

Enemies

(1906)

by Maxim Gorky



*Liberated from
capitalist control
to educate the masses
by
Socialist Stories*

CHARACTERS

- Zakhar Bardin, *aged 45*
Paulina, *his wife, aged 40*
Yakov Bardin, *aged 40*
Tatyana, *his wife, aged 28, an actress*
Nadya, *Paulina's niece, aged 18*
Pechenegov, *a retired general, uncle of the Bardins*
Mikhail Skrobotov, *aged 40, a merchant, partner of the Bardins*
Cleopatra, *his wife, aged 30*
Nikolai Skrobotov, *his brother, aged 35, prosecuting attorney*
Sintsov, *a clerk*
Pology, *a clerk*
Kon, *an ex-soldier*
Grekov
Levshin
Yagodin
Ryabtsov
Akimov
Agrafena, *the housekeeper*
Boboyedov, *captain of gendarmes*
Kvach, *a corporal*
An Army Lieutenant
Chief of Police
A Policeman

Gendarmes, soldiers, workmen, clerks, servants

ACT I

A garden shaded by large ancient limes. In the depths of the garden stands a white army tent. Under the trees to the right is a wide seat made of turf with a table in front of it. Another table laid for breakfast stands under the trees to the left. A small samovar is boiling. Wicker chairs are placed about the table. Agrafena is making coffee. Kon is standing under a tree smoking a pipe and talking to Pology.

Pology (*speaking with clumsy gestures*): Of course, you know better. I'm a person of no importance; my life is insignificant enough. But every cucumber was raised with my own hands, and no one shall steal them without answering to me for it.

Kon (*sullenly*): Nobody's asking your permission.

Pology (*pressing his hand to his breast*): But listen, if somebody takes your property, haven't you a right to ask the protection of the law?

Kon: Go ahead and ask. Today they take your cucumbers, tomorrow your head. There's your law for you!

Pology: That's a strange thing to hear you say, and even dangerous. How can you, a retired soldier wearing the Order of St. George, allow yourself to speak so contemptuously of the law?

Kon: There is no law. There's only a command. L-e-f-t face! Forwar-r-rd march! And off you go. When they say "halt!" it means halt.

Agrafena: You might stop smoking that makhorka, Kon; it's enough to make the leaves curl up.

Pology: If they stole because they were hungry, I might be able to excuse them. Hunger justifies a great many things; one might say that all villainy was done for the sake of satisfying hunger. When a man wants to eat, then of course—

Kon: The angels don't eat, but Satan went against God just the same.

Pology (*happily*): I would call that mere mischief-making.

(Enter Yakov Bardin. He speaks quietly, and as though he were listening to his own words. Pology bows to him. Kon gives a careless salute.)

Yakov: Hullo. What are you doing here?

Pology: I've come to Zakhar Ivanovich with a modest request.

Agrafena: He's come to complain. Last night some fellows from the factory stole his cucumbers.

Yakov: That so? You'll have to tell my brother.

Pology: Exactly. It's to him I'm going.

Kon (*glumly*): I don't see you going anywhere. Just standing here and grumbling.

Pology: I'm not interfering with you any, am I? If you were reading the paper or something, then of course you might accuse me of interfering.

Yakov: Kon, I want to speak to you.

Kon (*crossing over*): You're a stingy son of a gun, Pology, an old pettifogger.

Pology: Spare your words. Man was given a tongue for the making of complaints.

Agrafena: Oh, stop it, Pology. You're more like a mosquito than a human being.

Yakov (*to Kon*): What's he doing here? Why doesn't he go away?

Pology (*to Agrafena*): If my words offend your ear and fail to touch your heart, I shall be silent. (*He goes out, sauntering down the path, touching the trees as he passes.*)

Yakov (*embarrassed*): Well, Kon, it seems I hurt somebody's feelings again yesterday?

Kon: I'm afraid you did.

Yakov (*walking up and down*): Humph! Very strange. Why do I always insult people when I'm drunk, Kon?

Kon: Sometimes people are better drunk than sober. They're braver, drunk—not afraid of anybody; don't even spare themselves. We used to have a noncom in our company who was a tattletale and a toady when he was sober, and always getting into a fight. When he was drunk he would cry like a baby. "Brothers," he would say, "I'm a man like the rest of you. Spit in my eye, brothers," he would say. And some of them did.

Yakov: Who was it I insulted yesterday?

Kon: The public prosecutor. You called him a blockhead. And then you told him the director's wife had a string of lovers.

Yakov: Think of that, now! As if it was any business of mine!

Kon: Certainly. And then—

Yakov: Very well, Kon; that's enough. I don't want to know how many people I've insulted. It's all that accursed vodka! (*Goes over to the table and stares at the bottles; then he pours himself out a tall glass of wine and sips it. Agrafena glances at him out of the corner of her eye and sighs.*) You feel just a little bit sorry for me, don't you?

Agrafena: It's such a pity. You're so plain and simple with everybody. Not at all like most gentlefolk.

Yakov: But Kon here doesn't pity anybody. He only philosophizes. It takes a lot of abuse to make a person begin to think, isn't that right, Kon? (*From the tent comes the voice of the General, crying: "Hey, Kon!"*) I guess you've had rather rough treatment and that's why you're so smart.

Kon (*leaving*): The very sight of that General is enough to turn me into an idiot.

General (*emerging from the tent*): Kon! To the river! Lively! (*They disappear in the garden.*)

Yakov (*sitting and rocking back and forth on a chair*): Is my wife still sleeping?

Agrafena: No, she's up and had a swim.

Yakov: So you pity me, eh?

Agrafena: You ought to take treatments.

Yakov: Well, pour me out a drop of cognac.

Agrafena: Perhaps I oughtn't to, Yakov Ivanovich?

Yakov: Why oughtn't you? Refusing me one drink won't do me any good.

(*With a sigh, Agrafena pours him out a large glass of cognac. Mikhail Skrobotov enters in a state of excitement. He pulls nervously at his pointed black beard and toys with the hat in his hand.*)

Mikhail: Is Zakhar Ivanovich up? Not yet? I might have known as much! Give me ... is there any cold milk? Thanks. Good morning, Yakov Ivanovich! Have you heard the news? Those rascals are insisting that I fire foreman Dichkov. They threaten to stop working if I don't, devil take them.

Yakov: Go ahead and fire him.

Mikhail: That would be easy enough, but you see—that's not the point. The point is that concessions demoralize them. Today they demand that I fire the foreman, tomorrow they'll want me to hang myself for their amusement.

Yakov (*gently*): You think they'll wait for tomorrow to want that?

Mikhail: You seem to find it funny. I'd like to see you try to handle those grimy gentlemen—about a thousand of them with their heads turned by all kinds of people, including your dear brother with his liberalism, and a pack of idiots who write leaflets. (*Looks at his watch.*) Almost ten o'clock, and they threaten to begin the fun after lunch. Oh yes, Yakov Ivanovich, your brother certainly made a nice mess of things at the factory while I was away on leave. He completely demoralized the men with his lack of firmness.

(*Sintsov comes on right. He is about thirty years old. There is something calm and impressive in his face and figure.*)

Sintsov: Some representatives from the workers have come to the office and demand to see the owner, Mikhail Vasilyevich.

Mikhail: Demand? Be good enough to send them to the devil! (*Paulina comes on left.*) Forgive me, Paulina Dmitriyevna.

Paulina (*graciously*): You have a habit of swearing. But what is the occasion this time?

Mikhail: It's all this "proletariat"! They "demand"! Formerly they came to me with dutiful "requests."

Paulina: I must say you're very harsh with people.

Mikhail (*making a futile gesture with his hands*): There you are!

Sintsov: What shall I tell the representatives?

Mikhail: Let them wait. Go back.

(*Sintsov goes out unhurriedly.*)

Paulina: That man has an interesting face. Has he been working for us long?

Mikhail: About a year.

Paulina: He gives the impression of being well-bred. Who is he?

Mikhail (*shrugging his shoulders*): Earns forty rubles a month. (*Looks at his watch, sighs and glances about, catching sight of Pology under one of the trees.*) What are you doing here? Have you come for me?

Pology: No, Mikhail Vasilyevich, I've come to see Zakhar Ivanovich.

Mikhail: On what business?

Pology: In respect to a violation of property rights.

Mikhail (*to Paulina*): This is a new employee with a bent for gardening. He is firmly convinced that everything on earth was created for the sole purpose of injuring his interests. Everything annoys him—the sun, England, new machinery, the frogs—

Pology (*smiling*): Allow me to observe that the frogs annoy everybody when they begin croaking.

Mikhail: Get back to the office! What's this habit you have of dropping everything and coming to complain? I won't have it. Be off with you!

(Pology bows and leaves. Paulina smiles and stands watching him through her lorgnette.)

Paulina: How strict you are! He's an amusing type. It seems to me that Russians are more original than people of other nationalities.

Mikhail: If you said more *aboriginal* I'd agree with you. I've been managing men for fifteen years, and that has given me an excellent understanding of the noble Russian people as painted by our clerical writers.

Paulina: Clerical?

Mikhail: Your Chernyshevskys, Dobrolyubovs, Zlatovratskys, Uspenskys.... (*Looks at his watch.*) What a long time Zakhar Ivanovich is in coming!

Paulina: Do you know what's keeping him? He's finishing last night's chess game with your brother.

Mikhail: And down at the factory they're threatening to quit work after lunch! You can be sure that no good will ever come of Russia, and that's a fact. It's a land of anarchy! People have an organic disgust for any kind of work and complete inability to maintain order. There's not the slightest respect for law!

Paulina: But that's only natural. How can there be respect for law in a country where there is no law? Between you and me, our government—

Mikhail: Oh, I'm not justifying anybody. Not even the government. Take the Anglo-Saxons. (*Zakhar Bardin and Nikolai Skrobotov come in.*) There could be no better material from

which to build a state. An Englishman prances before the law on his hind legs like a circus horse. He has a feeling for law in his very bones and muscles. Good morning, Zakhar Ivanovich! Hullo, Nikolai! Allow me to inform you of the latest result of your liberal policy: the workers are demanding that I fire Dichkov immediately. They threaten to walk out after lunch if I don't. How do you like that?

Zakhar (*rubbing his forehead*): Hm, Dichkov? The fellow who's always using his fists and going after the girls? Of course we'll have to fire him. That's fair enough.

Mikhail (*excitedly*): Good Lord, can't you talk seriously? It's not a question of justice, but of policy. Justice is Nikolai's province. Your conception of justice, let me repeat, is ruinous to business.

Zakhar: But how can that be? That's a paradox.

Paulina: Talking business in my presence! And so early in the morning!

Mikhail: Sorry, but I've got to. This matter must be made clear. Before I went on leave, I held the factory in my hand like this (*holds up a tight fist*), and nobody dared to let out so much as a peep! As you know, I never saw anything beneficial in these Sunday amusements—reading circles and the like—under our conditions. The raw Russian mind is not illuminated by the light of reason when a spark of knowledge falls upon it. It only smokes and smoulders.

Nikolai: One should always speak calmly.

Mikhail (*restraining himself with difficulty*): Thanks for the advice. It is perfectly sound, but unfortunately I cannot accept it. In six months, Zakhar Ivanovich, your attitude towards the workers has shaken and undermined the firm structure which it took me eight years to build up. I had won the respect of all the men. They looked upon me as their master. Now it is clear that there are two masters, a good one and a bad one. You, of course, are the good one.

Zakhar (*embarrassed*): But ... er ... I don't understand you.

Paulina: That's a very strange thing to say, Mikhail Vasilyevich.

Mikhail: I have reasons for saying it. You have placed me in an idiotic position. The last time this question came up I told the workers I would close down the factory sooner than fire Dichkov. They saw I meant what I said and they became resigned.

On Friday, Zakhar Ivanovich, you told that fellow Grekov that Dichkov was a roughneck and you meant to fire him.

Zakhar (*conciliatingly*): But, my dear fellow, he goes around punching people in the jaw and that sort of thing. Surely we can't allow it. We're Europeans. We're civilized.

Mikhail: First of all, we're factory owners. On every holiday the workers beat each other up; what business is that of ours? But you'll have to postpone teaching the workers good manners for the present. At this very moment their representatives are waiting for you in the office and they will demand that you fire Dichkov. What do you intend to do?

Zakhar: Do you find that Dichkov is so indispensable?

Nikolai (*dryly*): It seems to me this is not a question of an individual. It's a matter of principle.

Mikhail: Exactly! It's a question of who is master at the factory—you and I, or the workers.

Zakhar (*at a loss*): I understand, but. . .

Mikhail: If we give in to them this time, there's no knowing what they'll demand next. They're a brazen lot. Six months of these Sunday schools and other things have done their work. They glare at me like wolves, and some leaflets have put in an appearance. It savours of socialism.

Paulina: Socialism in an out-of-the-way place like this! It sounds almost funny, doesn't it?

Mikhail: Does it? My dear Paulina Dmitriyevna, children are amusing as long as they are small. But gradually they grow up, and all of a sudden you find yourself face to face with full-grown rascals.

Zakhar: What do you intend doing?

