved me; now, when he fills himself up with drink, he rushes against me and wants to trample upon me. The other day he stuck his hands into my braids, and I had the hardest time to get away from him. And the girl is worse than a snake. I wonder how the earth can bring forth such evil ones!

Sponsor. Oh, oh, oh, friend! You look pretty well worn out! It is hard to bear it all. You picked him up when he was a beggar, and this is the way he treats you. Shall you not try to stop him?

Anisya. Oh, my dear friend! What shall I do with my heart? My former husband was very severe, but I twisted him as I wanted; I cannot do so with this one. The moment I see him my heart softens. I have no courage against him: I walk around before him like a wet chicken.

Sponsor. Oh, oh, friend! You must be bewitched. They say Matr^{na} does such things. It must be she who has done it.

Anisya. I think so myself, my friend. I sometimes feel so angry, I should like to tear him to pieces; but the moment I see him my heart does not allow me to raise my hands against him.

Sponsor. There is no doubt, you are bewitched. It does not take long to spoil a person by witchcraft. It makes me feel badly to see what has become of you.

Anisya. My legs are as thin as sticks. But look at silly Akulina! She is a slattern and a good-for-nothing, but just look at her! Where did it all come from? He has dressed her up. She has spread out and is as bloated as a bladder on the water. Although she is silly, she has got it into her head to say: "I," says she, "am the mistress here. The house is mine. Father wanted me to marry him." And oh, how mean she is! God save us from her! When she gets angry she tears the straw down from the roof.

Sponsor. Oh, oh, friend, what a life you lead! And people envy you ! They say you are rich ; but evidently, my dear, tears flow also over gold.

Anisya. What is there to envy ? The wealth will all pass away like dust. He squanders the money terribly.

Sponsor. But how is it, my friend, you have let it happen ? The money is yours.

Anisya. If you only knew it all! I made a little blunder.

Sponsor. If I were in your place, my friend, I should go to some great officer. The money is yours. How can he squander it ? There are no such laws.

Anisya. They pay no attention to this nowadays.

Sponsor. Oh, friend, you look pretty weak !

Anisya. Yes, my dear, I am weak, very weak. He has ruined me. I do not know what to do. Oh, oh, my wretched head!

Sponsor. Somebody is coming, I think. {Listens. The door opens. Enter Akim.)

Scene IV. The same and Akim.

Akim (crosses himself. Shakes off the mud from his shoes and takes off his wraps). Peace be upon this house ! How are you ? Good day, aunty.

Anisya. Good day, father ! Are you from the farm ?

Akim. I thought, so to speak, I would come down to see my son, so to speak. I started late, after dinner, so to speak; as I walked, it was snowing, and it was hard to walk, so to speak, and so I am late. Is my son at home ? Is he at home ?

Anisya. No. He is in town.

Akim {sits down on the bench). I have some business, so to speak, some business with him. I told him the other day, so to speak, about my need, so to speak; the horse has died, so to speak. I must get me another horse, so to speak, any kind of a horse, so to speak. So I have come, so to speak.

Anisya. Nikita told me about it. You will talk with him when he comes home. (Walks toward the oven.) You eat supper, and by that time he will be here. Mitrich, oh, Mitrich, come to supper!

Mitrich. 0 Lord, merciful St. Nicholas!

Anisya. Come to supper !

Sponsor. I will go now. Good-bye! {Exit.}

Scene V. Akim, Anisya, and Mitrich.

Mitrich {climbing down}. I do not know how I came to fall asleep. Ø Lord, St. Nicholas! Good evening, Uncle Akim!

Akim. Oh, Mitrich! What are you doing here, so to speak ? –

Mitrich. I am working for Nikita, your son.

Akim. I say! So you are working for my son, so to speak ? I say!

Mitrich. I was staying with a merchant in town, but I took to drinking there; so I came back to the village. I have no place to go to, so I hired out at your son's. (Yawning.) Ø Lord !

Akim. Well, so to speak, how is Nikita doing, so to speak ? He must be doing well, so to speak, to be able, so to speak, to hire a man.

Mitrich. He has money, then why should he –

Akim. That is all in vain, so to speak, all in vain. In vain, I say. Looseness, so to speak.

Anisya. Yes, he is spoilt, dreadfully spoilt.

Akim. That's it! I was thinking, so to speak, how to do it better, but he is doing it worse, so to speak. A man gets spoilt by wealth, so to speak, – he does.

Mitrich. Even a dog maddens from fat, – then why should a man not spoil from fat ? You ought to have seen me going on a spree when I had money ! I drank for three weeks without stopping. I gave my last trousers for drinks. When I did not have anything left I stopped. Now I have sworn off. Bother!

Akim. And your old woman, so to speak, where is she ?

Mitrich. The old woman, my friend, is well fixed. She sits now in one inn in town, now in another. She looks fine: one eye is torn out, the other is black, and her mouth is all awry. She is never sober, – pea-pie choke her!

Akim. Oh, oh ! How is that ?

Mitrich. Where else is there a place for a soldier's wife ? This is her proper occupation. (Silence.)

Akim (to Anisya). Has Nikita taken anything to town ? Has he, so to speak, taken anything to sell ?

Anisya (setting the table and passing the food). He went with nothing. He went to fetch some money from the bank.

Akim (eating). What do you want to do with the money ? Do you want to use it for something, so to speak ?

Anisya. No, we do not touch it. Only twenty or thirty roubles; we had to take them out.

Akim. Had to take them ? Why should you take the money, so to speak ? Hu take it to-day, and you take it to-morrow, so to speak, and then you use it all up, so to speak.

Anisya. This is above the capital. The money is not touched.

Akim. Not touched ? How not touched ? You take it, and it is, so to speak, not touched? You pour flour, so to speak, into a box, so to speak, or into the granary, and take the flour out again, – well, will it remain untouched, so to speak ? There is something wrong, they are cheating you, so to speak. You had better find out, or they will cheat you. How can it be untouched ? Hu are taking away, so to speak, – and it is not touched!

Anisya. I don't know about that. Ivan Mos&ch advised us to do it. " Put the money into the bank," says he, " then the money will be safe, and you will get interest on it."

Mitrich (through eating). That is correct. I used to live at the house of a merchant: he did it the same way. All one has to do is to put the money in, and then lie on the oven and receive money.

Akim. You are saying some wonderful things, so to speak. How is one to receive it, so to speak ? You receive it, so to speak, and from whom do they get the money, so to speak ?

Anisya. The bank gives us the money.

Mitrich. What is that? A woman can't make it out. Look here! I will explain it to you. Listen ! Let us suppose, for example, you have money, and I, for example, have my land lying fallow; it is spring, and I have no seed; or I have to pay the taxes. So I come to you, and say : " Akim, give me ten roubles ! I will have the harvest in by St. Mary's Intercession and then I will give it back to you, with a tithe for the accommodation." You, for example, see that I can be flayed, having a horse or a cow, so you say: "Give me two or three roubles for the accommodation." The noose is around my neck, and I cannot get along without it. " Very well," says I, " I will take the ten roubles." In the fall I sell some things, and I bring you the money, and you skin me in addition for three roubles.

Akim. But this is, so to speak, a wrong done to a peasant. If one forgets God, so to speak, it is not good.

Mitrich. Wait a minute! She will soon strike the same thing. So

remember what you have done: you have fleeced me, so to speak, and Anisya, for example, has some money which is lying idle. She has no place to put it in and, being a woman, does not know what to do with it. So she comes to you: " Can't I," says she, " make some use of my money ?" " Yes, you can," you say. And so you wait. Next summer I come to you once more. " Give me another ten roubles," says I, " and I will pay you for the accommodation." So you watch me to see whether my hide has not been turned yet, whether I can be flayed again, and if I can, you give me Anisya's money. But if I have not a blessed thing, and nothing to eat, you make your calculations, seeing that I cannot be skinned, and you say: " God be with you, my brother!" and you look out for another man to whom to give Anisya's money, and whom you can flay. Now this is called a bank. So it keeps going around. It is a very clever thing, my friend.

Akim (excitedly). What is this ? This is a nastiness, so to speak. If a peasant, so to speak, were to do it, the peasants would regard it as a sin, so to speak. This is not according to the Law, not according to the Law, so to speak. It is bad. How can the learned men, so to speak –

Mitrich. This, my friend, is their favourite occupation. You consider this: If there is one who is not very clever, or a woman, who has money and does not know what to do with it, they take it to a bank, and the bank snatches it up, – pea-pie choke them, – and skins the people with that money. It's a clever thing.

Akim (sighing). As I look at it, so to speak, there is trouble without money, so to speak, and with money the trouble is double, so to speak. God has commanded to work. But you put the money in the bank, so to speak, and lie down to sleep, and the money will feed you, so to speak, while you are lying. This is bad, – not according to the Law, so to speak.

Mitrich. Not according to the Law ? The Law does not trouble people nowadays, my friend. All they think about is how to clean out a fellow. That's what!

Akim (sighing). The time is coming near, so to speak. I have seen water-closets, so to speak, in the city. What have they come to? They are nice and clean, so to speak, like an inn. What does it all lead to, what does it lead to ? Oh, they have forgotten God! They have forgotten Him, so to speak. We have forgotten God, yes, we have forgotten Him. Thank you, my dear, I have had enough, – I am satisfied. (Comes out from behind the table. Mitrich climbs upon the oven.)

Anisya (taking away the dishes, and eating). Father might talk to him, but I am ashamed to mention it to him.

Akim. What ?

Anisya. Nothing, I was just speaking to myself.

Scene VI. The same and Anyutka (enter).