Mikhail: Closing down the factory. Let them go hungry for a while and they'll cool off. (*Yakov gets up, goes over to the table and has a drink, then he goes slowly off.*) As soon as we shut down, the women will put in an appearance. They'll begin to cry, and women's tears act like smelling salts on those who are dizzy with dreams. They immediately bring them to their senses.

Paulina: That's a harsh thing to say.

Mikhail: Perhaps, but life demands such harshness.

Zakhar: But . . . er . . . such a measure—do you think it's absolutely necessary?

Mikhail: Can you suggest anything else?

Zakhar: What if I go and speak to them?

Mikhail: You are sure to give in to them, and then my position will be intolerable. Your wavering, if you'll forgive my saying so, is almost an insult to me. To say nothing of the harm it does.

Zakhar (*quickly*): But, my dear fellow, I don't object. I'm just trying to think it out. You must understand I am more of a country gentleman than an industrialist. This is all so new to me, and so complicated. I want to see justice done. Peasants are more gentle and goodnatured than workmen. I get on famously with them. To be sure there are some interesting types among the workers, but on the whole I agree with you. They are too presumptuous.

Mikhail: Especially since you have made them so many promises.

Zakhar: As soon as you left I began to notice a sort of restlessness; there were even disturbances. Perhaps I was not very cautious, but the workers had to be quieted down. Things have been written about us in the papers, and very sharp things, I must say.

Mikhail (*impatiently*): It is now seventeen minutes past ten. We've got to come to some decision. As the matter stands, either I close down the factory or I withdraw from the firm. We will not suffer any loss if the factory is closed down. I have taken the necessary measures. All our rush orders are ready and we have reserve stocks in the warehouses.

Zakhar: Hm. Must it be decided immediately? Oh, yes. Well, what do you think, Nikolai Vasilyevich?

Nikolai: I agree with my brother. If we value civilization, we must hold strictly to principles.

Zakhar: That is, you also think we should close down? What a pity! My dear Mikhail Vasilyevich, please don't be offended with me. I shall give you my answer in, let's say, ten minutes. Will that do?

Mikhail: Quite.

Zakhar: Please come with me, Paulina.

Paulina (*following her husband*): Goodness, how unpleasant all this is!

Zakhar: In the course of centuries the peasant has developed an inherent respect for the gentry.... (*They go out.*)

Mikhail (*through his teeth*): The milksop! He can say that after the agrarian massacres in the south! Fool!

Nikolai: Easy, Mikhail! Why should you let yourself go like that?

Mikhail: My nerves are shot to pieces, can't you see? I'm going to the factory, and . . . look! (*Takes a revolver out of his pocket.*) They hate me, thanks to that idiot. But I can't drop everything. You would be the first one to blame me if I did. All our capital is in that factory. If I withdraw, that bald-headed idiot will ruin everything.

Nikolai (*calmly*): That's bad, if you're not exaggerating.

Sintsov (*entering*): The workers are asking for you.

Mikhail: For me? What do they want?

Sintsov: There are rumours the factory will be closed down after lunch.

Mikhail (*to his brother*): Hear that? How did they find out?

Nikolai: Probably Yakov Ivanovich told them.

Mikhail: Damn it all! (*Looking at Sintsov with an irritation he cannot suppress.*) Why are you so concerned, Sintsov? Coming here—asking questions—

Sintsov: The book-keeper asked me to come for you.

Mikhail: He did, did he? Where did you get that habit of staring and grinning? What are you so happy about?

Sintsov: That, I think, is my own business.

Mikhail: I don't agree. And I advise you to show more respect in the future, do you hear?

(*Sintsov fixes him with his eye.*)

Mikhail: Well, what are you waiting for?

Tatyana (*coming on right*): Oh! The director! In a hurry as usual? (*Calling to Sintsov.*) Hullo, Matvei Nikolayevich!

Sintsov (*warmly*): Good morning. How do you feel? Aren't you tired?

Tatyana: Not in the least. Only my arms ache from rowing. Are you going to the office? I'll go with you as far as the gate. Do you know what I want to tell you?

Sintsov: Hardly.

Tatyana (*walking beside Sintsov*): You said lots of clever things yesterday, but you spoke too emotionally, too pointedly. The more unemotionally some things are said, the more convincing they are. (*Their talk becomes inaudible.*)

Mikhail: How do you like that? The employee I have just called to account for his impudence flaunting his intimacy

with Yakov's wife in my face! He's a drunkard and she's an actress. Why they ever came here the devil only knows.

Nikolai: She's a strange woman—good-looking, well-dressed, rather tempting—and yet she seems about to have an affair with that pauper. Highly original, but foolish.

Mikhail (*ironically*): That's what you call being democratic. She's the daughter of a village teacher, you know, and she says she always feels drawn to the common people. Damn it all, I wish I had never got myself mixed up with these country gentlemen!

Nikolai: I don't think you should complain. You're the head of this business.

Mikhail: Not yet, but I *will* be.

Nikolai: I have an idea she's easy pickings. Seems very sensual.

Mikhail: That liberal of ours—he must have gone back to bed. No, Russia will never get anywhere, I tell you. People wander about in a daze talking and day-dreaming. Nobody knows his place in life. As for the government—it's made up of malicious morons who don't understand anything and can't do anything.

Tatyana (*returning*): Are you shouting too? For some reason everyone has begun to shout.

Agrafena: Zakhar Ivanovich is asking for you, Mikhail Vasilyevich.

Mikhail: At last! (*Goes out.*)

Tatyana (*sitting down at the table*): What is he so upset about?

Nikolai: You would hardly find it interesting.

Tatyana (*calmly*): He reminds me of a policeman who often used to be on duty in our theatre in Kostroma: tall and thin, with bulging eyes.

Nikolai: I fail to see the resemblance to my brother.

Tatyana: I'm not speaking of a physical resemblance. This policeman, too, was always in a hurry. He never walked; he ran. He never smoked; he gobbled up cigarettes. He had no time to live at all. All his time was taken up by rushing somewhere, but not even he knew where.

Nikolai: Do you think he really didn't know?

Tatyana: I'm sure he didn't. When a person has a clear purpose, he pursues it calmly. That fellow was always rushing. And it was a special kind of a rush. Something seemed to be

goading him on, and in his hurry he got in his own way and everybody else's. He wasn't greedy—not in the narrow sense. He was only greedily anxious to get rid of all his duties, including the duty to take bribes. He didn't *take* bribes—he *snatched* them, and in such haste that he even forgot to say thank you. Finally he was run over and killed by a carriage.

Nikolai: Do you wish to imply that my brother's energy is directed to no purpose?

Tatyana: Is that the impression you got? It isn't what I wanted to say. Your brother simply reminds me of that policeman.

Nikolai: Not very complimentary, I should say.

Tatyana: I had no intention of paying your brother compliments.

Nikolai: You have an unusual manner of flirting.

Tatyana: Have I?

Nikolai: And not a very gay one.

Tatyana (*calmly*): Is it possible for a woman to be gay with you?

Nikolai: Come, now!

Paulina (*coming in*): Nothing seems to go right today. Nobody is having breakfast, nobody seems to have got enough sleep. Early this morning Nadya went to the woods for mushrooms with Cleopatra Petrovna. Yesterday I asked her not to. Dear me! How difficult everything is!

Tatyana: You eat too much.

Paulina: Why that tone, Tanya? Your attitude toward people is abnormal.

Tatyana: Really?

Paulina: It's easy enough to take things calmly when you have nothing, and so are free of all responsibility. It's quite a different thing when nearly a thousand people depend on you for their food.

Tatyana: Stop feeding them, let them live as they like. Turn over everything to them—the factory, the land, and live in peace.

Nikolai (*lighting up*): From what play did you get that?

Paulina: I don't know why you should say such things, Tanya. You should see how upset Zakhar is. We have decided to close down the factory for a while, until the workers come to their senses. But just imagine how hard it will be! Hundreds

of people will be thrown out of work. And they have children. It's horrible!

T a t y a n a : Why do you do it if it's so horrible? Why torture yourselves?

P a u l i n a : Oh, Tanya! How irritating you are! If we don't close down, the workers will go on strike, and that will be even worse.

T a t y a n a : What will?

P a u l i n a : Everything. We certainly can't concede all their demands. And actually they aren't their demands. It's just that a pack of Socialists have put ideas into their heads and so they go about shouting. (*Fervently.*) I can't understand it! Abroad, socialism is in its proper place and its leaders conduct activities quite openly. But with us, here in Russia, they get the workers off in corners and whisper to them, ignoring the fact that socialism is out of place in a monarchy! It's a constitution we need, and not socialism. What do you think, Nikolai Vasilyevich?

N i k o l a i (*with a short laugh*): I take a slightly different view of it. Socialism is a very dangerous phenomenon. And it is bound to find fertile soil in a country which has no independent ... er ... so to speak, race philosophy; in a country where everything is borrowed on the run. We are extremists. That is our weakness.

P a u l i n a : Oh, that's true enough! We are extremists.

T a t y a n a (*getting up*): Especially you and your husband. And the prosecutor here.

P a u l i n a : What do you know about it, Tanya! Zakhar is considered to be a Red in our gubernia.

T a t y a n a (*walking up and down*): I think he only turns red from shame, and not very often at that.

P a u l i n a : Tanya! What in the world has got into you?

T a t y a n a : Why, have I offended you? I didn't mean to. Your life, it seems to me, is like an amateur performance. The roles have been wrongly assigned, nobody has any talent, everyone acts abominably. And the play doesn't make sense.

N i k o l a i : There is some truth in what you say. Everyone complains that the play is boring.

T a t y a n a : We ourselves make it so, and the extras and the stage hands are beginning to see it. Some day they'll drive us off the boards.

(*Enter the General and Kon.*)

Nikolai: Aren't you carrying it a little too far?

General (*calling*): Paulina! Some milk for the General! See that it's ice cold! (*To Nikolai.*) Hullo, you old coffin of laws! Your hand, my charming niece! Kon, recite your lesson: what is a soldier?

Kon (*bored*): Whatever his superior wants him to be, sir.

General: What if he wants him to be a fish, eh?

Kon: A soldier must be able to be anything.

Tatyana: My dear uncle, you amused us with this scene yesterday. Must we have it every day?

Paulina (*with a sigh*): Every day after his swim.

General: Yes, indeed, every day. And always something different. That old joker should make up the questions and answers himself.

Tatyana: Do you enjoy it, Kon?

Kon: The General enjoys it.

Tatyana: And you?

General: He enjoys it too.

Kon: I'm too old for the circus, but once you've got to eat, you've got to grin and bear it.

General: You sly old rascal! Right about face! Forwar-r-d march!

Tatyana: Don't you ever get tired of making fun of that poor old man?

General: I'm an old man myself. But I get tired of you all right. An actress should be entertaining, but you certainly are not.

Paulina: Uncle, do you know—?

General: I know nothing.

Paulina: We're closing down the factory.

General: What? Good for you! No more whistles! Early every morning, right in the middle of a sound sleep—o-o-O-O! That's right, close it down!

Mikhail (*entering quickly*): Nikolai, just a minute! (*Taking him aside.*) The factory is closed down, but we had better take measures, just in case. Send a telegram to the Vice-Governor; tell him briefly the situation and ask him to send soldiers. Sign my name.

Nikolai: He's my friend as well.

Mikhail: I'm off to send those representatives to the devil. Don't tell anyone about the telegram. I'll tell them myself when the time comes. You won't?

Nikolai: I won't.

Mikhail: It makes you feel fine to have things your own way! I'm older than you in years, but younger in spirit, don't you think?

Nikolai: It's not youth, but nervousness, if you ask me.

Mikhail: I'll show you whether it's nervousness or not. You'll see! (*Goes out laughing.*)

Paulina: So they've decided to do it, Nikolai Vasilyevich?

Nikolai (*going out*): Seems so.

Paulina: Good heavens!

General: What have they decided to do?

Paulina: To close down the factory.

General: Oh, that. Kon!

Kon: Here, sir.

General: The fishing-rods and the boat!

Kon: Everything's ready.

General: I'm off to be amused by the fish. I prefer it to being abused by humans. (*Laughing.*) Well put, eh? (*Nadya runs in.*) Ah, my pretty butterfly! What's up?

Nadya (*happily*): We've just had an adventure! (*Turning back, she calls.*) Do come here please! Grekov! Don't let him go, Cleopatra Petrovna! Just as we were coming out of the woods, auntie, we suddenly came upon three drunken workmen.

Paulina: There now! I warned you—

Cleopatra (*followed by Grekov*): Can you imagine anything more disgusting!

Nadya: Why disgusting? It was so funny! Three workmen, auntie, all of them bowing and smiling and saying, "Good morning, dear ladies!"

Cleopatra: I shall certainly ask my husband to dismiss them.

Grekov (*smiling*): What for?

General (*to Nadya*): Who is that ... er ... smudge-face?

Nadya: He's the one who saved us, grandfather, don't you see?

General: No, I don't.

Cleopatra (*to Nadya*): As though anyone *could*, the way you tell it.

Nadya: I tell it just the way it was.

Paulina: It's impossible to make head or tail out of what you're saying, Nadya.

Nadya: Because you keep interrupting me! They came up to us and said, "Let's sing a song, shall we?"

Paulina: What impertinence!

Nadya: Nothing of the kind! "We heard that you sang very well," they said. "Of course," they said, "we're a little tipsy, but we're better that way." And it's the truth, auntie. When they're drunk they aren't sullen, as they usually are.

Cleopatra: Fortunately for us, this young man—

Nadya: I tell it better than you do! Cleopatra Petrovna began scolding them—and you needn't have, I'm sure you needn't! And then one of them, the tall thin one—

Cleopatra (*grimly*): I know who he is.

Nadya: ... took her by the hand and said in such a sad voice: "You're such a pretty well-bred lady, it's a pleasure just to look at you. Why should you scold? Have we done anything to hurt you?" He said it so nicely—from his very heart! But then another one, a gruff one, said: "Why do you talk to them? As if they could understand anything! They're not people, they're beasts!" Us—beasts! She and I. (*Laughs.*)

Tatyana (*laughing*): You seem to be very pleased with the title.

Paulina: What did I tell you, Nadya? If you insist on running off to all sorts of places—

Grekov (*to Nadya*): May I go now?

Nadya: Oh, no. Please don't. Won't you have some tea? Or milk? Please do!

(The General laughs. Cleopatra shrugs her shoulders. Tatyana watches Grekov and hums quietly. Paulina drops her head and concentrates on the spoons she is wiping.)

Grekov (*smiling*): No, thank you, I don't care for anything.

Nadya (*insisting*): Don't be bashful. These are all very nice people, really.

Paulina (*protestingly*): Nadya!

Nadya (*to Grekov*): Don't go yet. I haven't finished telling about it.

Cleopatra (*displeased*): In a word, this young man put in a timely appearance and talked his drunken friends into leaving us in peace. I asked him to see us home, and that's all there is to tell.

Nadya: Oh, the way you tell it! If it had been that way it would simply have been tiresome!

General: Well, now, what are we to make of this?

Nadya (*to Grekov*): Sit down! Auntie, why don't you invite him to sit down? And what are you all so glum about?

Paulina (*to Grekov, from where she is sitting*): I am very grateful to you, young man.

Grekov: Don't mention it.

Paulina (*more dryly*): It was very good of you to defend these young women.

Grekov (*calmly*): There was no need to defend them. No one wanted to do them harm.

Nadya: Auntie! How can you say such a thing!

Paulina: Don't try to teach your elders!

Nadya: But of course nobody defended anybody. He simply said to them, "Leave them alone, comrades. That isn't nice." They were so glad to see him! "Grekov!" they cried. "Come along with us! You're a clever chap!" And he really is clever, auntie. Forgive me, Grekov, but that's the truth.

Grekov (*smiling*): You have placed me in a very embarrassing position.

Nadya: Have I? I didn't mean to. It isn't me, it's them, Grekov.

Paulina: Nadya! I can't endure your exuberances. You make yourself ridiculous. But enough of this!

Nadya (*excitedly*): Laugh if I'm so funny! What are you sitting there like owls for? Go ahead and laugh!

Cleopatra: Nadya has a talent for making mountains out of molehills—and doing it very noisily. That's particularly unpleasant now, in front of a stranger who, as you see, is laughing at her.

Nadya (*To Grekov*): Are you laughing at me?

Grekov (*simply*): Not at all. I am admiring you.

Paulina (*overwhelmed*): What? Uncle—

Cleopatra (*with a short laugh*): There you are!

General: Enough of this! Good things in little doses. Here, young man, take this and be off.

Grekov (*turning away*): Thank you, but that is quite unnecessary.

Nadya (*covering her face with her hands*): Oh! How could you!

General (*stopping Grekov*): Wait a minute! I'm offering you ten rubles!

Grekov (*calmly*): What of it?

(*For a second all are silent.*)

General (*confused*): Er ... a ... who are you anyway?

Grekov: One of the workers.

General: A smith?

Grekov: No, a fitter.

General (*sternly*): That's all the same. Why don't you take this money, eh?

Grekov: Because I don't want it.

General (*irritated*): Nonsense. What *do* you want?

Grekov: Nothing.

General: Maybe you'd like to ask the hand of the young lady, eh?

(*He laughs. Everyone is embarrassed.*)

Nadya: Oh! Think what you're saying!

Paulina: Please, uncle—

Grekov (*calmly, to the General*): How old are you?

General (*amazed*): What? Me? How old?

Grekov (*in the same tone*): Yes. How old are you?

General (*glancing about*): I'm ... er ... sixty-one. What do you want to know that for?

Grekov (*leaving*): You're old enough to have more sense.

General: What? More sense? Me?

Nadya (*running after Grekov*): Please—please don't be angry. He's just an old man. They're really very nice people. Honest to goodness.

General: What the devil do you call this?

Grekov: Don't trouble yourself. This is only what is to be expected.

Nadya: It's just because of the heat. It's put everyone in a bad mood. And I told about our adventure so badly.

Grekov (*smiling*): They wouldn't have understood no matter how you told it.

(*They disappear.*)

General (*overwhelmed*): How dared he say such a thing to me!

Tatyana: You had no business to offer him money.

Paulina: Oh Nadya! That Nadya!

Cleopatra: The nerve of him! There's a proud Spaniard for you! I'll certainly ask my husband to—

General: A puppy, that's what he is!

Paulina: Nadya's impossible! Walking off with him like that! She upsets me so!

Cleopatra: These Socialists of yours keep getting more impudent every day.

Paulina: What makes you think he's a Socialist?

Cleopatra: I can see it. All the decent workers are Socialists.

General: I'll tell Zakhar to throw that young upstart out of the factory on his ear.

Tatyana: The factory is closed.

General: On his ear just the same!

Paulina: Tanya, go and call Nadya. That's a dear. Tell her I'm simply overwhelmed.

(Tatyana goes off.)

General: The scum! "How old?"—eh?

Cleopatra: Those drunkards had the impertinence to whistle at us. And you pamper them with reading circles and the like!

Paulina: Just imagine, on Thursday I had to go into the village, and all of a sudden I heard someone whistling at me. Even at me! They might have frightened the horses, to say nothing about the insult of it!

Cleopatra (*pedantically*): Zakhar Ivanovich is much to blame! He doesn't place the proper distance between himself and those people, as my husband says.

Paulina: He's too soft-hearted. He wants to be kind to everyone. He thinks that keeping on good terms with the common people is advantageous to both sides. In respect to the peasants, he is right. They lease the land and pay rent, and everything runs smoothly. But these... (*Enter Tatyana and Nadya.*) Nadya! Can't you understand, darling, how improper—

Nadya (*hotly*): It's you who were improper! You! The heat has affected you—made you hot and irritable. You don't understand a thing! As for you, grandfather—oh dear, how stupid you are!

General (*infuriated*): Me? Stupid? Must I listen to this a second time?

Nadya: Why did you say that about . . . about asking for my hand? Aren't you ashamed?

General: Ashamed? Well, that's the limit! I've had just about enough for one day! (*Goes out shouting at the top of his voice.*) Kon! The devil take the likes of you! Where under the sun have you got to, you dolt, you dunderhead!

Nadya: And you, auntie! You! You travel abroad and make fine speeches about politics! Not to have invited him to sit down, not to have offered him a cup of tea!

Paulina (*jumping up and throwing down a spoon*): This is impossible! Do you realize what you're saying?

Nadya: And you too, Cleopatra Petrovna! On the way back you were sweet and polite to him, but as soon as we got here—

Cleopatra: What was I supposed to do, kiss him? Sorry, but his face was dirty. By the way, who ever gave you the right to reprove me? There you are, Paulina Dmitriyevna. There's your democracy for you, or what do they call it—humanism? And my husband is the one who has to answer for it all. But you'll have to answer for it too, you'll see!

Paulina: I really must apologize, Cleopatra Petrovna, for Nadya's behaviour—

Cleopatra (*leaving*): Quite unnecessary. It isn't a question of only Nadya. You're all to blame!

Paulina: When your mother was dying, Nadya, and entrusted me with your upbringing—

Nadya: Don't speak of my mother! You never say the right things about her!

Paulina (*in amazement*): Nadya! Are you ill? Think of what you're saying. Your mother was my sister. I knew her a bit better than you did.

Nadya (*unable to restrain her tears*): You don't know anything. Poor people and rich people have nothing in common. My mother was poor, but she was good! You don't understand poor people! You don't even understand Aunt Tanya!

Paulina: I must ask you to leave, Nadya. Go at once!

Nadya (*as she goes off*): Very well. But I am right just the same. I'm right and you're wrong.

Paulina: Good heavens! A strong, healthy girl having a fit like this all of a sudden! Almost hysterics! Forgive me, Tanya, but I'm afraid you've been having a bad influence on her. You

talk to her about everything as though she were a grown-up. You take her among our employees—those people from the office—those queer workers. That's absurd, you know. And then these boating parties—

T a t y a n a : Don't take it so hard. Perhaps you'd better have a drink or something. There's no denying that you didn't show much tact with that worker. Nothing would have happened to the chair if you had asked him to sit on it.

P a u l i n a : You're all wrong. Certainly nobody can accuse me of having a wrong attitude towards the workers. But everything within limits, my dear!

T a t y a n a : And I don't take her anywhere, in spite of what you say. She goes herself, and I don't consider it necessary to stop her.

P a u l i n a : Herself! As if she understood what she was doing!

(Yakov enters slowly, slightly drunk.)

Y a k o v *(sitting down)*: There's going to be trouble at the factory.

P a u l i n a *(long-sufferingly)*: Stop it, Yakov Ivanovich!

Y a k o v : Yes, there is. There's going to be trouble. They're going to burn down the factory and roast us all in the fire—like rabbits.

T a t y a n a *(with vexation)*: You've been drinking already!

Y a k o v : I've always been drinking by this hour. I just saw Cleopatra. There's a low woman for you! Not because she's got so many lovers, but because there's a vicious old dog sitting right where her heart ought to be.

P a u l i n a *(rising)*: Everything was going along so nicely, and then all of a sudden—*(Walks aimlessly about the garden.)*

Y a k o v : Vicious and mangy. Not a big dog, but a greedy one. There it sits, baring its teeth. It's gobbled everything up, but it wants more, and it doesn't know what. That makes it restive.

T a t y a n a : Hush, Yakov! Here comes your brother.

Y a k o v : What do I care? I realize very well, Tanya, that it's impossible to love me any more, and that hurts. Yes, it hurts, but it doesn't stop me from loving you.

T a t y a n a : You had better freshen yourself up a bit. Go and have a bathe.

Z a k h a r *(entering)*: Have they announced that the factory is being closed down?

T a t y a n a : I don't know.

Yakov: No, they haven't, but the workers know it anyway.

Zakhar: How? Who told them?

Yakov: I did. I went and told them.

Paulina (*coming up*): Why did you do that?

Yakov (*shrugging his shoulders*): Just for the fun of it. They're interested. I tell them everything—everything they'll listen to. I think they like me. They enjoy knowing that their boss's brother is a drunk. It impresses them with the idea of the equality of men.

Zakhar: Hm. You often go to the factory, Yakov, and of course I have nothing against it. But Mikhail Vasilyevich says that sometimes when you are talking with the workers you criticize the management.

Yakov: That's a lie. I don't understand anything about management. Or mismanagement.

Zakhar: He also says that sometimes you bring vodka with you.

Yakov: That's a lie. I don't bring it; I send for it, and not sometimes but every time. They wouldn't pay any attention to me if I didn't give them vodka.

Zakhar: But, Yakov, judge for yourself—after all, you're the owner's brother.

Yakov: That's not my only shortcoming.

Zakhar (*offended*): Very well, I'll say nothing more. Nothing. For some reason I find myself surrounded by hostility—

Paulina: Very true. You should have heard what Nadya just said!

Pology (*running in*): Allow me to report... the director... they have just killed the director!

Zakhar: What!?

Paulina: You... what did you say?

Pology: Killed him outright. He fell down—

Zakhar: Who? Who shot him?

Pology: The workers.

Paulina: Did they catch them?

Zakhar: Is there a doctor there?

Pology: I don't know.

Paulina: Yakov Ivanovich! Go immediately.

Yakov (*with a helpless gesture*): Where?

Paulina: How did it happen?

Pology: The director was excited. He kicked one of the workers in the stomach.

Yakov: They're coming here.

(*Confusion. Mikhail Skrobotov is led in by Nikolai and Levshin, a bald middle-aged worker. Several workers and office employees come with them.*)

Mikhail (*in a tired voice*): Let go of me. Put me down.

Nikolai: Did you see who did the shooting?

Mikhail: I can't... go on....

Nikolai (*insistently*): Did you notice who did the shooting?

Mikhail: You're hurting me. Some red-headed fellow. Put me down. A red-headed fellow.

(*They place him on the turf seat.*)

Nikolai (*to a Policeman*): Do you hear? A red-headed fellow.

Policeman: Yes, Your Honour.

Mikhail: What difference does it make now?

Levshin (*to Nikolai*): Wouldn't it be better not to trouble him for the present?

Nikolai: Hold your tongue! Where's the doctor? I'm asking you where the doctor is!