Akim. Ah, clever girl! Still flying around ? You are frozen, I suppose.

Anyutka. I am dreadfully frozen. Good evening, grandfather!

Anisya. Well ? Is he there ?

Anyutka. No. Andrian, who has come back from town, says that he is still in town, in an inn. Father, he says, is dead drunk.

AnIsya. Do you want to eat ? Here, take it!

Anyutka (joes to the oven). Oh, it is so cold! My hands are numb. (Akim takes off his coat and shoes. Anisya washes the dishes.)

Anisya. Father!

Akim. What do you wish ?

Anisya. Is Marina living well ?

Akim. Not bad. She is getting along. She is a clever woman, so to speak, and peaceable, and is getting on well, so to speak. She is a good worker, so to speak, and tries hard, and, so to speak, is obedient. She is all right, so to speak.

Anisya. They say that a relative of Marina's husband wanted to marry our Akulina. Haven't you heard anything about it ?

Akim. The Mironovs ? The women were saying something about it. I did not pay any attention to it, so to speak. I do not know for sure, so to speak. The women were saying something. But I do not remember, I do not remember it, so to speak. Well, the Mironovs are good peasants, so to speak.

Anisya. I wish so much I could get her married at once.

Akim. What is it ?

Anyutka (listening). They have come.

Anisya. Keep out of their way ! (Continues to wash the spoons, without turning her head.)

Scene VII. The same and Nikita.

Nikita. Anisya, my wife, who has come? (Anisya looks around and, turning au'ay, keeps silent.)

Nikita (angrily). Who has come? Have you for- v gotten ?

Anisya. Stop blustering! Go'

Nikita (more angrily still). Who has come?

Anisya (walks over to him and takes hold of his hand). Well, my husband has come. Go into the room.

Nikita (holding back). That's it, your husband. What is his name ? Say it correctly !

Anisya. Well, Nikita.

Nikita. That's it! You boor, call me by my patronymic !

Anisya. Akfmych. Well ?

Nikita (still at the door). That's it. No, you tell my family name!

Anisya (laughing, and pulling him by his hand). Chilikin. How angry you look !

Nikita. That's it. (Holding on to the doorpost). No, you tell me what foot Chilikin puts first as he steps into the room.

Anisya. That will do! The room is getting cold.

Nikita. Tell me what foot. You must tell me by all means.

Anisya (aside). He'll tire me out. Well, the left. Come now.

Nikita. That's it.

Anisya. See who is in the room !

Nikita. My father ? Well, I am not ashamed of my father. I can show the proper respect to my father. Good evening, father ! (Bows to him and gives him his hand.) My respects to you !

Akim (not answering him). The liquor, the liquor, so to speak, is doing it. It is bad.

Nikita. The liquor? Because I have drunk some? I am quite guilty of this. I have taken a drink with a friend.

Anisya. Go and lie down !

Nikita. Wife, where am I standing? Speak!

Anisya. Now, stop it! Go and lie down !

Nikita. I will have a samovar with father. Fix the samovar! Akulina, come in !

Scene VIII. The same and Akulina.

Akulina (dressed up. Walks with her purchases up to Nikita). How you scatter things! Where is the harness ?

Nikita. The harness ? The harness is there. Oh, Mitrich, where are you ? Are you asleep ? Go and put the horse up!

Akim (not seeing Akulina and looking at his son). What are you doing ? The old man is, so to speak, worn out: he has been threshing, and you are all bloated, so to speak. " Put the horse up!" Pshaw, how bad that is!

Mitrich (climbs down from the oven and puts on his felt boots). 0 merciful Lord! Is the horse in the yard ? I suppose you have worn it out! Thunder, he is sopped in liquor, – through and through. 0 Lord! St. Nicholas ! (Puts on the fur coat and exit.)

Nikita (sitting down). Forgive me, father! I have drunk some, that is so; but what is to be done ? A chicken drinks, too. Am I not right? So forgive me! As to Mitrich, – he will not be offended, he will put the horse up.

Anisya. Do you really want the samovdr ?

Nikita. Make it! Father has come, and I want to drink tea with him and talk. (To Akulina.) Have you taken out all the purchases ?

Akulina. The purchases? I took out what belongs to me; the rest are in the sleigh. Take this; it does not belong to me. (Throws a roll on the table, and puts the purchases into a coffer. Anyutka watches Akulina putting away things. Akim does not look at his son, and puts away his leg-rags and the bast shoes on the oven.)

Anisya (exit with the samovdr). The coffer is full, but he has bought more things.

Scene IX. Akim, Akulina, Anyutka, and Nikita.

Nikita (tries to look sober). Father, don't be angry with me! You think that I am drunk. I can do everything ; I can drink without losing my senses. I can talk with you, father, as though nothing had happened. I remember everything. You told me about the money: you said that the horse has died, – I remember it all. That can be done. It is all in our hands. If an immense sum were asked I would have to put it off for some time, but this I can do. Here it is.

Akim (still busy with his rags). Oh, my son, a spring path is, so to speak, not a road –

Nikita. What do you mean by it ? You can't talk well with a drunken man. Never mind ! We will have some tea together. I can do everything, positively I can.

Akim (shaking his head). Oh, oh, oh !

Nikita. Here is the money. (Puts his hand into his pocket, gets the pocketbook, flourishes the money and pulls out a ten-rouble bill.) Take this for your horse! Take it for the horse! I cannot forget a father. I will positively not abandon you. Here, take it! I do not begrudge you the money. (Comes up and pushes the money into Akim's hand, but Akim does not want to take it.) Take it, I say ! I give it with pleasure.

Akim. I cannot take it, so to speak. I cannot speak with you, so to speak, because there is no decency about you, so to speak.

Nikita. I will not let you go. Take it! (Pushes the money into Akim's hand.)

Scene X. The same and Anisya.

Anisya (enters and stops). You had better take it, for he will give you no rest.

Akim (takes it, shaking his head). Oh, the liquor! You are not a man, so to speak –

Nikita. This is better. If you give it back to me it will be well; if not, God be with you! That's my way ! (Seeing Akulina.) Akulina, show your presents !

A K u l i n a. What?

Nikita. Show your presents!

Akulina. The presents ? What is the use of showing them ? I have put them away.

Nikita. Get them out, I say! Anyutka likes to see them. Show them, I say, to Anyutka! Open up the shawl! Give it to me !

Akim. Oh, it makes me feel bad to look at him. (Climbing on the oven.)

Akulina (taking out her things and glutting them on the table). Here they are. What is there to look at ?

Anyutka. Oh, how nice they are ! This is not worse than Stepanidina's.

Akulina. Stepanidina's ? Stepanidina's does not come up to this, (becoming more animated and opening the shawl.) Look at it! See what quality it is : it is of French make.

Anyutka. And what pretty chintz! Mashutka has one like it, only hers is lighter, on an azure field. This one is so nice !

Nikita. That's it. (.Anisya goes angrily into the storeroom and returns with the samovar pipe and tablecloth, and walks over to the

table.)

Anisya. How you have scattered things here !

Nikita. Look here !

Anisya. What am I to look at ? I have seen such things before. Take them away ! (Brushes the shawl down on the floor.)

Akulina. Don't throw about things like that! Throw your own things ! (Picks it up.)

Nikita. Anisya, look out!

Anisya. What am I to look out for ?

Nikita. You think I have forgotten you. Look here! (Shows the roll and sits down upon it.) It is a present for you. Only you have to earn it. Woman, where am I sitting ?

Anisya. Stop your nonsense ! I am not afraid of you. On whose money are you celebrating, and buying presents for your hussy ? On mine.

Akulina. Yes, yours! You wanted to steal it, but you did not succeed. Get away! (Wants to pass by and pushes her.)

Anisya. Don't push that way - I will give you a push!

Akulina. You will ? Try- it! (Pushes against her.)

Nikita. Women, women, stop! (Stands between them.)

Akulina. She started it. She had better keep quiet. You think we do not know all about you ?

Anisya. What do you know ? Say, say what you know !

Akulina. I know something about you.

Anisya. You are a slut ! You are living with a married man.

Akulina. And you have killed your husband!

Anisya (rushes at Akulina). You lie !

Nikita (holding her back). Anisya, have you forgotten ?

AnTsyA. You can't frighten me. I am not afraid of you.

Nikita. Get out of here! (Turns her away and pushes her out.)

Anisya. "Where shall I go? I won't go away from my house.

Nikita. Get out, I say ! And don't you dare put your foot in again '

AnIsya. I will not go. (Nikita pushes her; Anisya weeps and cries, holding on to the door.) What? You want to kick me out of my own house ? What are you doing, you rascal ? Do you think there is no law against you ? Just wait!

Nikita. Well, well!

Anisya. I will go to the elder, to the officer.

Nikita. Get out, I say. (Pushes her out.)

Anisya (behind the door). I will hang myself!

Scene XI. Nikita, Akulina, Anyutka, and Akim.

Nikita. That's all right.

Anyutka. Oh, oh, oh! Mother dear, mother dear.

(JVecping.)

Nikita. I am not much afraid of her. What are you crying about ? Never mind, she will come back. Go and look after the samovar !
(.Anyutka exit.)

Scene XII. Nikita, Akim, and Akulina.

Akulina (picking up her purchases and putting them away). How that accursed one has been carrying on ! Just wait! I will cut up your sleeveless coat. Upon my word, I will.

Nikita. I have driven her away,— what more do you want ?

Akulina. She has soiled my new shawl. Dog! If she had not gone I would have scratched out her eyes.