(*Everyone starts whispering and moving about aimlessly.*)

Mikhail: Don't shout... The pain... Let me rest.

Levshin: That's right, rest a bit, Mikhail Vasilyevich. Ah, me! It's all a matter of money, this life of ours! Money's our breath, money's our death.

Nikolai: Policeman! Ask everyone who doesn't belong here to leave.

Policeman (*in a low voice*): Be off, fellows. Nothing to watch here.

Zakhar (*quietly*): Where's the doctor?

Nikolai: Misha! Misha! (*Bends over his brother; the others do likewise.*) I'm afraid, it's all over.

Zakhar: Impossible! He's just fainted!

Nikolai (*slowly and quietly*): No, he's dead. Do you understand what that means, Zakhar Ivanovich?

Zakhar: But... but maybe you're mistaken.

Nikolai: I'm not. *You're* the one responsible for this. *You!*

Zakhar (*overwhelmed*): Me?

Tatyana: How cruel... and absurd!

Nikolai (*aggressively*): Yes, you!

Chief of Police (*running in*): Where's the director? Is he seriously wounded?

Levshin: He's dead. He, as was always making others stir themselves—just look at him now.

Nikolai (*to the Chief of Police*): He managed to tell us that the fellow who killed him was a red-head.

Chief of Police: A red-head?

Nikolai: Yes. You must immediately take measures.

Chief of Police (*to the Police Sergeant*): Round up all the red-heads.

Policeman: Yes, sir.

Chief of Police: See that you don't miss anybody!

(The Policeman goes out.)

Cleopatra (*running in*): Where is he? Misha! What's the matter, has he fainted? Nikolai Vasilyevich, has he fainted? (*Nikolai turns away.*) Is he dead? Is he?

Levshin: He's quiet now. He threatened them with his pistol, but the pistol was turned against himself.

Nikolai (*angrily, under his breath*): Get out of here! (*To the Chief of Police.*) Take this fellow away!

Cleopatra: The doctor—what does the doctor say?

Chief of Police (*under his breath to Levshin*): Clear out, you!

Levshin (*quietly*): I'm going. No need to shove.

Cleopatra (*quietly*): Have they killed him?

Paulina (*to Cleopatra*): Darling!

Cleopatra (*quietly but vengefully*): Don't touch me! This is your work! Yours!

Zakhar (*despondently*): I understand that this is a dreadful blow to you, but why . . . why say such a thing?

Paulina (*tearfully*): Oh, my dear, think what you're saying!

Tatyana (*to Paulina*): You had better not stay here. Where's the doctor?

Cleopatra: It's your accursed softness that killed him!

Nikolai (*dryly*): Come, Cleopatra, Zakhar Ivanovich is well aware of his guilt without your rubbing it in.

Zakhar (*despondent*): But . . . I don't understand. What are you saying? How can you make such an accusation?

Paulina: This is horrible! Such lack of feeling!

Cleopatra: Lack of feeling? You poisoned the workers against him, you destroyed his influence over them. They used to be afraid of him. They used to tremble at the very sight of him. And now they've killed him. And it's you, *you* who are to blame. His blood is on your hands!

Nikolai: Enough of this. You mustn't shout.

Cleopatra (*to Paulina*): Crying, are you? Good. Go ahead and cry! Cry all his blood out of your eyes!

Policeman (*coming out*): Sir—

Chief of Police: Sh!

Policeman: All the red-heads are rounded up.

(Through the garden in the background comes the General pushing Kon in front of him and laughing loudly.)

Nikolai: Sh-h-h!

Cleopatra: Well, you murderers?

CURTAIN

ACT II

A bright moon throws heavy shadows in the garden. On the table is a disorderly array of bread, cucumbers, eggs, and bottles of beer. Candles are burning in lanterns. Agrafena is washing the dishes. Yagodin is sitting with a stick in his hand and smoking. Tatyana, Nadya and Levshin are standing left. Everyone speaks in lowered voices, as though listening for something. The general atmosphere is one of tense anticipation.

Levshin (to Nadya): Everything human carries the taint of copper, miss. That's why your young heart is heavy. All people are chained to a copper kopek—all but you, and so you don't fit in. To every man on this earth the kopek jingles its message: "Love me as you love yourself." But that doesn't mean you. A bird neither sows nor reaps.

Yagodin (to Agrafena): Levshin has started teaching his betters, the old simpleton!

Agrafena: Why not? He tells them the truth. A little truth won't do his betters any harm either.

Nadya: Do you have a hard life, Levshin?

Levshin: Oh, not very. I have no children. I have a woman—a wife, that is. But our children all died.

Nadya: Aunt Tanya, why does everyone speak in whispers when there's a dead body in the house?

Tatyana: I don't know.

Levshin (smiling): Because we're all guilty before the dead, miss. Guilty on every count.

Nadya: But it isn't always like this, that the dead man's been—been killed. But people speak in whispers anyway.

Levshin: We kill them all, miss. Some with bullets, others with words. We kill everybody with our doings. We drive people from the sun into the soil without even knowing it. But we begin to sense our guilt, once we've thrown a man into the arms of death. We begin to feel sorry for the dead one and to feel ashamed of ourselves, and a great fear rises up in us. Because, don't you see, we ourselves are being driven the same way; we ourselves are headed for the grave.

Nadya: That's a dreadful thought.

Levshin: Don't let it worry you. Today it's dreadful, tomorrow it's forgotten. And people begin pushing each other about again. When one of them falls down everybody is quiet and ashamed for a moment. Then they give a sigh and begin all over again, in the same old way. It's all their ignorance. But you need feel no shame, miss. Dead people won't disturb you. You can talk as loud as you like in front of them.

Tatyana: How do you think we ought to change our way of living, Levshin?

Levshin (*mysteriously*): We've got to do away with the kopek. Got to bury it. Once the kopek's gone, why should we push each other about? Why be enemies?

Tatyana: And that's all?

Levshin: It's enough to begin with.

Tatyana: Wouldn't you like to take a walk in the garden, Nadya?

Nadya (*pensively*): Perhaps.

(They disappear in the depths of the garden; Levshin crosses to the table. The General, Kon and Pology appear near the tent.)

Yagodin: You're sowing your seeds on stony soil, Levshin, you simpleton!

Levshin: Why?

Yagodin: No sense in trying to teach them anything. As though they could understand! What you say would reach the heart of a working man, but not of the gentlefolk.

Levshin: The young miss is a nice little thing. Grekov told me about her.

Agrafena: Will you have another glass of tea?

Levshin: I don't mind if I do.

(Pause. Then the General's voice is heard; the white dresses of Nadya and Tatyana glimpse through the trees.)

General: Or you take a piece of string and stretch it across the road so's nobody can see it. Somebody comes along and all of a sudden—flop!

Pology: It's such a pleasure to see somebody fall, sir!

Yagodin: Hear that?

Levshin: I hear it all right.

Kon: We can't do a thing like that today, with a dead man in the house. You can't play jokes with a dead man in the house.

General: Don't teach me! When you die I'll do a hand-spring.

(*Tatyana and Nadya approach the table.*)

Levshin: The General's in his dotage.

Agrafena (*going towards the house*): Always up to some tricks!

Tatyana (*sitting down at the table*): Tell me, Levshin, are you a Socialist?

Levshin (*simply*): Me? No. Me and Timofei—we're weavers. That's what we are—weavers.

Tatyana: Do you know any Socialists? Have you heard about them?

Levshin: Yes, we've heard about them. We don't know any, but we've heard about them.

Tatyana: Do you know Sintsov who works in the office?

Levshin: Oh yes, we know him. We know all the men in the office.

Tatyana: Have you ever spoken to him?

Yagodin (*uneasily*): What should we speak to him about? He works upstairs. We're downstairs. If we have to go to the office, he tells us what the director wants and that's all. That's all we know about him.

Nadya: You seem to be afraid of us, Levshin. Don't be afraid. We're really very much interested—

Levshin: Why should we be afraid? We haven't done anything wrong. They asked us to come here and keep order, so we came. Down there the people are mad. They swear they'll burn down the factory and everything else—won't leave anything but a heap of cinders. Well, we don't approve of such mischief. There's no point in burning things down. Why burn them down? We built them ourselves, we and our fathers, and our grandfathers. Why should we go and burn them down?

Tatyana: I hope you don't think we're questioning you so as to do you harm.

Yagodin: Why should you? *We* don't wish anybody any harm.

Levshin: Here's what we think: whatever people have built with their own hands is sacred. You have to value human labour, and not go burning things down. The people are dark-minded. They love a fire. And they've been sore tempted. The deceased

was hard on us, there's no denying that. He kept waving that pistol of his to put the fear of God in us—

N a d y a: Is my uncle any better?

Y a g o d i n: Zakhar Ivanovich?

N a d y a: Yes. Is he any kinder? Or is he just as hard on you?

L e v s h i n: I wouldn't say that.

Y a g o d i n (*sullenly*): They're all the same, seems to me—strict or easy. All alike.

L e v s h i n (*gently*): The strict one's a boss and the easy one's a boss. A cancer don't care whose flesh it eats.

Y a g o d i n (*with a bored air*): Zakhar Ivanovich is kind-hearted.

N a d y a: You mean he's better than Skrobotov?

Y a g o d i n (*softly*): Don't forget the director's dead.

L e v s h i n: Your uncle's a good man, miss. Only—that don't make it any easier for us.

T a t y a n a (*irritated*): Let's go, Nadya. Can't you see they don't want to understand us?

N a d y a (*softly*): Yes.

(They go off in silence. Levshin watches them go, then looks at Yagodin; they both smile.)

Y a g o d i n: Get on your nerves, don't they?

L e v s h i n: Hear that? They're "very much interested."

Y a g o d i n: Maybe they think we'll spill something.

L e v s h i n: I still think the young miss is a nice little thing. Too bad she's rich.

Y a g o d i n: We'd better tell Matvei Nikolayevich about this—that the lady was trying to pump us.

L e v s h i n: We'll tell him. And we'll tell Grekov.

Y a g o d i n: I wonder how things are going. The management ought to give in to us.

L e v s h i n: It will. Then in a little while they'll start squeezing us against the wall again.

Y a g o d i n: Squeezing our guts out.

L e v s h i n: Uh-huh.

Y a g o d i n: Hm. Oh, to have a good sleep!

L e v s h i n: Not yet. Here comes the General.

(The General comes on. Pology walks beside him deferentially. Behind them comes Kon. Suddenly Pology seizes the General's arm.)

General: What's that?

Pology: A hole in the ground. Don't step in it.

General: Oh. What's all this on the table? Such a mess. Have you been eating here?

Yagodin: Yes, sir; us and the young miss.

General: So you're guarding the place for us?

Yagodin: Yes, sir. We're on duty.

General: Good. I'll speak to the Governor about you. How many of you are there here?

Levshin: Two of us.

General: Idiot! I can count to two. How many are there all together?

Yagodin: About thirty.

General: Are you armed?

Levshin (to Yagodin): Where's that pistol you had, Timofei?

Yagodin: Here it is.

General: Don't hold it by the muzzle! Damn it, Kon, teach these blockheads how to hold a revolver. (To Levshin.) Have you got a revolver?

Levshin: Not me.

General: If the rebels come, do you intend to shoot?

Levshin: They won't come, sir. They didn't mean anything—just flared up for a minute.

General: But if they *do* come?

Levshin: They were sore, you see—about closing down the factory. Some of them have children.

General: What are you raving on about? I'm asking you if you intend to shoot?

Levshin: Well, we're willing to, sir. Why not? Only we don't know how. And besides, there's nothing for us to shoot with. If this was a rifle, now—or a cannon.

General: Kon! Come here and teach them. Go down to the river.

Kon (*sullenly*): Allow me to report that it's dark, sir. People will get frightened if we start shooting. They'll rush out to see what's up. But just as you say. It's all the same to me.

General: Very well. Put it off until tomorrow!

Levshin: Tomorrow everything will be quiet. They'll open up the factory tomorrow.

General: Who will?

Levshin: Zakhar Ivanovich. He's talking to the workers about that now.

General: Damn it all! If I had my way, I'd close down the factory forever. I'd put a stop to those pesky whistles early in the morning!

Yagodin: We wouldn't mind either if they blew them a little later.

General: And I'd starve you good and proper. No more of your riots!

Levshin: Do you call this a riot?

General: Hold your tongue! What are you doing here anyway? You ought to be making your rounds along the fence, and if anybody comes crawling up—shoot on the spot! I'll be responsible!

Levshin: Come on, Timofei. Bring your pistol.

General (*muttering after them*): Pistol! The stupid asses! Don't even know a revolver when they see one!

Pology: Allow me to inform you, sir, that the common people are, for the most part, coarse and bestial. Take my case, for instance: I have a garden and cultivate vegetables with my own hands—

General: Very commendable.

Pology: I devote all the free time at my disposal to this work.

General: Well, everybody's expected to work!

(*Tatyana and Nadya come on.*)

Tatyana (*from a distance*): Why are you shouting so?

General: Ugh, these people! (*To Pology.*) Well?

Pology: But almost every night the workers steal the fruits of my labour.

General: Steal, you say?

Pology: Exactly. I have sought the protection of the law, but the law is represented in these parts by the honourable Chief of Police, an individual who displays the greatest indifference to the needs of the population.

Tatyana (*to Pology*): Why in the world do you use such high-flown language?

Pology (*embarrassed*): Do I? I beg your pardon, but for three years I studied at the gymnasium and I read the paper daily.

Tatyana (*smiling*): Oh, so that explains it!

Nadya: You're very funny, Pology.

Pology: I am happy if it gives you pleasure. An individual should strive to make himself pleasant.

General: I suppose you love fishing?

Pology: I've never tried it, sir.

General (*shrugging his shoulders*): A strange answer!

Tatyana: What haven't you tried—fishing or loving?

Pology: The former.

Tatyana: And the latter?

Pology: I *have* tried that.

Tatyana: Are you married?

Pology: I only dream of married bliss. But since I earn only twenty-five rubles a month (*Nikolai and Cleopatra enter quickly*), I dare not venture upon such an undertaking.

Nikolai (*angrily*): Simply amazing! Utter chaos!

Cleopatra: How could he! How *dare* he!

General: What's the trouble?

Cleopatra (*shouting*): Your nephew is a milksop! He has granted all the demands of the insurgents—the murderers of my husband!

Nadya (*softly*): But all of them aren't murderers.

Cleopatra: He is making a mockery of his dead body! And of me! Just to think of it! Opening the gates of the factory before the man is buried whom those rascals killed just because he closed them!

Nadya: But uncle is afraid they will burn down everything!

Cleopatra: You're a child and should hold your tongue!

Nikolai: The speech that young boy made! The most obvious socialist propaganda!

Cleopatra: There is some clerk who is at the head of them and gives them advice. He had the nerve to say the crime was provoked by the deceased himself!

Nikolai (*jotting down something in his notebook*): That fellow rouses my suspicions. He's too clever for a mere clerk.

Tatyana: Are you speaking of Sintsov?

Nikolai: Yes.

Cleopatra: I feel as if someone had spit in my face.

Pology (*to Nikolai*): Allow me to remark that, when reading the newspaper, Mr. Sintsov always comments extensively on politics and is strongly prejudiced against the authorities.

Tatyana (*to Nikolai*): Are you interested in hearing such tales?

Nikolai (*challengingly*): Yes, I am! Are you trying to shame me?

Tatyana: I don't think Mr. Pology belongs here.

Pology (*confused*): I beg your pardon. I shall go at once. (*Hurries out.*)

Cleopatra: Here he comes. I don't want to see him. I couldn't bear it! (*Hurries off.*)

Nadya: What is happening?

General: I'm too old for such excitement. Killings. Uprisings. Zakhar should have foreseen all this when he invited me to come here for a rest. (*Zakhar comes on, excited but pleased. On seeing Nikolai he stops in embarrassment and adjusts his glasses.*) Listen, my dear nephew, do you realize what you've done?

Zakhar: Just a minute, uncle. Nikolai Vasilyevich!

Nikolai: Ye-es.

Zakhar: The workers were in such a state of excitement that . . . I was afraid they would destroy the factory . . . and so I . . . I conceded their demand not to close down. And their demand about Dichkov, too. But I did it on condition that they hand over the criminal, and they are looking for him.

Nikolai (*dryly*): They needn't trouble themselves. We'll find the murderer without their aid.

Zakhar: I would rather have them find him themselves. That would be better. We agreed to open the factory after lunch tomorrow.

Nikolai: Who do you mean by "we"?

Zakhar: I . . .

Nikolai: Ah! Thank you for the information. But I feel that after the death of my brother his place should be taken by me and his wife. Certainly you should have consulted us in this matter instead of making the decision yourself.

Zakhar: But I asked you to come! Sintsov even came for you, but you refused.

Nikolai: I could hardly be expected to think of business matters on the day of my brother's death.

Zakhar: But you went to the factory anyway.

Nikolai: I did. I went to listen to their speeches. What of it?

Zakhar: But don't you see? The deceased, it turns out, wired the town authorities to send troops. A reply was received saying they would arrive tomorrow morning.

General: Aha! Soldiers! That's talking! No nonsense when there's soldiers on the scene!

Nikolai: A very wise measure.

Zakhar: I'm not sure. If troops come the workers will grow more excited than ever. The Lord only knows what they may do if we don't open up the factory! It seems to me that I did the right thing. At least there will be no bloodshed.

Nikolai: I take a different view of the matter. You should not have conceded everything to those . . . er . . . creatures, if only out of respect for the memory of the deceased.

Zakhar: But don't you see this may lead to further tragedy?

Nikolai: That doesn't concern me.

Zakhar: True, but what about me? It's me who has to live with the workers. And if their blood is shed . . . why, they might tear down the factory!

Nikolai: I don't believe they would.

General: Neither do I!

Zakhar (*despondent*): And so you blame me for what I've done?

Nikolai: Yes, I do.

Zakhar (*sincerely*): Why should there be all this hostility? I want only one thing—to avoid the horror that is only too possible. I don't want bloodshed. Is it really impossible to achieve a peaceful, reasonable way of life? You look upon me with hate, the workers with distrust. I want to do what's right—only what's right!

General: Who knows what's right? It isn't even a word. Just a collection of letters. R for rat, T for tat. But business is business. Isn't that how it goes?

Nadya (*tearfully*): Hush, grandfather. Uncle, don't let it upset you so. He doesn't understand. Oh, why don't you understand, Nikolai Vasilyevich? You're so clever. Why don't you trust uncle?

Nikolai: Sorry, but I am going, Zakhar Ivanovich. I'm not accustomed to having children interfere in business matters. (*Goes off.*)

Zakhar: See that, Nadya?

Nadya (*taking his hand*): It doesn't matter. The important thing is that the workers must be satisfied. There are so many of them, lots more than us.

Zakhar: Just a minute. I'm very much displeased with you, Nadya. Very.

General: So am I.

Zakhar: You sympathize with the workers. That's only natural at your age, but you mustn't lose your sense of proportion, my dear. This morning, now, you brought that fellow Grekov to the table. I know him. He's an intelligent chap. But you had no right to cause a scene with your aunt on his account.

General: Go on! Give it to her!

Nadya: But you don't know how it all happened.

Zakhar: I know more than you do, you can be sure. Our people are coarse and uncultivated. If you give them a finger they seize the whole hand.

Tatyana (*quietly*): Like a drowning man clutching at a straw.

Zakhar: They are as greedy as animals, and they mustn't be spoiled. They must be cultivated—that's it, cultivated. Be so good as to think this over.

General: And now I'll have my say. The devil only knows how you behave toward me, you little vixen. Let me remind you that it will take you forty years to catch up to me in age. You'll have to wait that long before I'll let you talk to me as an equal. Remember that. Kon!

Kon (*from among the trees*): Here.

General: Where is that ... what's his name? ... that corkscrew.

Kon: What corkscrew?

General: That ... I've forgotten his name. The thin slippery one.

Kon: Oh, Pology. I don't know.

General (*going toward the tent*): Find him.

(Zakhar walks up and down with bent head, polishing his glasses on his pocket handkerchief. Nadya sits deep in thought. Tatyana is standing and watching them.)

Tatyana: Is it known who killed him?

Zakhar: They say they don't know, but they promise to find him. Of course, they know. I think—(*He glances about and lowers his voice.*)—I think they have a tacit agreement. It's a conspiracy. It's true that he exasperated them.—He stopped at nothing. Love of power was a kind of disease with him. And so they just killed him. Awful, isn't it? Awful in its very simplicity. And still they look at you with such clear, candid eyes, as though they don't realize they have committed a crime. It's all so shockingly simple!

Tat'yana: They say Skrobotov was about to shoot when somebody snatched the revolver out of his hand and—

Zakhar: That isn't important. It was they who did the shooting, not he.

Nadya: Why don't you sit down?

Zakhar: Why did he send for troops? They found out as they find everything out, and that hastened his death. Of course I had to throw open the gates of the factory. If I hadn't, my relations with them would have been spoiled for a long time to come. At a time like this one has to show them more attention and consideration. Who knows how it may end? At such a time a sensible person must make sure to have friends among the common people. (*Levshin appears upstage.*) Who's that?

Levshin: It's us. We're on duty.

Zakhar: Well, Levshin, now that you've killed a man you've become meek and peaceable, eh?

Levshin: We're always that way, Zakhar Ivanovich; we're always peaceable.

Zakhar (*reprovingly*): Aren't you just! And you kill people peaceably, eh? By the way, I hear you're spreading ideas, Levshin; some new-fangled ideas about not needing money and bosses and such things any more. That's forgivable—that is, it's understandable—in Lev Tolstoi, but you'd better drop it, my friend. Nothing good will come of such talk.

(Tat'yana and Nadya go out right, from whence the voices of Sintsov and Yakov come. Yagodin appears from behind the trees.)

Levshin (*calmly*): What talk? I've lived a bit, thought a bit, and say what I think.

Zakhar: Bosses aren't beasts. You've got to understand that. I'm not really a bad sort. I'm always ready to help you. I want to do what is right.

Levshin (*sighing*): Is there anybody who wants to do himself harm?

Zakhar: But can't you understand? I want to do what is right for you!

Levshin: We understand, of course. . . .

Zakhar (*looking closely at him*): No, you're wrong. You don't understand. What strange people you are! Sometimes you're like beasts, sometimes like little children.

(*He goes out. Levshin stands leaning on his stick watching him go.*)

Yagodin: Another sermon?

Levshin: He's a Chinaman. A real Chinaman. What's he trying to say? He can't understand anybody but himself.

Yagodin: He says he wants to do what's right.

Levshin: That's it.

Yagodin: Let's go. Here they come.

(*Levshin and Yagodin withdraw into the depth of the garden. Tatyana, Nadya, Yakov and Sintsov come on up-stage right.*)

Nadya: We keep walking round and round in circles, as if in a dream.

Tatyana: Would you like something to eat, Matvei Nikolayevich?

Sintsov: I'd rather have a glass of tea. I've talked so much today that I have a sore throat.

Nadya: Aren't you afraid of anything?

Sintsov (*sitting down at the table*): Me? No, I'm not.

Nadya: Well, I am. Things have got so mixed up! I can't make out who is right and who is wrong.

Sintsov (*smiling*): They'll get straightened out. Don't be afraid to think. Think fearlessly, straight through to the end. On the whole, there's nothing to be afraid of.

Tatyana: Do you think everything has quieted down?

Sintsov: Yes. The workers hardly ever win, and even a small victory brings them great satisfaction.

Nadya: Are you fond of them?

Sintsov: That's hardly the word. I've lived with them a long time; I know them and am aware of their strength. I believe in their intelligence.

Tatyana: And that the future belongs to them?

Sintsov: Yes, I believe that, too.

Nadya: The future. What's the future?

Tatyana (*smiling*): They're a sly lot, your proletarians. Nadya and I tried to talk to them, but nothing came of it.

Nadya: It wasn't very nice. The old man talked to us as though we were wicked—spies or something. But there's another one, Grekov—he looks at people differently. The old man keeps smiling as if he pitied us, as if we were sick.

T a t y a n a : Stop drinking, Yakov. I can't bear to see you.

Y a k o v : What am I supposed to do?

S i n t s o v : Is there nothing else to do?

Y a k o v : I have an aversion, a unconquerable aversion to business and everything connected with it. You see, I belong to the third category.

S i n t s o v : To what?

Y a k o v : The third category. People are divided into three categories: the first consists of those who work all their lives, the second of those who save money, the third of those who refuse to earn their bread because there's no sense in it, and can't save money because it's foolish and beneath them. That's me—the third category. To this category belong all the lazy loafers, the tramps, monks, beggars and other parasites of this world.

N a d y a : Why do you say such tiresome things, uncle? And you're not like that at all. You're just kind and soft-hearted.

Y a k o v : In other words, good-for-nothing. I realized that when I was still in school. People get into these three categories before they grow up.

T a t y a n a : Nadya was right when she said you were tiresome, Yakov.

Y a k o v : I agree with her. Matvei Nikolayevich, do you think life has a face?

S i n t s o v : It may have.

Y a k o v : It does have. And its face is always young. Not long ago life looked at me indifferently, but now it looks at me sternly and keeps saying: "Who are you? Where are you going?"

(He seems to be frightened by something, and when he tries to smile his lips quiver and his face is distorted into a pitiful grimace.)

T a t y a n a : Oh, drop it, Yakov. Here comes the prosecutor. I shouldn't like you to say such things in front of him.

Y a k o v : Very well.

N a d y a *(softly)* : Everybody's expecting something awful to happen. Why don't they let me make friends with the workers? It's so stupid!

N i k o l a i *(coming up)* : May I have a glass of tea?

T a t y a n a : You may.

(For a few seconds everyone sits in silence. Nikolai is standing, stirring his tea.)

Nadya: I should like to know why the workers don't trust uncle, and in general—

Nikolai (*sullenly*): They only trust those who make speeches on the theme: "Workers of All Countries, Unite!" They trust them, all right.

Nadya (*quietly and with a shrug of her shoulders*): Those words—that challenge to the workers of all countries—they make me feel out of it, as if people like us were not wanted.