Nikita. Stop your noise! What are you making a noise about ? You know I do not love her !

Akulina. Love her ? A fine person to love, — that woman with the big snout. If you had let her go then, nothing would have happened. You ought to have sent her to the devil. The house is mine, anyway, and so is the money. She says she is the mistress. Mistress! What kind of a mistress is she to her husband ? She is a miner of souls, that's what she is. She will do the same to you !

Nikita. There is no stopping up a woman's mouth! You don't know yourself what you are yelling about.

Akulina. Yes, I do. I will not live with her. I will drive her away. She cannot stay with me. And she calls herself mistress. She is not a mistress, but a jailbird.

Nikita. That will do. What have you to do with her ? Don't look at her! Look at me ! I am the master. I do what I want. I do not love her any longer – I love you. I love whomever I please. I rule here. She will be locked up. This is where she is. (.Points under his feet.) Oh, I have no accordion!

The rolls are on the stove,

The mush is on the shelf,

And we will live,

And celebrate,

And death will come,

And we will die.

The rolls are on the stove, The mush is on the shelf.

Scene XIII. The same and Mitrich (enter. Takes off his wraps and climbs on the oven).

Mitrich. Evidently the women have been fighting again. 0 Lord, merciful St. Nicholas !

Akim (sitting on the edge of the oven. Takes the leg-rags and shoes, and puts them on). Creep past me to the corner.

Mitrich (creeping). They won't agree at all. 0 Lord !

Nikita. Get the syrup! We will drink the tea with it.

Scene XIV. The same and Anyutka.

Anyutka (enter, to Akulina). Sister! the samovar is boiling over.

Nikita. Where is mother ?

Any6tka. She is standing in the vestibule and weeping.

Nikita. Go and call her, and tell her to bring in the samovar! Akulina, let us have the dishes !

Akulina. The dishes? All right. (Taking up the dishes.)

Nikita (gets the syrup, pretzels, and herring). This is for myself; for the woman there in the vestibule, – the goods. And here is the money. Wait! (Takes the abacus.) I will figure it up at once. (Casts the account on the abacus.) The wheat flour eight dimes, the oil – Father, ten roubles. Father! Come to tea! (Silence. Akim is sitting on the oven and fixing the bast cords of his shoes.)

Scene XV. The same and Anisya.

Anisya (carrying in the samovar). Where shall I put it?

Nikita. Put it on the table! Well, have you been to the elder's ? That's it: talk, and be done with it! Stop being angry! Sit down and drink tea! (Fills a wineglass for her.) Here is a present for you. (Gives her the roll on which he had been sitting. Anisya takes it in silence, shaking her head.)

Akim (climbing down and putting on his fur coat. Goes up to the table and puts the money upon it). Take the money, – take it!

Nikita (not seeing the 'money). Where are you getting ready to go ?

Akim. I will go, I will go, so to speak, for Christ's sake forgive me! (Takes his cap and belt.)

Nikita. I declare! Where do you want to go in night-time ?

Akim. I cannot, so to speak, remain in your house. I cannot, so to speak, stay here. Forgive me!

Nikita. But why are you rushing away from the tea ?

Akim (girding himself). I will go away, because, so to speak, it is not good here; it is not good here, Nikita, so to speak. You are living badly, so to speak, Nikita, badly. I will go away.

Nikita. Stop talking! Sit down and drink tea

Anisya. Father, it will be a disgrace before people. What is it that has offended you ?

Akim. I have not been offended, so to speak, but I see that everything is making for ruin, so to speak, – yes, my son, for ruin, so to speak.

Nikita. What ruin ? Prove it!

Akim. To ruin, to ruin, you are going to ruin. I told you so last year.

Nikita. What of it if you told me ?

Akim. I told you about the orphan. You have wronged, so to speak, the orphan, Marina, – you have wronged her.

Nikita. What are you thinking about ? Of old yeast make not a new feast! That is a thing of the past –

Akim (excitedly). Past ? No, friend, it is not past. One sin holds on to another and pulls you along. Nikita, you are stuck in sins. You are stuck, I see, in sins. You are stuck fast, so to speak.

Nikita. Sit down and drink tea, and stop that talking!

Akim. I cannot, so to speak, drink tea with you. Because your evil deeds, so to speak, make me feel bad. I cannot, so to speak, drink with you.

Nikita. You are repeating one and the same story. Go to the table!

Akim. You are sitting in your wealth, so to speak, as though in a snare, in a snare, so to speak. Oh, Nikita, one needs a soul.

Nikita. What right have you to talk to me that way in my own house ? What do you want of me, anyway ?

Ain I a little boy that will allow himself to be pulled by his hair ? They don't do these things nowadays.

Akim. That is so: I have heard that nowadays they pull fathers' beards, so to speak, – but this leads only to ruin, to ruin, so to speak.

Nikita (angrily). We are getting along without your help. But you have come to ask aid of me.

Akim. Money ? There is your money. I will go and beg, so to speak, but I will not, so to speak, take the money.

Nikita. Stop that! Why are you so angry, and breaking up the company ? (Holds him back by his hand.)

Akim (moaning). Let me go! I will not stay ! I would rather sleep near the fence than in your nastiness. Pshaw, God forgive you ! (Exit.)

Scene XVI. Nikita, Akul'fna, Anisya, and Mitrich.

Nikita. I declare!

Scene XVII. The same and Akim.

Akim (opening the door). Nikita, come to your senses! One needs a soul ! (Exit.)

Scene XVIII. Nikita, Akulina, Anisya, and Mitrich.

Akulina (taking the cups). Well, shall I pour out the tea ? (All are silent.)

Mitrich (bellowing). O Lord, have mercy on me, sin. ful man ! (All tremble.)

Nikita (lying down on a bench). Oh, I feel bad, so bad. Akulina, where is the accordion ?

Akulina. The accordion ? What are you thinking about ? You have left it to be mended. I have filled the glasses. Come and drink !

Nikita. I don't want to. Put out the light— Oh, I feel bad, so bad !
(Weepi

Curtain.

DRAMATIS PERSON JE OF ACT IV.

Nikita.

Mitricii.

Neighbour.

Sponsor.

Matrena.

Anisya.

Anyutka.

Suitor, a gloomy peasant.

ACT IV.

Autumn. Evening. The moon is shining. The interior of the farmyard. In the middle, the vestibule; on the right, the warm hut and the gate; on the left, the cold hut and the cellar. In the house are heard conversation and drunken shouts. Neighbour comes out of the vestibule and calls Anisya's sponsor.

Scene I. Sponsor and Neighbour.

Neighbour. Why did Akulina not come out ?

Sponsor. Why did she not come out? She would like to, but she does not feel well. The suitors came to see the bride, but she is lying in the cold hut and will not show up, my dear.

Neighbour. What is the matter?

Sponsor. She has been bewitched, — she has it in her belly.

Neighbour. You don't say so?

Sponsor. I do. (She whispers something, in her ear.) Neighbour. Well, what a sin! The suitors will find out about it.

Sponsor. How are they to find out ? They are all drunk. They are

more after the dowry. They are giving the girl two fur coats, six bodices, a French shawl, a big lot of linen, and, they say, two hundred roubles in money.

Neighbour. What pleasure is there in such money ? What a shame!

Sponsor. Hush. The suitor is coming. (They grow silent and walk into the vestibule.)

Scene II. Suitor (alone, coming out of the vestibule, and hiccupping).

Suitor. I am sweating. Oh, it is so hot. I want to cool off a little. (Stands blowing.) God knows how it is – something wrong – does not please me– Well, an old woman –

Scene III. Suitor and Matrena.

Matrena (coming out of the vestibule). I was looking for the suitor, and here you are. Well, my dear, thank the Lord, everything is done honourably. A suitor must not brag. I do not even know how to brag. You have come to do a good work, and God will grant you to thank me for it all your life. The bride, you know, is a rare one. You will not find such a girl in the whole country.

Suitor. That is so, if only we don't get fooled about the money.

Matrena. Don't mention the money! She has all her parents have left her. In our time one hundred and fifty roubles are not a small matter.

Suitor. We are satisfied, but we do not want to wrong our child, – we want to do it in the best possible manner.

Matron A. I tell you the truth, suitor: if it were not for me you would not get her in a lifetime. The Kor-milins have sent to inquire about her, but I have stopped them. As to the money, I will tell you how it was: when the man was dying, – the kingdom of heaven be his, – he told the widow to take Nikita to the house,– my son has told me so, – and the money was to go to Akulina. Another man would have made use of it, but Nikita gives her every cent that belongs to her. Think what a sum it is !

Suitor. People say that there was more money left for her. My son is a shrewd one himself.

Matrena. Oh, my little white doves! A piece of bread looks big in other people's hands. She gets every cent that is coming to her. I tell you: stop all delay and clinch the bargain at once! The girl is as pretty as a beanstalk.

Suitor. That is so. My wife and I have been wondering why the girl has not come out ? We thought she might be an ailing girl.

Matrena. Not at all She is not a sickly girl. There is not another such a healthy woman in the whole country. She is so plump you can't pinch her. You saw her the other day. She is a great worker. It is true she is a little hard of hearing, but a worm bite does not hurt a good apple. She did not come out because she has had the evil eye upon her. Somebody has bewitched her. I know who the bitch is that has done it. They knew that the match-makers were to be at the house, so they bewitched her. I will take off the evil eye. Tomorrow the girl will be up again. Have no doubts about the girl!

Suitor. All right, – the affair is settled.

Matrena. That's it. Don't back out again! And don't forget me! I have interceded for you, so don't forget me!