Nikolai (*roused*): Quite right! Every civilized person should feel like that, and then I'm sure another challenge would soon be heard: "Civilized People of All Countries, Unite!" It's high time to cry that. High time! The barbarians are coming to trample in the dust the fruits of thousands of years of civilization. They're on the way, impelled by their greed!

Yakov: They wear their souls in their bellies, in their empty bellies, and that's a sight to make anyone drink.

(*Pours himself out a glass of beer.*)

Nikolai: The mob is coming, impelled by greed, marshalled into unity by their one desire—to guzzle!

Tatyana (*pensively*): The mob. Everywhere the mob. In the theatres, in the churches. . . .

Nikolai: What can these people contribute? Nothing but destruction. And note that the destruction will be more fearful here, among us, than anywhere else.

Tatyana: It always seems strange to me when I hear the workers referred to as advanced people. That's far from my understanding of them.

Nikolai: And you, Mr. Sintsov? I don't suppose you agree with us.

Sintsov (*calmly*): No, I don't.

Nadya: Aunt Tanya, do you remember what the old man said about the kopek? How simply he put it!

Nikolai: Why don't you agree with us, Mr. Sintsov?

Sintsov: Because I think differently.

Nikolai: A reasonable answer. But perhaps you would share your views with us?

Sintsov: I don't think I care to.

Nikolai: Very sorry to hear it. I hope when we next meet, your attitude will have changed. Yakov Ivanovich, if it isn't asking too much, see me to the house. My nerves are shot to pieces.

Yakov (*rising with difficulty*): With pleasure, with pleasure. (*They go out*).

Tatyana: That prosecutor is a loathsome man. It's hard to agree with anything he says.

Nadya (*rising*): Then why do you?

Sintsov (*laughing*): Yes, why do you, Tatyana Pavlovna?

Tatyana: Because our views are the same.

Sintsov (*to Tatyana*): You think as he does, but you feel differently. You want to understand, but he doesn't. Understanding means nothing to him.

Tatyana: He must be very cruel.

Sintsov: Yes, he is. In the city he handles the political cases, and his attitude towards those who are arrested is disgusting.

Tatyana: By the way, he jotted down something about you in his notebook.

Sintsov (*with a smile*): I don't doubt it. He had a talk with Pology. He never misses anything. Tatyana Pavlovna, I should like to ask a favour of you.

Tatyana: I shall be glad to do anything I can.

Sintsov: Thank you. I suppose the gendarmes have been called.

Tatyana: They have.

Sintsov: That means they will search the houses. Could you hide something for me?

Tatyana: Do you think they will search your house?

Sintsov: Of course.

Tatyana: And they may arrest you?

Sintsov: I don't think so. What for? Because I make speeches? Zakhar Ivanovich knows that in all my speeches I call the workers to order.

Tatyana: And is there nothing in your past?

Sintsov: I have no past. Will you help me? I wouldn't trouble you if I didn't think the houses of all those who might hide these things were sure to be searched tomorrow. (*Laughs quietly*.)

Tatyana (*embarrassed*): I shall speak frankly. My situation in this house does not allow me to use the room I have been given as though it were my own.

Sintsov: In other words you cannot? Well, then—

Tatyana: Please don't be offended.

Sintsov: Oh, I'm not. Your refusal is quite understandable.

T a t y a n a : But wait. I shall speak to Nadya.

(*Goes out. Sintsov drums with his fingers on the table as he watches her go. Cautious steps are heard.*)

S i n t s o v (*softly*): Who's there?

G r e k o v : Me. Are you alone?

S i n t s o v : Yes, but there are people about. What's new at the factory?

G r e k o v (*with a short laugh*): As you know, they agreed to find the one who did the shooting. An investigation is being carried on. Some are shouting that the Socialists killed him—those who are trying to save their own skins.

S i n t s o v : Do you know . . . who did it?

G r e k o v : Akimov.

S i n t s o v : Really?! Hm. I didn't expect that. He's a decent, sensible fellow.

G r e k o v : Hot-tempered. Wants to give himself up. He has a wife and child, and another coming. I just spoke to Levshin. He, of course, talks nonsense—says we ought to substitute somebody less important for Akimov.

S i n t s o v : Queer duck! But I'm sorry to hear this. (*Pause.*) You'll have to bury everything in the ground, Grekov. There's no other place to hide it.

G r e k o v : I've found a place. The telegraph operator agreed to take everything. But you'd better get away from here, Matvei Nikolayevich.

S i n t s o v : I'm not going anywhere.

G r e k o v : They'll arrest you.

S i n t s o v : Let them. The workers will get the wrong impression if I leave.

G r e k o v : True enough, but I feel sorry for you.

S i n t s o v : Nonsense. Akimov's the one to feel sorry for.

G r e k o v : And there's nothing we can do to help. Wants to give himself up. Funny to see you in the role of guardian of the bosses' property.

S i n t s o v (*smiling*): Can't be helped. I suppose my fellows are asleep?

G r e k o v : No, they're talking things over. The night's fine.

S i n t s o v : I'd be glad to go along with you, but I must wait here. They'll probably arrest you too.

G r e k o v : So we'll serve our sentence together. I'm off.

(Goes out.)

Sintsov: Good-bye. (*Tatyana comes on.*) Don't bother, Tatyana Pavlovna; I've arranged everything. Good-bye.

Tatyana: I'm awfully sorry.

Sintsov: Good night.

(*Goes out. Tatyana walks quietly up and down, studying the toes of her shoes. Yakov comes on.*)

Yakov: Why don't you go to bed?

Tatyana: I don't feel like it. I'm thinking of going away from here.

Yakov: Hm. As for me, there's nowhere for me to go. I've sailed past all the continents and islands.

Tatyana: It's depressing here. Everything keeps swaying and makes me dizzy. I'm forced to lie, and I can't bear to lie.

Yakov: True, you can't bear to lie. Unfortunately for me. Unfortunately.

Tatyana (*to herself*): And I just told a lie. Of course Nadya would have agreed to hide those things. But I have no right to start her along that road.

Yakov: What are you talking about?

Tatyana: Nothing in particular. How strange! Yesterday everything seemed so clear and simple. I thought I knew what I wanted.

Yakov (*quietly*): Talented drunkards, handsome loafers and other members of the jolly professions have ceased to attract attention. As long as we offered a contrast to the boredom of everyday life, people took an interest in us. But now everyday life is becoming more and more dramatic. And people are shouting at us: "Hey, you clowns and comedians! Off the stage!" But the stage is your field, Tanya.

Tatyana (*moved*): My field? Yes, I once thought I stood firmly on the stage, and that I could attain to great heights there. (*Forcefully, and painfully.*) I feel hurt and ashamed when people watch me coldly, silently, as if they were saying: "We know all that. It's old and stale." They disarm me. I can't capture their hearts and rouse their emotions. I want to tremble with joy and fear, I want to speak words full of fire, passion, and hate! Words sharp as a knife, flaming as a torch! I want to pour them lavishly before people—let them catch fire! Let them shout and rush

away! But there are no such words. I would stop them by tossing other words to them—beautiful ones this time, beautiful as flowers, full of hope and love and joy! They would weep, and so would I. Weep such lovely tears. They would give me an ovation, bury me in flowers, lift me into the air! For a moment I should have held them in my power. For a moment I should have been vitally alive. All of life in that one moment! But there are no such living words.

Yakov: We all know how to live only for a moment.

Tatyana: The best things in life are always for just a moment. How I should like to see people different—more responsive! And life different—less vain. A life in which art would be indispensable to everyone, always. So that I would have a place in life. (*Yakov is gazing wide-eyed into the darkness.*) Why do you drink so much? You have killed yourself. Once you were handsome.

Yakov: Forget it.

Tatyana: Can't you understand how hard it is for me?

Yakov (*with horror*): No matter how drunk I am, I understand everything. That's my misfortune. My mind keeps going on and on with accursed persistence. All the time. And all the time I see a leering face, broad and unwashed, with enormous eyes that keep saying: "Well?" Just that one word: "Well?"

Paulina (*running in*): Tanya! Come here, Tanya. It's Cleopatra—she's gone mad—she's insulting everybody. Perhaps you can bring her to her senses.

Tatyana (*miserably*): Leave me out of your squabbles. Gobble each other up if you must, but don't keep getting in other people's way.

Paulina (*startled*): Tanya! What's the matter with you? What are you saying?

Tatyana: What are you after? What do you want?

Paulina: Look at her. Here she comes.

Zakhar (*off stage*): Be quiet, I beg of you!

Cleopatra (*also off stage*): It's you who should be quiet in my presence!

Paulina: She'll start shouting here, with these muzhiks around. It's awful, Tanya. Please—

Zakhar (*entering*): I'm afraid I'm losing my mind.

Cleopatra (*following him*): You can't run away from me. I'll make you listen to me. You played up to the workers because you needed their respect. You threw them a human life as you

would toss a piece of meat to snarling dogs. You're humane at other people's expense, at the price of other people's blood!

Zakhar: What is she saying?

Yakov (*to Tatyana*): You'd better go away. (*He goes out.*)

Paulina: Look here, my fine lady, we're respectable people and we won't have a woman of your reputation shouting at us.

Zakhar (*startled*): Paulina! For God's sake!

Cleopatra: What makes you think you're respectable? Because you babble about politics? About the misery of the masses? About progress and humanity? Is that why?

Tatyana: Cleopatra Petrovna! Enough of this!

Cleopatra: I'm not talking to you. You don't belong here. This is none of your business. My husband was an honest man—frank and honest. He knew the common people better than you. He didn't go around babbling like you. And you betrayed him. You murdered him with your vicious stupidity.

Tatyana (*to Paulina and Zakhar*): Go away, you two.

Cleopatra: I'll go away myself. You're loathsome—all of you! (*Goes out.*)

Zakhar: There's a crazy woman for you!

Paulina (*tearfully*): We must drop everything and go away. To insult people like that!

Zakhar: What has got into her? If she had loved her husband, or even lived contentedly with him! But to have taken on at least two lovers a year and then to go about shouting like this!

Paulina: We must sell the factory.

Zakhar (*in vexation*): Nonsense! That's not the way out. We have got to think things over, and think them over well. I was speaking to Nikolai Vasilyevich when that woman tore in and interrupted us.

Paulina: Nikolai Vasilyevich hates us too. He's a horrid man.

Zakhar (*more composed*): He's angered and shocked, but he's a clever person and has no reason for hating us. There are very practical considerations binding him to us since the death of Mikhail.

Paulina: I'm afraid of him, and I don't trust him. He'll deceive you.

Zakhar: Nonsense, Paulina. He has very good judgement—yes, he has. The fact of the matter is, I really did assume a dubious position in my relations with the workers. I must confess

that. When I spoke to them that evening—you can't imagine how dead set they are against us, Paulina!

Paulina: I told you so. That's just what I said. They'll always be our enemies! (*Tatyana laughs quietly and goes out. Paulina looks at her and purposely raises her voice as she continues.*) Everyone is our enemy! They all envy us; and that's why they're all against us.

Zakhar (*walking quickly up and down*): You're partly right, of course. Nikolai Vasilyevich says it isn't a struggle between the classes, it's a struggle between the races—black and white. That's putting it a bit crudely—going to extremes, so to speak. But when you stop to think that it is we, the cultivated people, who have created science and art and all sorts of things, then equality—physiological equality—hm . . . er . . . well, all right. But first let them become human, let them become civilized, and then we shall speak about equality.

Paulina (*alert*): I've never heard you speak like this before.

Zakhar: My ideas are schematic as yet. I haven't thought things through. Know thyself! That's the main thing.

Paulina (*taking him by the arm*): You're too soft-hearted, darling. That's what makes it so hard for you.

Zakhar: We know very little and that's why we are so often amazed. Take that Sintsov, for instance—he amazed me and made me like him. Such simplicity! Such logical thinking! It turns out he's a Socialist, and that's where he gets his logic and simplicity.

Paulina: There's no doubt but that he attracts a great deal of attention. Such an unpleasant face! But you ought to rest. Don't you think we had better go?

Zakhar (*following her*): And then there's another worker—Grekov. An insolent fellow. Nikolai Vasilyevich and I were just talking about the speech he made. He's no more than a boy, but he speaks with such arrogance. . . .

(They go out. Silence. A song is heard off stage, then soft voices. Enter Yagodin, Levshin and Ryabtsov, a young chap who frequently tosses back his head. His face is round and good-natured. The three of them stop under the trees.)

Levshin (*quietly and secretively*): It's for the common cause. Pavel.

Ryabtsov: I know.

Levshin: For the common cause, the human cause. There's a high price on every great soul these days. The people are pulling themselves up with their minds. They're listening and reading and thinking. And those of them who have come to understand are priceless.

Yagodin: That's true, Pavel.

Ryabtsov: I know it. Why the talk? I'll do it.

Levshin: But not just for the fun of it. You've got to understand why. You're young and this means penal servitude.

Ryabtsov: That's all right. I'll run away.

Yagodin: Maybe it won't mean that. You're too young to be sentenced to penal servitude, Pavel.