A Woman's Voice (in the vestibule'). Ivan, let us go,

– it is time 1

Suitor. Right away! (Exit. People crowd in the vestibule, and drive away.)

Scene IV. Anisya and Anyutka.

Anyutka (running out of the vestibule and beckoning to Anisya).
Mamma!

Anisya (from a distance). What is it ?

Anyutka. Mamma, come here, or they will hear me. (Goes with her to the barn.)

Anisya. Well, what is it ? Where is Akulina ?

Anyutka. She has gone to the granary. She is carrying on awfully there! Truly, " I have no more strength," says she. " I will cry out," says she, " as loud as I can." Truly.

Anisya. Maybe she can wait. Let us first see off the guests.

Anyutka. Oh, mamma! It is hard for her. And she is so angry. " Their drinking on my account is all in vain," says she. " I will not marry. I will sooner die," says she. Mamma, I am afraid she may die. I am awfully afraid!

Anisya. Don't be afraid, she won't. Don't go to her. Go! (Anisya and Anyutka exeunt.)

Scene V. Mitrich (alone. Comes from the gate and picks up the scattered hay).

Mitrich. Ø Lord, merciful St. Nicholas! What a lot of liquor they have used up! And how it smells! It stinks even here in the yard from it. No, I don't want it,

– go to! How they have scattered the hay! They don't eat it, but only nose through it. There will be a whole bundle of it. Oh, what a smell! Almost under my nose. Go to! (Yawning.) It is time to go to bed ! I don't want to go into the house. It is hovering all about my nose. It smells strong, – accursed liquor! (One hears the people departing.) They are gone, Ø Lord, merciful St. Nicholas! They are only collaring each other, and pulling the wool over each other's eyes. It is all nonsense.

Scene VI. Mitrich and Nikita.

Nikita (coming out). Mitrich, go on the oven! I will pick it up.

Mitrich. All right. Throw it to the sheep! Well, have you seen them off ?

Nikita. I have, but things don't go right. I don't know what will happen.

Mitrich. Bosh ! There is a Foundling House for that. Throw out anything you please, and they will pick it up. Give them all the babies you want, they won't ask any questions. They even give money, so that all a woman has to do after that is to become a wet-nurse. Nowadays these things are done very simply.

Nikita. Look here, Mitrich, don't say more than you need to!

Mitrich. What do I care ? Sweep away the track as well as you can ! Oh, how you smell of liquor! I will go in. (Goes away, yawning.) Ø Lord !

Scene VII. Nikita (long silent. Sits down on a sleigh).

Nikita. Bad business!

Scene VIII. Nikita and Anisya.

Anisya (coming out). Where are you ?

Nikita. Here I am.

Anisya. What are you sitting there for ? There is no time to lose. You have to carry it out at once.

Nikita. What are we going to do ?

Anisya. Do what I tell you !

Nikita. You had better take it to the Foundling House.

Anisya. You carry it there, if you want to. You are ready enough to do something nasty, but very weak in straightening things out.

Nikita. What is to be done ?

Anisya. I told you: go into the cellar and dig a hole there!

Nikita. Can't you do it any other way ?

Anisya (mocking him). Any other way ? No, you can't. You ought to have thought of it before. Go where I tell you !

Nikita. Oh, it is a bad business!

Scene IX. The same and Anyutka.

Anyutka. Mamma! grandmother is calling you. Sister must have a baby, – truly, – it has been crying.

Anisya. Don't talk! The paralysis take you ! The kittens are mewling. Go into the house and sleep! Or I will teach you!

Anyutka. Mamma dear, really, upon my word –

Anisya (raising her hand against her). I will show you ! Don't let me hear a word from you !

Anyutka (runs away).

Anisya (to Nikita). Go and do as I tell you! Or look out! (Exit.)

Scene X. Nikita (alone, long silent).

Nikita. Bad business! Oh, these women! It is bad! She says I ought to have thought of it before.

When was I to have thought of it before ? When was I to have thought of it ? Last year it was Anisya that stuck to me. Well? Am I a monk? The master died and I covered up the sin by marrying her, as is proper. There was no fault of mine. Such things often happen. And then the powders. Did I persuade her to do so ? If I had known it at the time I would have killed the bitch. Really, I would. The slut has made me a part of her nastiness. Ever since then I have loathed her. When my mother told me about it I began to loathe her, and could not look into her eyes. How could I, after that, get along with her? And so it started. Then this girl began to cling to me. Why not I? If not I, some one else would have done it. And now what has come of it! Again it is not my fault. Oh! it's a bad business. (Sits in thought.) It is a bold thing the women have thought out.

No, I won't do it!

Scene XI. Nikita and Matrena (with a lantern and a spade, walking hurriedly).

Matron a. Don't sit there like a sitting hen! Your wife told you to do something. Are you ready ?

Nikita. What are you going to do ?

Matrena. We know what to do. You attend to your business!

Nikita. You will get me entangled.

Matron a. What ? Do you intend to back out ? You have gone so far, and now you want to back out.

Nikita. It is a terrible thing! But the thing is living!

Matrena. A living thing ! It is barely living. Where would you put it ? Take it to the Foundling House, and it will die all the same. Then everybody will know it, and the girl will be on our hands.

Nikita. But if they should find it out ?

Matrena. It is in your own house, and you can do it right. We will fix it so that not a word of it will be heard. Do as I tell you ! But we are women and can't get along without a man. Take the spade! Go down and fix it! I will hold the lantern.

Nikita. What shall I fix ?

Matrena (in a whisper). Dig a hole ! Then we will take it down and bury it at once. There she is, calling again. Go, I say. I must go.

Nikita. Well, is the child dead ?

Matrena. Of course, it is. Only do it more lively! The people are not yet asleep, and they, the accursed ones, may hear and see it. The officer passed here in the evening. So go! (Giving him the spade.) Go down in the cellar! Dig a hole in the corner! The earth is soft there, – and then you will smooth it out again. Mother earth won't tell: it will be as smooth as though a cow had licked it down. Go, go, my son !

Nikita. You will get me entangled. Go to ! Really, I will go away. Do yourselves as you please!

Scene XII. The same and Anisya.

Anisya (from the door). Well, have you dug it?

Matrena. What did you come here for ? What have you done with it ?

Anisya. I have covered it with a bag, so it won't be heard. Well, hasn't he dug it yet ?

Matrena. He does not want to.

Anisya (rushing out in fury). He does not want to ! And does he want to feed lice in the prison ? I will go at once and tell the officer. I will make an end of it at once. I will tell him everything!

Nikita (frightened). What will you tell ?

Anisya. What ? Everything ! Who took the money ? You ! (Nikita is silent.) And who gave him the poison ?

I did. But you knew, you knew, you knew! We had agreed upon it.

Matrena. That will do ! Nikita, don't be so stubborn ! What is to be done ? You must take the trouble ! Go, ' my dear!

Anisya. I declare I The pretty fellow ! He does not want to! You have wronged me enough! You have been misusing me, and now is my turn. Go, I say, or I will show you what I can do. Take the spade, here! Go!

Nikita. Don't insist so! (Takes the spade, but reluctantly.) If I don't want to I won't go.

Anisya. You won't? (.Begins to cry ozit.) Oh, people, people!

Matrena (putting her hand on her mouth). What are you doing ? Are you insane ? He will go. Go, my son, go, my dear !

Anisya. I will call for help at once.

Nikita. Stop it! Oh, what people they are! Hurry up! I will do it. (Goes to the cellar.)

Matrena. Yes, my son, you knew how to have a good time, – know how to hide your crime !

Anisya (still excited). He and his slut have been making fun of me, – that will stop now! I sha'n't be the only one. Let him be a murderer, too! He will know how it feels.

Matrena. Well, well, how you are blustering! Woman, don't be so angry, but do everything softly and slowly, as is proper. Go to the girl! He will do the work. (Follows him with the lantern. Nikita goes into the cellar.)

Anisya. I will make him choke the life out of his accursed offspring. (Still in excitement.) I am tired having Peter's bones upon my own conscience. Let him find out what it is! I will have no pity on myself, I will not, I have said.

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Nikita (from the cellar). Let me see the light!

Matrena (puts down the lantern, to Anisya). He is digging. Go and bring it!

Anisya. Watch him or the accursed one will go away. I will bring it out.

Matrena. Say, don't forget to baptize it! If you can't do it, I will. Have you a cross ?

Anisya. I know where to find one. (Exit.)

Scene XIII. Matrena (alone) and Nikita (in the cellar).

Matrena. How the woman has flared up ! Of course, it is provoking. God aid us in covering up the matter, and let there be an end of it! We will get rid of the girl without a crime. My son will then live quietly. They have plenty of everything in the house, thank God. He will not forget me. What would they be without Matrena. They would not be able to think out a thing. (Into the cellar.) Are you done, my son ?

Nikita (coming out of the cellar. His head is visible). Well ? Are you going to bring it ? Why are you crawling so ? If it is to be done, do it quick!

Scene XIV. The same and Anisya. (Matrena walks over to the vestibule and meets Anisya. Anisya comes out with the baby swaddled in rags.)

Matrena. Have you crossed it?

Anisya. Of course. I took it away by force. She would not let me have it. (Comes up to Nikita and gives it to him.)

Nikita (not taking it). Take it down yourself

Anisya. Take it, I say. (She throws the child to him.) Nikita (catching it). Alive! Mother, it is moving!

It is alive ! What shall I -

Anisya (taking the child out of his hands and throwing it into the cellar). Strangle it at once and it won't live. (.Pushes Nikita down-stairs.) This is your affair. Make an end of it!

Matrena (sitting down on the top step). He is compassionate. It is hard for him. Well, it is his own sin. (Anisya stands over the cellar. Matrena sits down on the steps of the porch and looks at her.) Oh, how frightened he got! Suppose it is hard, - still it has

to be done. What else could we do ? When you come to think of it: how some people beg for children ! But God does not grant them any, and they get only still-born children. There, for example, the pope's wife – and here is a living child, and nobody wants it. (Looking down into the cellar.) He must be through. (To Anisya.) Well ?

Anisya (looking down into the cellar). He has covered it with a board and is sitting down on it. He has done it, no doubt.

Matrena. Oh, oh ! I should like to get along without sinning, but what is to be done ?

Nikita (coming out, shivering). It is still living! I can't! It is living !

Anisya. If it is living, where are you going ? (Wants to stop him.)

Nikita (rushes against her). Go away, or I will kill you ! (Seizes her hand ; she tears herself away ; he runs after her with the spade. Matrena runs toward him and stops him. Anisya runs upon the porch. Matrena wants to take away the spade.)

Nikita (to his mother). I will kill you, you, too! Get away! (Matrena runs away to Anisya on the porch. Nikita stops.) I will kill you ! I will kill everybody !

Matrena. He does this from fright. Never mind, it will pass.

Nikita. What have they done? What have they done with me ? How it cried ! – How it crunched under me! What have they done with me ? And it is alive, still alive! (Silent and listening.) It is crying, oh, how it is crying. (Puns to the cellar.)

Matrena (to Anisya). He is running down to get it buried, no doubt. Nikita, do you want the lantern ?

Nikita (does not answer. Listening at the cellar). I do not hear it. It is quiet. (Goes away and stops.) Oh, how the bones crunched under me! Crr – err – What have they done with me ? (Listens again.) Again it cries, really it does. What is it ? Mother, O mother! (Goes up to her.)

Matrena. What is it, my son ?

Nikita. Mother dear, I can't finish it. I can't. Mother dear, take pity on me!

Matrena. Oh, how frightened you are ! Go, go, take some liquor to brace you up.

Nikita. Mother dear, I am undone. What have you done with me? Oh, how those bones did crunch, and how it cried! – Mother dear, what have you done with me ? (Walks away and sits down on the sleigh.)

Matrena. Go, my son, and take a drink! It makes one feel bad to do such things at night-time. But let day come, and let another day pass, and you will forget to think of it. Wait a bit, and we will get the girl married, and we will think no more of it. But you go and take a drink ! I will fix everything in the cellar.

Nikita (shuddering). Is there any liquor left ? I will take a drink. (Exit. Anisya, who has been standing all the time near the vestibule, steps silently aside.)

Scene XV. Matrena and Anisya.

Matrena. Go, go, my dear! I will go down in the cellar myself, and will bury it. Where did he throw the spade? (Finds the spade and goes half-way down into the cellar.) Anisya, come here and hold the lantern for me !

Anisya. And he ?

Matrena. He is dreadfully frightened. You went for him too stiffly. Never mind, he will come to. God be with him! I will do the work myself. Put the lantern here. I shall be able to see. (Matrena disappears in the cellar.)

Anisya (toward the door, through which Nikita has gone). Well, are you through celebrating? You have been spreading yourself. Now wait and see how it feels ! You won't be so dashing after this!

Scene XVI. The same and Nikita (running out of the vestibule, toward the cellar).

Nikita. Mother, 0 mother !

Matrena (sticking her head out of the cellar). What is it, my son ?

Nikita (listening). Don't bury it! It is alive. Don't you hear it ? It is alive ! Do you hear it cry ? – I hear it –

Matrena. How can it cry? You have crushed it flat. You have smashed the whole head.

Nikita. What is this? (Closes his ears.) It is crying still! I have forfeited my life, I have forfeited it! What have they done with me ? Where shall I go? (Sits down on the porch.)

Curtain.

VARIANT

Instead of Scenes XIII., XIV., XV., and XVI. of Act IV., the following variant may be read.

Pakt IL

Room of Act I.

Scene I. Anyutka (–undressed, on the door bench, under a caftan).
Mftrich (sitting on the hanging bed and smoking).

Mitrich. I declare, they have filled the room with the smell of liquor, – pea-pie choke them ! They have poured out a lot! I can't get rid of it by smoking. It just stays in my nose. 0 Lord ! It is time to go to sleep. (Goes up to the little lamp and wants to turn it down.)

Anyutka (leaping up and sitting doion). Grandfather, please, don't put it out!

Mitrich. Why not ?

AnyIjtka. There has been such a noise in the yard. (Listening.) Do you hear ? They have gone to the granary again.

Mitrich. What is that to you ? They don't ask you about it ? Lie down and go to sleep ! I will turn out the light. (Turns it down.)

Anyutka. Grandfather, golden one! Don't put out the light! Let it burn a wee little bit, or it will frighten me.

Mitrich (laughing.) All right, all right. (Sits down near her.) What frightens you ?

Anyutka. How can I help being frightened, grandfather ! Sister was suffering so. She struck her head against the flour box. (In a whisper). I know–she wants to get a baby – Maybe it is bom now –

Mitrich. You imp, the frogs may kick you! You must know everything! Lie down and sleep ! (An–yutka lies down). That's it. (Covers her.) That's it. If you know much, you will soon get old.

AnyCtka. And will you go on the oven ?

Mitrich. Where else ? Silly girl! She wants to know every tiling. (Covers her still more and rises to go.) Lie like this and sleep ! (Goes to the oven.)

Any6tka. It cried once, and now you can't hear it.

Mitrich. 0 Lord, merciful St. Nicholas ! What is it you can't hear ?

Anyutka. The baby.

Mitrich. You can't hear it because there is none.

Anyutka. But I heard it, truly, I did. Such a thin voice.

Mitrich. You did not hear it. What you heard was a girl crying, for

the bogie-man put her in a sack and took her away.

Anyutka. What bogie-man ?

Mitrich. The bogie-man, that's all. (Climbing on the oven.) The oven feels good to-day, - it is warm. Fine ! O Lord, merciful St. Nicholas !

Anyutka. Grandfather, are you going to sleep ?

Mitrich. What did you think ? That I was going to sing ? (Silence.)

Anyutka. Grandfather, O grandfather! They are digging! Upon my word, they are. Do you hear ? Truly, they are digging.

Mitrich. What nonsense! Digging! Digging at night! Who is digging ? The cow is scratching herself. And you say: digging. Sleep, I say, or I will put out the light altogether.

Anyutka. Darling, grandfather, don't put it out! I won't do it again, upon my word, I won't. I am frightened.

Mitrich. Frightened ? Don't be afraid, - there is nothing to frighten you. You are afraid yourself, so you think something frightens you. How can you help being frightened if you are afraid ? "What a foolish girl! (Silence. A cricket.)

Anyutka (in a whisper). Grandfather, O grandfather! Are you asleep ?

Mitrich. Well, what is it again ?

Anyutka. What is a bogie-man ?

Mitrich. I'll tell you. If a child won't go to sleep, just as you are doing now, he comes with a sack and whisks her into it. Then he puts in his own head, raises her shirt, and begins to whip her.

Anyutka. What does he whip her with ?

Mitrich. With a bath broom.

Anyutka. But he can't see inside the sack!

Mitrich. Never mind, he can.

Anyutka. I will bite him.

Mitrich. No, dear, you won't.

Anyutka. Grandfather, somebody is coming I Who is it ? O mother, who is it ?

Mitrich. Let them come ! What do you want ? I suppose it is your

mother.

Scene II. The same and Anisya (enter).

Anisya. Anyutka! (Anyutka pretends to be asleep.) Mitrich!

Mitrich. What ?

Anisya. Why are you burning the lamp? We will sleep in the cold hut.

Mitrich. I have just undressed myself. I will put it out.

Anisya (looking for something in the coffer, and grumbling). You never can find a thing when you need it.

Mitrich. What are you looking for ?

Anisya. I am looking for a cross to baptize it with. God grant it will die! It will be a sin to let it die unbaptized.

Mitrich. Of course, you must do everything as is proper. Well, have you found it ?

Anisya. I have. (Exit.)

Scene III. Mitrich and Anyutka.

Mitrich. That's it. I would have given her mine. O Lord!

Anyutka (jumping down and trembling). Oh, oh, grandfather! Don't fall asleep, for Christ's sake! I am afraid.

Mitrich. What are you afraid of ?

Anyutka. The baby will, no doubt, die. The midwife baptized Aunt Anna's baby, and it died, too.

Mitrich. If it will die they will bury it.

Anyutka. Maybe it would not have died if Grandmother Matrena were not here. I heard what grandmother said, truly, I did.

Mitrich. What did you hear ? Sleep, I say ! Cover up your head, that's all.

Anyutka. If it should live, I would take care of it.

Mitrich (bellowing). O Lord !

Anyutka. Where will they put it ?

Mitrich. They will put it where it belongs. It is not your sorrow. Sleep, I say! Mother will come and will give it to you ! (Silence.)

Anyutka. Grandfather! They did not kill the girl you told me about ?

Mitrich. What girl ? Oh, that one! She came out all right.

Anyutka. Grandfather, you told me they found her, didn't you ?

Mitrich. Yes, they did.

Anyutka. Where did they find her ? Tell me.