Levshin: Let's think he's not. The worse we make it, the better. If a fellow's willing to suffer the worst, that means he's made up his mind once and for all.

Ryabtsov: I've made up my mind.

Yagodin: Don't hurry. Think it over.

Ryabtsov: What's there to think over? He's been killed, so somebody's got to pay for it.

Levshin: Yes, he has. And if nobody comes forward and gives himself up, many will be called to account. They'll call our best people to account, Pavel; those who are more valuable to the cause than you are.

Ryabtsov: I'm not objecting, am I? I may be young, but I understand. We have to keep a strong grip on each other—like the links of a chain.

Levshin (*sighing*): That's true.

Yagodin (*smiling*): We'll join hands, encircle them, close in tight, and there you are!

Ryabtsov: I've made up my mind. I have no one dependent on me, so I'm the one to go. Only it's too bad to pay such a price for such rotten blood.

Levshin: Not for the blood, but for the sake of your comrades.

Ryabtsov: Yes, but I mean he was a beast. Scum, that's what he was.

Levshin: And that's why he got killed. Good people die a natural death. Nobody wants to get rid of them.

Ryabtsov: Well, is that all?

Yagodin: That's all, Pavel. So you'll tell them tomorrow morning?

Ryabtsov: Why should I wait until tomorrow?

Levshin: It would be better to. The night's as good a counsellor as a mother.

Ryabtsov: All right. May I go now?

Levshin: God be with you!

Yagodin: Go ahead, brother. Be firm.

(Ryabtsov goes out unhurriedly. Yagodin regards the stick he is toying with. Levshin stares at the sky.)

Levshin *(quietly)*: There's a lot of fine people growing up these days, Timofei.

Yagodin: Good weather, good crops.

Levshin: It looks as if we were going to pull ourselves out of this hole.

Yagodin *(unhappily)*: Too bad about the lad.

Levshin *(quietly)*: Isn't it. Off you go to prison—and on such a charge. The only consolation is—he did it for his comrades.

Yagodin: Yes.

Levshin: But hold your tongue. Tck! Tck! What ever made Akimov pull that trigger! What good is a killing? No good at all. Kill one dog and the boss buys another, and there's an end to the tale.

Yagodin *(sadly)*: How many of our men pay with their lives!

Levshin: Come along, sentry! We've got to guard the bosses' property! *(They go off.)* Damn it all!

Yagodin: What's the matter?

Levshin: This accursed life! If only we could hurry and do something about it!

ACT III

A large room in the Bardin house. In the back wall are four windows and a door opening on to a verandah. Through the glass windows can be seen soldiers, gendarmes, and a group of workers, among whom are Levshin and Grekov. The room seems not to be lived in: the little furniture it contains consists of worn, odd pieces; the wallpaper is peeling off. A large table has been placed to the right. When the curtain rises, Kon is angrily pushing chairs about the table and Agrafena is sweeping the floor. There are large double doors in both the left and right walls.

Agrafena: Well, you needn't be angry with *me*!

Kon: I'm not angry. They can all go to devil for all I care. Thank goodness I'll be dying soon. My heart's running down.

Agrafena: Don't boast. We'll all be dying.

Kon: I've had enough—I can't take any more. At sixty-five I've got no teeth for their low tricks, any more than for walnuts. Fancy rounding up all those people and drenching them out there in the rain!

(Captain Boboyedov and Nikolai enter through the door left.)

Boboyedov (*happily*): So this will serve as the courtroom? Splendid! I suppose you are acting in a professional capacity?

Nikolai: I am. Kon, call the Corporal!

Boboyedov: Now this is how we shall serve up this dish: in the centre that . . . er . . . what's his name?

Nikolai: Sintsov.

Boboyedov: Sintsov. Very touching. And grouped around him, the united workers of all countries, eh? That will be a sight to warm the heart! The owner of this place is a charming man. Very. We had quite a different impression of him. I know his sister-in-law from the theatre in Voronezh. Wonderful actress. (*Kvach enters from the porch.*) Well, Kvach?

Kvach: Everyone's been searched, sir.

Boboyedov: And what did you find?

Kvach: Nothing. Everything was hid. Allow me to report that the Police Inspector is in too much of a hurry to do the job thoroughly, sir.

Boboyedov: I might have expected it. The police are always like that. Did you find anything in the houses?

Kvach: A few things behind the icons in Levshin's place, sir.

Boboyedov: Bring everything to my room.

Kvach: Yes, sir. That young gendarme who has just come from the dragoons—

Boboyedov: What about him?

Kvach: He isn't thorough either.

Boboyedov: Well, you'll have to see to that yourself. Be off with you now. (*Kvach leaves.*) He's a sharp one, that Kvach. Not much to look at, and seems a bit stupid, but he's got a nose like a bloodhound.

Nikolai: I advise you to pay special attention to that clerk, Bogdan Denisovich.

Boboyedov: Oh, yes. Yes indeed. We'll make him squirm, have no fear.

Nikolai: I'm not speaking of Sintsov, but of Pology. I think he can be of use to us.

Boboyedov: That fellow we were talking to? Yes, of course. We'll draw him into it.

(Nikolai goes to the table and carefully arranges the documents.)

Cleopatra (*at the door right*): Will you have another glass of tea, Captain?

Boboyedov: Yes, thank you, if it isn't too much trouble. Beautiful country here. A lovely place. It turns out that I am acquainted with Madame Lugovaya. Didn't she used to act in the Voronezh Theatre?

Cleopatra: I believe she did. Did you find anything when you made your searches?

Boboyedov (*graciously*): Everything. We found everything. And we shall always find everything, have no fear of that. Even if there's nothing to find.

Cleopatra: My late husband did not take these proclamations seriously. He always said papers didn't make a revolution.

Boboyedov: Hm. That, of course, is not entirely correct.

Cleopatra: He said leaflets were secret orders issued to fools by idiots.

Boboyedov (*laughing*): Very clever—but just as incorrect.

Cleopatra: And now you see they have advanced from issuing proclamations to taking action.

Boboyedov: You can rest assured they will be punished severely—most severely.

Cleopatra: That's a great comfort. As soon as you came I felt relieved.

Boboyedov: It's our duty to keep up people's spirits.

Cleopatra: I can't tell you what a pleasure it is to see someone who is wholesomely contented with life. Such people are a rarity these days.

Boboyedov: Oh, the gendarmes in our corps are all hand-picked!

Cleopatra: Let's go to the table.

Boboyedov (*going*): With pleasure! In what theatre is Madame Lugovaya to act this season?

Cleopatra: Sorry, but I don't know.

(*Tatyana and Nadya come in from the verandah.*)

Nadya (*agitated*): Did you notice how that old man Levshin looked at us?

Tatyana: Yes.

Nadya: I don't know, but somehow it all seems so dreadful, so shameful! Nikolai Vasilyevich, why must you do it? Why were these people arrested?

Nikolai (*dryly*): There were more than sufficient grounds for their arrest. And I must request you not to use the verandah as long as those—

Nadya: Oh, we won't!

Tatyana (*looking at Nikolai*): Has Sintsov been arrested too?

Nikolai: Sintsov has been arrested too.

Nadya (*walking about the room*): Seventeen people! Their wives are standing at the gates crying, and the soldiers push them about and laugh at them. Tell the soldiers they should at least be polite.

Nikolai: That's none of my business. Lieutenant Strepetov is in charge of the soldiers.

Nadya: I'll go and tell him.

(Goes out right. Tatyana smiles and crosses to the table.)

Tatyana: Listen, you graveyard of laws, as the General calls you—

Nikolai: I don't find the General particularly witty. I shouldn't repeat his jokes.

Tatyana: Oh, no. I made a mistake. A coffin of laws—that's what he called you. Don't you like it?

Nikolai: I'm not in a mood for joking.

Tatyana: Would you have me believe you're so serious-minded?

Nikolai: Let me remind you that they killed my brother yesterday.

Tatyana: What's that to you?

Nikolai: I beg your pardon, but—

Tatyana (*with a sarcastic smile*): Don't pretend. You aren't sorry for your brother. You never are sorry for anybody. Not as I am, for instance. Death—that is, a sudden death—is always a shock. But I assure you that not for one moment have you felt genuinely, humanly sorry for your brother. It isn't in you.

Nikolai (*constrained*): This is interesting. What do you want of me?

Tatyana: Haven't you observed that you and I are kindred spirits? No? That's a pity. I'm an actress—a cold-blooded creature, possessed of one desire—to have a good role to play. You, too, are hard-hearted, and just as anxious to get a good role. Tell me the truth, do you really want to be a prosecutor?

Nikolai (*quietly*): I want you to stop this.

Tatyana (*laughing, after a brief pause*): I'm a bad diplomat. I came to you with the purpose of—that is, I intended to be pleasant and charming, but as soon as I saw you I began to be insulting. You always make me want to hurt you. Always. Whether you're sitting or standing, talking or silently passing judgement on people, I intended to ask you—

Nikolai (*with a short laugh*): I can guess what.

Tatyana: Perhaps. But I suppose I'm too late?

Nikolai: Any time would be too late. Mr. Sintsov is too deeply involved.

Tatyana: I think it gives you satisfaction to tell me that, doesn't it?

Nikolai: I don't conceal it.

Tatyana (*sighing*): That just shows how much we resemble

each other. I, too, am very mean and petty. Tell me, is Sintsov completely in your power? I mean particularly in *yours*?

Nikolai: Yes, he is.

Tatyana: And if I should ask you to let him off?

Nikolai: Nothing would come of it.

Tatyana: Even if I asked you very earnestly?

Nikolai: It would make no difference. You amaze me.

Tatyana: Do I? Why?

Nikolai: You are a beautiful woman and you undoubtedly have an original mind. You are a personality. There are innumerable chances for you to secure an easy, luxurious life, and yet you interest yourself in this nobody. Eccentricity is a disease, and any cultivated person would feel indignant at your conduct. No one who admires women and prizes beauty could forgive you for it.

Tatyana (*looking at him curiously*): So that's the judgement you pass on me! Alas! And on Sintsov?

Nikolai: Tonight that gentleman goes to jail.

Tatyana: Is that final?

Nikolai: Yes.

Tatyana: With no concessions as a favour to a lady? I don't believe it! If I wanted it badly enough, you would release Sintsov.

Nikolai (*thickly*): Try wanting it badly. Very badly.

Tatyana: I can't. I don't know how to do such things. But tell me the truth—it shouldn't be so hard to tell the truth once in your life—would you release him?

Nikolai (*after a pause*): I don't know.

Tatyana: I do. (*A pause, a sigh.*) What rotters we both are!

Nikolai: There are things that are unforgivable even in a woman.

Tatyana (*carelessly*): Oh, what of it? We're alone. No one can hear us. I have a right to tell you and myself that we're both—

Nikolai: Please. I don't want to hear any more.

Tatyana (*calmly and persistently*): The fact remains that you place a lower price on your principles than on a woman's kiss.

Nikolai: I have already said I don't care to listen to you.

Tatyana (*calmly*): Then go away. I certainly don't wish to keep you.

(*He goes out quickly. Tatyana wraps herself in her shawl and stands in the middle of the room gazing out on the verandah. Nadya and the Lieutenant come in right.*)

Lieutenant: I give you my word that a soldier would never insult a woman. For him a woman is sacred.

Nadya: Well, you'll see.

Lieutenant: Impossible. Only in the army has a chivalrous attitude to women been preserved.

(*They cross over to the door left. Paulina, Zakhar and Yakov come in.*)

Zakhar: You see, Yakov—

Paulina: But how could it be otherwise?

Zakhar: We are up against reality, inevitability.

Tatyana: What are you talking about?

Yakov: They are singing a dirge over me.

Paulina: So amazingly unfeeling! Everyone is blaming us, even Yakov Ivanovich, who is always so mild. As though it were our fault that the soldiers came! And nobody invited the gendarmes either. They always come of themselves.

Zakhar: Blaming me for those arrests!

Yakov: I'm not blaming you.

Zakhar: Not in so many words, but I feel—

Yakov (*to Tatyana*): I was sitting there when he came up and said, "Well, brother?" and I answered, "Rotten, brother." That's all.

Zakhar: But can't you understand that to preach socialism in the form it is presented here would be impossible anywhere else? It simply couldn't happen!

Paulina: Everyone should be interested in politics, but what has socialism to do with politics? That's what Zakhar says, and he's right.

Yakov (*sullenly*): What kind of Socialist is old man Levshin? He's simply gone daffy from overwork, from sheer exhaustion.

Zakhar: They're all daffy.

Paulina: You must show some pity, gentlemen. We have gone through so much!

Zakhar: Do you think I don't mind having my house turned into a law court? It's all Nikolai Vasilyevich's doing, but you can't argue with him after such a tragedy.

Cleopatra (*entering quickly*): Have you heard? The murderer has been found. They're bringing him here.

Yakov (*mumbling*): Oh, for goodness' sake—

Tatyana: Who is it?

Cleopatra: A young boy. And I'm glad. Perhaps that doesn't sound very humane, but I'm glad. And if he's just a boy, I'd have them give him a good thrashing every day until the trial. Where is Nikolai Vasilyevich? Have you seen him?