Mitrich. They found her in their house. The soldiers came to the village and began to rummage through the houses. In one of them that girl was lying on her stomach. They wanted to strike her. It made me feel bad, and so I picked her up, but she kept kicking. She made herself heavy, as though she weighed two hundred pounds, and she kept scratching anything she got into her hands, so that it was hard to get away from her. And so I picked her up and patted her on her head. She was as rough as a hedgehog. I patted her and patted her until she quieted down. I soaked a piece of hardtack and gave it to her. She understood what I wanted. She ate it. What was I to do with her? We took her along. We fed her, and she got used to us. We took her along on our expedition, and she went with us. She was a nice girl.

Anyutka. Wasn't she baptized ?

Mitrich. I don't know. They said she was not completely baptized, because her people were not like ours.

Anyutka. Was she a German ?

Mitrich. German! No. She was not a German, but an Asiatic. They are all like Jews, but not exactly Jews. They were Poles, but Asiatics. Krudles, - Krugles is their name, - well, I have forgotten which it is. We called the girl Sasha. Sasha was a pretty child. I have forgotten everything else, but I see the girl right before me, peapie choke her ! This is all I remember from my whole soldier's life. I only remember how they used to flog me, and the girl. She used to hold on to my neck, and I carried her. You could not find a finer child. Later we gave her up. The captain's wife took her for a daughter. And she turned out a fine woman. The soldiers were so sorry to part with her!

Anyutka. Grandfather, I remember how father died. You were not living at our house then. He called up Nikita and said: " Forgive me/' says he, " Nikita! " and he burst out crying. (Sighing.) It was such a pity to see him.

Mitrich. Yes, that's so.

Anyutka. Grandfather, 0 grandfather! There is again a noise in the cellar. Oh, my dear! Oh, grandfather, they are doing something to the baby. It is such a tiny one. Oh, oh ! (Covers up her head and weeps.)

Mitrich (listening). Yes, they are up to something bad. Those women are a bad lot. You can't say much good of the men, but the women – they are like wild beasts. They fear nothing.

Anyutka (rising). Grandfather, 0 grandfather!

Mitrich. Well, what is it ?

Anyutka. The other day a wanderer stopped here overnight. He said that if a baby died its little soul went straight to heaven. Is it true ?

Mitrich. I don't know. I suppose it does. Why?

Anyutka. I should like to die. (Sobbing.)

Mitrich. If you die you don't count.

Anyutka. Up to ten years you are a child, and your soul may go to God. After that you get spoiled.

Mitrich. I should say you do ! How can you women help spoiling ? Who teaches you ? What do you see ? What do you hear? Nothing but badness. I have not learned much, but I know at least something, not like a village woman. What is a village woman ? Nothing but dirt. There are many millions of you women in Russia, but you are as blind as moles, – you know nothing. All you know is how to fan off a cow's death, and all kinds of enchantments, and how to take children to a sitting hen.

Anyutka. Mamma has taken me there, too.

Mitrich. Precisely, that's it. There are millions of you women and girls, but you are all like the beasts of the forest. Just as one has been born, so she dies. She has neither seen nor heard anything. A man will learn something, if nowhere else, at least in the inn, or by some chance, in prison, or in the army, as I have. But what about a woman ? She does not know a thing about God, – nay, she does not know one day from another. They creep about like blind pups, and stick their heads into the manure. All they know is their foolish songs : Ho, ho, ho, ho – But what this ho-ho is they don't know themselves.

Anyutka. Grandfather, I know nearly half of the Lord's prayer.

Mitrich. You know a lot! Nor can one expect it of you. Who is teaching you ? All the teaching you get is from a drunken peasant with the reins. I do not know who will be responsible for you. The sergeant or the corporal is responsible for the recruits. But there is nobody who may be made responsible for you women. You women are like riotous cattle without a shepherd, – a stupid set you are. A most senseless lot!

AnyCtka. What is it going to be ?

Mitrich. What ? – Cover up your head and go to sleep. 0 Lord!
(Silence. A cricket.)

Anyutka (leaping up). Grandfather! Something is calling in the street! Upon my word, somebody is calling. Grandfather dear, he is coming this way.

Mitrich. I tell you, cover yourself up!

Scene IV. The same, Nikita, and Matr^na.

Nikita (enter). What have they done with me ? What have they done with me ?

Matrena. Take a drink, my dear, take a drink!

(Gets the liquor and puts it on the table.)

Nikita. Give it to me. I want to drink.

Matrena. Softly ! They are not asleep yet. Here, drink!

Nikita. What is that for ? Why did you think that out! Could you not have carried it anywhere ?

Matrena {in a whisper}. Sit down awhile, and drink some more, and take a smoke! This will drive away your bad thoughts.

Nikita. Mother dear, I am undone. When it cries, and the little bones begin to crunch, err – err, I lose my manhood.

Matrena. Don't mention it! You are saying unseemly things. Of course it makes one feel bad to do such things at night-time. But let day come, and another day pass, and you will forget about it. {Goes up to Nikita, and puts her hand on his shoulder.}

Nikita. Go away from me ! What have you done with me ?

Matrena. My son, don't say that! (Takes hold of his hand.)

Nikita. Go away from me ! I will kill you ! I don't care for anything now! I will kill you !

MATRENA. Oh, oh, how frightened you are! You had better go to bed.

Nikita. I have no place to go to. I am lost.

Matrena (shaking her head). Oh, oh ! I will go and fix it all. And he will sit here until he feels better. {Exit.}

Scene V. Nikita, Mitrich, and Anyutka.

Nikita {sits with his hands over his face, while Mitrich and Anyutka keep quiet). It cries, really it cries, hear, hear – I hear it. She will bury it, she will! {Runs to the door.) Mother, do not bury it. It is alive J

Scene VI. The same and Matrdna.

Matrena {returning, in a whisper). Christ be with you ! What are you thinking about ? How can it be alive ? All its bones are crushed.

Nikita. Give me some more liquor! {Drinks.)

Matrena. Go, my son! You will now fall asleep, and all will pass.

Nikita {stands and listens). It is alive! I hear it cry. Don't you hear it ? Listen '

Matrena {in a whisper). No, I don't.

Nikita. Mother dear! I have forfeited my life. "What have you done with me ? Where shall I go ? {Runs out of the room. Matrena follows him.)

Scene VII. Mitrich and Anyutka.

Anyutka. Grandfather dear, they have killed it!

Mitrich {angrily). Sleep, I say! Oh, may the frogs kick you ! I will strike you with the bath broom! Sleep, I say!

Anyutka. Grandfather, golden one! Somebody is taking me by the shoulder! Somebody is taking me with his big hands! Grandfather, truly I will go away from here. Grandfather, golden one, let me come to you on the oven ! Let me come, for Christ's sake– He is taking hold of me – He is taking me – Ah ! {Runs to the oven.)

Mitrich. I declare, they have frightened the girl, – those sluts, – may the frogs kick them ! Climb up !

Anyutka {climbing on the oven). Don't go away !

Mitrich. Where should I go ? Climb up! O Lord, St. Nicholas! Most Holy Virgin of Kazdn ! – How they have frightened the girl! {Covering her up) Silly little girl! The sluts have frightened her, though, – pea-pie choke them!

Curtain.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE OF ACT V.

Nikita.

Anisya.

Akulina.

Akim.

Matr[^]na.

Anyutka.

Marina.

Marina's Husband.

First Girl.

Second Girl.

Officer.

Driver.

Best Man.

Suitor.

Akulina's Husband.

Elder.

Guests, Women, Girls, at the Wedding.

ACT V.

The threshing-floor. Nearest to the audience, the grain-ricks ; on the left, the even floor ; on the right, the barn of the threshing-floor. The doors of the barn are open. Through the doors straw is seen ; in the background, the yard. Songs and tambourines are heard. Two girls walk on the path near the barn, toward the house.

Scene I. Two girls.

First Girl. You see, we have come without getting our shoes dirty; through the village the road is dreadful! so dirty. (They stop to clean their shoes with straw.)

First Girl (looking into the straw and seeing something). What is this ?

Second Girl (looking in). That is Mitrich, their hired hand. See how drunk he is !

First Girl. He must have been drinking heavily.

Second Girl. Evidently before this day.

First Girl. Look ! He evidently came to fetch some straw. The rope is still in his hands, just as he fell asleep with it.

Second Girl (listening). They are still receiving. Evidently they have not pronounced the blessing yet. They say Akulina did not even howl.

First Girl. Mamma said that she was marrying against her will. Her stepfather threatened her, or else she would never have married. They have been saying some dreadful things about her !

Scene II. The same and Marina (catching up with the girls).

Marina. Good day, girls ! •

The Girls. Good day, aunty!

Marina. Are you going to the wedding, my dear ones ?

First Girl. That is over. We just came to take a look.

Marina. Call my old man, Semfn of Zuev. You know him, perhaps ?

First Girl. Why not ? I think he is the bridegroom's relative.

Marina. Yes. The bridegroom is my husband's nephew.

Second Girl. Why don't you go there yourself ? You have come to the wedding, then why don't you go ?

Marina. I don't feel like it, girl, and I have no time. We must leave. We did not start out for the wedding. We were going to town with oats. We stopped to feed the horses, and they called in my old man.

First Girl. Where did you stop ? At Fedorych's ?

Marina. Yes. So I will wait here, while you, dear one, call my old man. Call him, my dear ! Say : " Your wife, Marina, tells you to start. Your companions are hitching up the horses ! "

First Girl. All right, since you will not go yourself. (The girls walk along the path to the yard. Songs and tambourines are heard.)

Scene III. Marina (alone).

Marina (in thought). I don't like to go there, because I have not seen him since he gave me up. It is nearly two years now. I should like to take a peep at him and Anisya, to see how they are getting along. People say they do not live in peace. She is a coarse,

headstrong woman. He has, no doubt, thought of me more than once. He wanted to have an easy life, so he took her in my stead. God be with him, I wish him no evil. Then it hurt me. Yes, it pained me then. But now I am over it, and have forgotten it. But I should like to see him – (Looking toward the yard and seeing Nikita.) I declare! What is he coming for ? Have the girls told him ? Why has he left the guests ? I will go away.

Scene IV. Marina and Nikita (who walks at first with drooping head, and swinging his arms. Mumbling).

Marina. How gloomy he looks !

Nikita (sees Marina and recognizes her). Marina! Dear friend!
Marina ! What are you doing here ?

Marina. I came to get my old man.

Nikita. Why did you not come to the wedding ? You might have looked at me, and laughed at me.

Marina. Why should I laugh at you ? I came to get my husband.

Nikita. Oh, Marina! (Wants to embrace her.)

Marina (angrily turns away). Nikita, leave your old tricks ! What has been, is no more. I came to get my husband. Is he in your house ?

Nikita. So you will not let me recall the past ?

Marina. There is no reason for recalling the past. What has been is no more.

Nikita. And it will not return ?

Marina. No, it will not. But why did you go away ? You are the host, and you have left the wedding-feast.

Nikita (sitting down on the straw). Why have I come away ? Ah, if you only knew! I feel badly, Marina, I feel so badly that I wish my eyes did not see it all. I left the table and went away from the people, just not to look at them.

Marina (coming nearer to him). What is it ?

Nikita. It is something that neither my eating, nor my drinking, nor my sleep will make me forget. Oh, I feel so mean, so mean! But the worst thing about it is, Marina, that I have no one to share my sorrow with.

Marina. You can't live without sorrow, Nikita. I, too, have wept much, but it has all passed.

Nikita. You are speaking of what has been. Oh, my friend! You got through weeping, but I am all undone.

Marina. What is the matter ?

Nikita. I am tired of life. I am tired of myself. Oh, Marina, you did not know how to keep me, and you have ruined me and yourself, too. What kind of a life is this ?

Marina (standing near the barn, weeping, and holding herself back).
Nikita, I do not complain of my own life. May God grant that everybody lead such a life! I confessed to my old man, and he forgave me everything. He does not reproach me for it. I cannot complain about my life. The old man is peaceable. He is good to me, and I dress and wash his children ! He takes good care of me, so why should I complain ? It evidently was God's fate. And how is your life? You are wealthy –

Nikita. My life! I just did not want to disturb the wedding, or I would have taken a rope, – this rope (picks up the rope from the straw), – and would have thrown it

across this beam. Then I would have made a good noose, would have climbed on the beam, and would have put my head into it. That is the life I lead.

Marina. Stop talking that way ! Christ protect you !

Nikita. You think I am jesting ? Do you think I am drunk ? No, I am not. I can't get drunk to-day. Pining, pining is eating me up ! I am completely undone, and nothing gives me pleasure. Oh, Marina, what a time we passed together, shortening the nights on the railroad !

Marina. Nikita, don't tear open old sores! I have accepted the Law, and you have, too. Don't stir up the past !

Nikita. What shall I do with my heart? Where shall I go ?

Marina. What shall you do? You have a wife of your own : don't covet other women, but take care of your own ! You loved Anisya before, – love her now !

Nikita. Oh, this Anisya is as bitter as wormwood to me, and she has enmeshed my feet like bad weeds.

Marina. Still, she is your wife – What is the use of talking? Go to your guests, and send my husband to me!

Nikita. Oh, if you knew everything! What is the use of mentioning it ?

Scene V. Nikita, Marina, her husband, and Anyutka.

Marina's Husband (coming from the yard, red in his face and drunk).

Marina ! Wife ! Old woman ! Are you here ?

Nikita. Here is your husband. He is calling you. Go!

Marina. And what will you do ?

Nikita. I ? I will lie down here. (Lies down in the straw.)

Marina's Husband. Where is she ?

Anyutka. There she is, grandfather, near the barn.

Marina's Husband. What are you standing there for ? Go to the wedding! The hosts ask you to come and honour them. The wedding will soon be over, and then we will go.

Marina (walking toward her husband). I did not feel like it.

Marina's Husband. Go, I say! We will drink a glass, and you will congratulate rogue Petninka. The hosts will feel offended if you don't, and we shall have plenty of time to attend to our business. (Marina's husband embraces her and, tottering, goes away with her.)

Scene VI. Nikita and Anyutka.

Nikita (gets up and sits down on the straw). I feel even worse since I saw her. What a life it was I led with her! And now I am lost, I am ruined! (Lies down.) Whither shall I go ? Oh, mother earth, cleave open for me!

Anyutka (seeing Nikita and running up to him). Father, 0 father! They are looking for you. The sponsor and everybody else have blessed them already, and they are angry.

Nikita (aside). Where shall I go ?

Anyutka. What is it ? What are you saying ?

Nikita. Nothing. Don't bother me!

Anyutka. Father! Come with me ! (Nikita is silent. Anyutka pulls him by the hand.) Father, go and bless them! Really, they are very angry.

Nikita (pulling away his hand). Leave me alone!

Anyutka. Come!

Nikita (threatening her with the reins). Go, I say! I will teach you!

Anyutka. I will send mamma to you. (Runs away.)

Scene VII. Nikita (alone. Rising).

Nikita. How can I go ? How can I look into their faces ? How can I look into her eyes ? (Again lies down.) Oh, if there were a hole in the ground, I would go through it. People would not see me, and I would not see them. (Again gets up.) I will not go – To perdition with them! I will not go. (Takes off his boots and picks up the rope; makes a noose of it, and puts it around his neck.) That's what I will do.

Scene VIII. Nikita and Matkna. (Nikita sees his mother, takes off the rope, and lies down in the straw again.)

Matkena (running up out of breath). Nikita, O Nikita! I declare, he does not answer. Nikita, are you drunk ? Come, Nikita, come ! The people are waiting for you.

Nikita. What have you done with me ? I am no longer a man.

Matkena. What is the matter with you ? Go, my dear, and bless them in all honour, as is proper! The people are waiting for you.

Nikita. How can I bless them ?

Matkena. As usual. Don't you know how ?

Nikita. I know, I know. Whom shall I bless? What have I done with her ?

Matkena. What have you done ? There you are again at it! Nobody knows about it: neither cat nor kit nor the pope knows it. The girl is marrying of her own will.

Nikita. How of her own will ?

Matkena. She is marrying through fear. Anyway she is marrying. What is to be done ? She ought to have thought in time. Now she can't refuse. There is no offence to the suitors. They saw the girl twice and they get the money. Everything is in tip-top shape.

Nikita. And what about the cellar?

Matkena (laughing). The cellar ? In the cellar there are mushrooms, cabbage, potatoes, I suppose. What is the use of thinking of the past ?

Nikita. I should like not to think of it, but I can't. Every time I think of it, I hear it. Oh, what have you done with me ?

Matkena. Don't act the fool!

Nikita (lying down, face downward). Mother! Don't torment me ! I am sick of it all!

MATKENA. But you must go. The people are talking as it is, and now

the father goes away and does not dare bless them. They will begin to put things together. They will figure it all out. The moment you are slow they will begin to guess. Put on a good face and they will receive you with grace. Above everything else, my son, don't be timid, or they will make it out at once.

Nikita. Oh, you have entangled me!

MATKENA. Stop that! Come with me! Go and bless them! Do everything in proper shape, and that will be the end of it.

NiKiTA (still lying face downward). I cannot.

Matkena (aside). What has happened ? Everything was going well, and suddenly this has come over him. He must be bewitched. Nikita, get up! See, Anisya has left the guests and is coming this way

Scene IX. Nikita, Matrena, and Anisya.

Anisya (dressed up, red in her face, under the influence of liquor). Everything is going so well, mother! So well and honourably ! And how satisfied the people are ! – where is he?

Matrena. Here he is, my dear, here. He is lying in the straw and won't get up.

Nikita (looking at his wife). I declare, she is drunk, too. It sickens me to look at her. How can I live with her? (Turns his face downward.) I will kill her some day. It will only be worse.

Anisya. So you have hidden yourself in the straw! Has the liquor knocked you down ? (Laughing.) I should like to lie down with you myself, but I have no time. Come, I will lead you in. Oh, how nice everything is in the house! It makes one feel good to look at it. There is an accordion! The women are singing so nicely. They are all drunk, as is proper. It is so nice!

Nikita. What is nice?

Anisya. The wedding, the merry wedding. All people say that it is a rare wedding. Everything is so nice and proper. Come now! We will go together – I have had some liquor, but I will manage to take you there. (Takes him by the hand.)

Nikita (pulling himself away in disgust). Go by yourself! I will be there.

Anisya. What are you pouting about? We are rid of all our trouble and have made her a bride, – so now we can live an easy life. Everything is done so properly, and according to the Law. I can't tell you how happy I am. I feel as though I were marrying you again. And the people are so satisfied! They are all very thankful. And such nice guests. Ivan Mosch and the officer, too. They have honoured us, too.

Nikita. Very well, stay with them ! What did you come here for ?

Anisya. You must come! How will it look for the hosts to run away from the guests ? And they are such nice guests !

Nikita (getting up and picking off the straw). Go ! I will be there in a minute.

Matrena. The cuckoo of the night has cuckooed better than the cuckoo of the day. He did not listen to me, but he obeys his wife. (Matrena and Anisya walk away.)

Matrena. Are you coming ?

Nikita. I will be there right away. You go, and I will follow you. I will come to bless them – (The women stop.) Go, and I will follow you. Go, I say! (The women exeunt.)

Nikita (looking in their direction, in thought).

Scene X. Nikita (alone), then Mitrich.

Nikita (sits down and takes off his coat). Wait until I come! You look for me on the beam! I will straighten the noose and jump from the beam, and then you may look for me. The reins are here, that is good. (In thought.) If it were any kind of a sorrow, it would pass in time; but this is in the heart, and it cannot be taken out. (Looking at the yard.) She is coming again, I think. (Mocking Anisya.) " Oh, how nice it is ! I will lie down with you ! " Oh, you contemptible witch ! Embrace me when they take me off from the beam. There will be an end of it. (Takes the rope and pulls it.)

Mitrich (drunk. Pulls the rope back and gets up). I won't let you. I won't let anybody. I will bring it myself. I told you: I will bring the straw myself. Nikita, is it you ? (Laughing.) Oh, the devil! Did you come for the straw ?

Nikita. Let me have the rope!

Mitrich. No, wait! The peasants sent me for it. I will bring it. (Rises to his feet and begins to scrape up some straw ; but he totters, and finally falls down.) The liquor is stronger: it has me down.

Nikita. Let me have the reins !

Mitrich. I told you I wouldn't. Nikita, you are a stupid ! (Laughing.) I love you, but you are a stupid. You see I am drunk. The devil I care for you ! You think that I need you – Look at me I I am an underofficer ! You are a stupid, and you can't even pronounce it: Under-officer of the very first regiment of her Majesty's Grenadiers. I have served my Tsar and my country faithfully and honestly. What am I ? You think I am a soldier ? No,

I am not a soldier, but the very worst kind of a man, – an erring orphan. I swore off drinking, and see how I am swilling! Well, do you think I am afraid of you ? I guess not. I am not afraid of anybody. When I drink, I drink! I'll be on a tear for two weeks now, – I'll paint things red! I will spend everything I have on me for drinks: I will sell my cap, pawn my passport, – and I am not afraid of a soul! They used to flog me in the army to make me stop drinking. They walloped me: "Well," they said, "will you stop it?" "No," said I. I was not afraid of them, – that's the kind of a man I am! I am on the rampage now, and I will drink ! I am not afraid of anybody. I am telling you the truth – Why should I be afraid of them, darn it! That's what! There was a pope who used to tell me that the devil is a braggart, – the moment you begin to brag, you lose your courage. And the moment you lose your courage before people, the devil grabs you and jams you where he has a mind to. As I am not afraid of people, I live an easy life. I'll spit into his beard, with his claws, – and on the mother of his brood of pigs! Here, chaw at it!

Nikita (crossing himself). How foolish it was of me! (Throwing away the rope.)

Mitrich. What ?

Nikita (rising). You say I ought not to be afraid of people ?

Mitrich. What is there to be afraid of, darn it! Look at them in the bath-house! They are all made of the same dough. One has a bigger belly than another that is all the difference between them. So, whom are you to be afraid of ? Pea-pie choke them!

Scene XI. Nikita, Mitrich, and Matr^ena (coming out of the yard).

Matrena (calling). Well, are you coming ?

Nikita. Oh! Yes, it is better this way! I am coming ! (Goes toward the yard.)

Curtain.

Part II.

Change of scenery. The room, as in the First Act, is full of people, sitting at tables, and standing. In the fore corner, Akulina and her husband. On a table are images and bread. Among the guests are Marina, her husband, and the officer. Women sing songs; Anisya serves the liquor. The songs stop.

Scene I. Anisya, Marina, Marina's Husband, Akulina, her Bridegroom, Driver, Officer, Bridegroom's Mother, Best Man, Matrena, Guests, and people.

Driver. It is time to start, – the church is far off.

Best Man. Just let the stepfather bless them. Where is he ?

Anisya. He will be here in a minute, my dear, he will Take another glass, – don't refuse me !

Bridegroom's Mother. What keeps him away ? We have been waiting so long, o o

Anisya. He will come, – in a minute. He will be here before a clean-shaven girl will have plaited her braids. Take another glass, my dear guests! (Serves them.) He will be here at once. Pretty girls, sing another song in the meantime !

Driver. They have sung all the songs waiting for him. (The women sing. During the song enter Nikita and Akim.)

Scene II. The same, Nikita, and Akim.

Nikita (holding Akim by his hand and pushing him before himself). Go, father! I can't do it without you.

Akim. I don't like it, so to speak –

Nikita (to the women). Stop your singing ! (Surveying everybody in the room.) Marina, are you here ?

Bridegroom's Mother. Take the image and bless them!

Nikita. Wait, give me a chance! (Looking around him.) Akulina, are you here ?

Bridegroom's Mother. Why are you calling up all the people ? Where else is she to be ? How strange he is –

Anisya. O Lord ! He is undressed.

Nikita. Father, are you here ? Look at me ! Orthodox people, you are all here, and so am I! Here I am! (Kneeling down.)

Anisya. Nikita, what is the matter with you? Oh, my head!

Bridegroom's Mother. Well, I declare!

Matrena. I say he has drunk too much French wine. Come to your senses! What is the matter with you ? (People try to lift him, but he pays no attention to anybody, and keeps looking in front of him.)

Nikita. Orthodox people! I am guilty, and I want to make my confession.

Matrena (pulling him by the shoulder). What is the matter with you ? Are you insane ? Dear people, he is out of his mind, – we ought to take him away.

Nikita (brushing her aside with his shoulder). Leave me alone! Father, listen to me! First of all, Marina, look toward me! (Bowing to her and getting up.) I am guilty toward you: I had promised to marry you, and I seduced you. I deceived you and abandoned you, – forgive me for Christ's sake! (Again bows to her to the ground.)

Anisya. What are you raving about ? How indecent! Nobody is asking you about it. Get up and stop disgracing yourself!

Matrena. Oh, oh, he is bewitched. What is the matter with him ? He has the evil eye upon him. Get up and stop talking nonsense! (Pulls him.)

Nikita (shaking his head). Don't touch me ! Forgive me, Marina! I have sinned toward you. Forgive me, for Christ's sake ! (Marina covers her face with her hands and keeps silent.)

Anisya. Get up, I say, and stop disgracing yourself! Don't recall the past! Don't act like that! Shame on you ! Oh, my head ! He must be insane.

Nikita (pushing away his wife and turning to Akulina). Akulina, now I have something to say to you. Listen, Orthodox people! I am a wretched sinner. Akulina, I am guilty toward you! Your father did not die a natural death. He was poisoned.

Anisya (shouting). My head! "What is he talking about ?

Matrena. He is beside himself. Take him away ! (People walk up toward him, wishing to take him away.)

Akim (warding them off). Wait! Good men, wait, so to speak !

Nikita. Akulina, I poisoned him. Forgive me, for Christ's sake!

Akulina (jumping up). He is lying. I know who has poisoned him.

Bridegroom's Mother. Stop! Sit down !

Akim. O Lord ! The sin, the sin !

Officer. Take him! Send for the elder and the

posse I I must write up a protocol. Get up and come over here !

Akim (to the officer). You, bright-buttons, so to speak, wait awhile, so to speak! Give him a chance, so to speak, to tell everything!

Officer (to Akim). You, old man, look out, and don't interfere! I must write up a protocol.

Akim. What a queer fellow, so to speak, you are ! Wait, I say! Don't talk now about the protocol! God's business, so to speak, is being

done here – a man is making his confession, so to speak, and he talks about the protocol, so to speak –

Officer. Send for the elder !

Akim. Let him first attend to God's business, so to speak, and then you may attend to yours, so to speak!

Nikita. Akulina, there is another sin I have committed toward you. I have seduced you, – forgive me, for Christ's sake ! (Bows to the ground before her.)

Akulina (coming out from behind the table). Let me go, – I will not be married ! He compelled me to, – but now I won't!

Officer. Repeat what you have said !

Nikita. Wait, Mr. Officer! Let me finish first!

Akim (in transport). Speak, my child! Tell everything, and you will feel better! Repent you before God, and don't be afraid of people ! God is the main thing, God!

Nikita. I killed your father, and I, dog, have ruined his daughter. I had the power over her, and I killed also her baby.

Akulina. That is true, that is true !

Nikita. I choked the baby to death with a board. I sat down upon it – I choked it – and its bones crunched. (Weeping.) Then I buried it in the ground. I did it, all by myself.

Akulina. He is lying. I told him to.

“God is the main thing, God!”

Photogravure from Photograph {Russian Stage Production)

Nikita. Don't shield me ! I am not afraid of anybody now! Forgive me, Orthodox people! (Bows to the ground.)

(Silence.)

Officer. Bind him! Your wedding is evidently broken up. (People come up with their belts.)

Nikita. Wait awhile, – you will have time enough. (Bowing to the ground before his father.) Father dear! Forgive me, sinful man! You told me, when I first started on this life of debauch: " When the claw is caught, the whole bird is lost," but I, dog, did not pay any

attention to you, and so everything turned out as you said. Forgive me, for Christ's sake !

Akim (in transport). God will forgive you, my own child ! (Embraces him.) You did not pity yourself, but He will. God is the main thing, God!

Scene III. The same and the Elder.

Elder (enter). We have a posse here.

Officer. We will hold the inquest at once. (Nikita is being bound.)

Akulina (walking up and standing near him.) I will tell the truth! Ask me, too !

Nikita (bound). There is nothing to ask. I have done it all myself. It was my plan, and my deed. Lead me where I belong ! I sha'n't say another word !

Curtain.