(*Goes to the door left, where she is met by the General.*)

General (*sullenly*): Here you are, standing around like a bunch of wet hens.

Zakhar: It's very unpleasant, uncle.

General: The gendarmes? Yes, that Captain's cheeky. I'd like to play a trick on him. Are they spending the night here?

Paulina: I don't think so. Why should they?

General: Too bad! If they stayed, I'd see that he got a pail of cold water dumped over him when he crawled into bed. That's the way I had faint-hearted cadets treated in my corps. Nothing funnier than to see somebody all wet and naked hopping around and shouting.

Cleopatra (*standing in the doorway*): Why in the world should you say such a thing, General? The Captain is a very respectable person and extremely energetic. As soon as he arrived he began rounding up the offenders. That should be appreciated. (*Goes out.*)

General: Hm. For her, any man with big moustaches is respectable. But people should know their place. That's the thing. That's the secret of respectability. (*Goes to the door left.*)
Kon!

Paulina (*quietly*): You'd think she was in charge of everything! Just see how she behaves! So rude and uncivil!

Zakhar: If only they'd hurry and get it over with! How I long for peace and quiet!

Nadya (*running in*): Aunt Tanya, that Lieutenant is too stupid for words! I think he beats his soldiers. You should see him rushing about, shouting and making hideous faces! They certainly ought to allow those who have been arrested to see their wives, uncle. Five of those men are married. Go out and tell that gendarme—he's the one in charge—

Zakhar: But you see, Nadya—

N a d y a : I see that you're not moving. Go on. Go out and tell him. They're crying. Go on, I tell you.

Z a k h a r (*leaving*): I'm afraid it won't do any good.

P a u l i n a : You're always upsetting everybody, Nadya.

N a d y a : It's you who are always upsetting everybody.

P a u l i n a : Us? Think what you're—

N a d y a (*overwrought*): Yes, us—all of us—you and me and uncle. We're the ones who keep upsetting people. We don't do anything, but it's because of us the soldiers and gendarmes have come and all this business has started. And those people have been arrested, and the women are crying—all because of us!

T a t y a n a : Come here, Nadya.

N a d y a (*going up to her*): Here I am. What do you want?

T a t y a n a : Sit down and compose yourself. You don't understand anything and there's nothing you can do.

N a d y a : See, there's nothing you can say. I don't want to compose myself. I don't want to.

P a u l i n a : Your poor mother was right when she said you were a difficult child.

N a d y a : Yes, she was right. She earned the bread she ate, but you—what do you do? Whose bread do you eat?

P a u l i n a : There she goes again! I must ask you to change your tone, Nadya. How dare you raise your voice when speaking to your elders?

N a d y a : You're not my elders. You're just old, that's all.

P a u l i n a : Tanya, this is all your influence, and you ought to tell her she's just a stupid little girl.

T a t y a n a : Do you hear? You're a stupid little girl. (*Pats her on the shoulder.*)

N a d y a : Is there nothing else you can say? No, there isn't. Nothing. You can't even defend yourselves. Such people! What *can* you do? Nothing. Not even here in your own house. Simply nothing.

P a u l i n a (*severely*): Do you realize what you're saying?

N a d y a : All these people have come here—gendarmes, soldiers, fools with big moustaches—and all they do is give orders, drink tea, bang their swords, clink their spurs, tramp about laughing—and seizing people, shouting at them, threatening them, making the women cry. And you? What good are you here? They've pushed you into the corner—

P a u l i n a : But you're talking nonsense. These people have come to protect us.

N a d y a (*bitterly*): Oh, Aunt Paulina! Soldiers can't protect anybody from stupidity! Really they can't!

P a u l i n a (*indignant*): Wha-at?

N a d y a (*holding out her arms*): Don't be angry. I mean everybody. (*Paulina goes out quickly.*) Oh dear, she's run away. She'll tell uncle that I'm rude and unmanageable and uncle will read me such a long lecture that even the flies will drop dead of boredom.

T a t y a n a (*thoughtfully*): How you are ever going to live in this world I can't imagine!

N a d y a (*with a sweeping gesture*): Not like this! I wouldn't live like this for anything! I don't know what I am going to do—but I won't do anything the way you do it. I just walked past the verandah with that officer, and there was Grekov standing there smoking and watching us, and his eyes were laughing. And yet he knows they are sending him to jail. See that? Those who live the way they want to aren't afraid of anything. They're always cheerful. I'm ashamed to look at Levshin and Grekov. I don't know the others, but those two—I'll never forget them. Oh, here comes that idiot with the moustache. Gr-r-r!

B o b o y e d o v (*entering*): How terrifying! Who is it you're trying to scare?

N a d y a : I'm afraid of you. Will you let the women go to their husbands?

B o b o y e d o v : No, I won't. I'm a villain!

N a d y a : Of course you are if you're a gendarme. Why don't you want to let the women go to their husbands?

B o b o y e d o v (*politely*): For the present that is impossible. Later, when the men are led away, I shall allow them to say good-bye.

N a d y a : But why is it impossible? It all depends on you, doesn't it?

B o b o y e d o v : Upon me. . . that is, upon the law.

N a d y a : What has the law to do with it? Let them go, please do.

B o b o y e d o v : What has the law to do with it? You, too, are defying the law? Tut! Tut!

N a d y a : Don't talk to me like that. I'm not a child.

B o b o y e d o v : Aren't you now? Only children and revolutionaries defy the law.

N a d y a : Then I'm a revolutionary.

Boboyedov (*laughing*): Oho! Then I've got to put you in jail! Arrest you and put you in jail!

Nadya (*unhappily*): Don't make a joke of it. Let them go.

Boboyedov: That I cannot do. It's the law.

Nadya: Crazy law.

Boboyedov (*seriously*): Hm. You shouldn't say that. If, as you claim, you are not a child, you must realize that laws are made by those in power, and without them there could be no state.

Nadya (*hotly*): Laws, power, the state! But for goodness' sake, weren't all these things made for the sake of the people?

Boboyedov: Well, now . . . er . . . of course. That is, first of all for the sake of order.

Nadya: But such order must be wrong if it makes people cry. We don't need power and the state if they make people cry! The state! How stupid! What do I want with it? (*Goes to the door.*) The state! Why do people talk about things they don't know anything about?

(*Goes out. Boboyedov is confounded.*)

Boboyedov (*to Tatyana*): A remarkable young lady, but with dangerous tendencies in her thinking. Her uncle, it seems, is a man of liberal views. Am I correct?

Tatyana: You should know better than I. I don't know what is meant by liberal views.

Boboyedov: Don't you, now? Everybody knows that. Contempt for those in power—that's what liberalism is. But to change the subject. I have seen you in Voronezh, Madame Lugovaya. Yes indeed, I was enchanted by your acting. Simply superb! You may even have noticed me—I always sat next to the Vice-Governor. At that time I was an adjutant in the local administration.

Tatyana: I see. But I don't remember you. There are gendarmes in every town, I believe.

Boboyedov: Oh, yes indeed. In every town, without exception. And let me tell you it's us, the officials, who are the true lovers of art. Well, maybe the merchants, too. Take, for example, contributions to buying a gift for a favourite actress on the occasion of her benefit performance—you'll find the names of all the officers of the gendarmerie on every list. That is, so to say, a tradition with us. May I ask where you intend to act during the coming season?

T a t y a n a : I haven't yet decided. But of course in a town where there are sure to be true lovers of art. That, it seems, is inevitable?

B o b o y e d o v (*missing the point*): Oh, yes indeed. You'll find them in every town. After all, people are becoming more cultivated.

K v a c h (*from the verandah*): They are bringing that fellow, sir—the one who did the shooting. Where do you want him?

B o b o y e d o v : In here. Bring them all in here. Call the prosecutor. (*To Tatyana.*) I beg your pardon, but I must tend to business for a little while.

T a t y a n a : Are you going to interrogate them?

B o b o y e d o v (*politely*): Just the least little bit. Quite superficially—only to make their acquaintance. A sort of roll-call, so to speak.

T a t y a n a : May I be present?

B o b o y e d o v : Hm. It isn't, of course, the accepted practice. Not in political cases. But since this is a criminal case, and we are not on our own premises, and I should like to afford you this pleasure—

T a t y a n a : No one will see me. I shall watch from over here.

B o b o y e d o v : Good. I am happy to be able to repay you in some measure for the delight your acting has afforded me. I must just go and fetch certain papers.

(He goes out. Two middle-aged workers bring Ryabtsov in from the verandah. Beside them walks Kon, stealing glances into the prisoner's face. They are followed by Levshin, Yagodin, Grekov and several other workers. Gendarmes.)

R y a b t s o v (*angrily*): What did you tie my hands for? Untie them! Hear me?

L e v s h i n : Untie his hands, fellows. Why humiliate him?

Y a g o d i n : He won't run away.

O n e o f t h e W o r k e r s : We're supposed to. The law demands that we tie his hands.

R y a b t s o v : I won't have it! Untie them!

A n o t h e r W o r k e r (*to Kvach*): May we, sir? The fellow is quiet enough. It's hard to believe he could have been the one—

K v a c h : Very well. Untie them.

K o n (*suddenly*): You've got the wrong fellow! This one was on the river when the shooting took place. I saw him myself and

so did the General! (*To Ryabtsov.*) Speak up, you fool. Tell them it wasn't you. Why don't you speak?

Ryabtsov (*firmly*): I'm the one who did it.

Levshin: He ought to know best, soldier.

Ryabtsov: I'm the one.

Kon (*shouting*): That's a lie! You're up to some mischief! (*Enter Boboyedov and Nikolai Skrobotov.*) When that happened you were rowing on the river and singing. Deny it if you can!

Ryabtsov (*calmly*): That was later.

Boboyedov: This fellow?

Kvach: Yes, sir.

Kon: No, not him.

Boboyedov: What? Kvach, take the old man out. How did he get in here?

Kvach: He's attendant on the General, sir.

Nikolai (*scrutinizing Ryabtsov*): Just a minute, Bogdan Denisovich. Leave him alone, Kvach.

Kon: Keep your hands off. I'm a soldier myself.

Boboyedov: That's all right, Kvach.

Nikolai (*to Ryabtsov*): Are you the one who killed my brother?

Ryabtsov: I am.

Nikolai: Why did you do it?

Ryabtsov: He treated us bad.

Nikolai: What's your name?

Ryabtsov: Pavel Ryabtsov.

Nikolai: I see. What is it you were saying, Kon?

Kon (*greatly disturbed*): He didn't kill him! He was on the river when it happened! I'm ready to swear to it. The General and I both saw him. The General even said, "Wouldn't it be nice if we could upset his boat and give him a ducking?" That's what he said. Do you hear me, you young whipper-snapper? What is it you're up to?

Nikolai: Why are you so sure he was on the river at the time of the murder, Kon?

Kon: It's a good hour's walk from the factory to the place where he was.

Ryabtsov: I ran.

Kon: He was rowing a boat and singing. You don't sing when you've just killed a man.

Nikolai (*to Ryabtsov*): Do you realize that the law is very

severe towards anyone giving false evidence and attempting to shield a criminal? Do you realize that?

Ryabtsov: I don't care.

Nikolai: Very well. So you are the one who killed the director?

Ryabtsov: Yes, I am.

Boboyedov: The brute!

Kon: He's lying!

Levshin: You don't belong here, soldier!

Nikolai: What's that?

Levshin: I say he don't belong here and keeps interfering—

Nikolai: What makes you think *you* belong here? Perhaps you're implicated in the murder?

Levshin (*laughs*): Me? Once I killed a rabbit with a stick and couldn't get over it for a week.

Nikolai: Then keep your mouth shut. (*To Ryabtsov.*) Where's the revolver you used?

Ryabtsov: I don't know.

Nikolai: What kind was it? Describe it.

Ryabtsov (*uneasy*): What kind? The usual kind.

Kon (*rejoicing*): The son of a gun! He never saw a revolver!

Nikolai: How big was it? (*Indicating half a yard with his hands.*) About this long?

Ryabtsov: Yes. Oh no, less.

Nikolai: Bogdan Denisovich, just a second. (*He leads Boboyedov aside and lowers his voice.*) There's something underhanded being done. We'll have to be more severe with this boy. Let's leave him alone until the coroner comes.

Boboyedov: Why should we? He confesses to everything.

Nikolai (*impressively*): You and I suspect that this boy is not the murderer, but merely a shield for the true culprit, understand?

(Yakov, obviously drunk, comes in and stands near Tatyana, silently looking on. From time to time his head drops on his chest as though he were drowsing off, then, jerking it up suddenly, he glances about with a frightened look on his face.)

Boboyedov (*uncomprehendingly*): Ah-h-h. Hm. Yes, yes. Fancy that!

Nikolai: It's a frame-up. A collective crime.

Boboyedov: The rascal!

Nikolai: Let the Corporal take him out now, and see that he is kept in strict solitary confinement. I'm going out for a minute. Come with me, Kon. Where's the General?

Kon: Digging worms.

(*They both go out.*)

Boboyedov: Kvach, take this fellow out, and keep an eye on him! A sharp eye, mind!

Kvach: Yes, sir. Come on, youngster!

Levshin (*affectionately*): Good-bye, Pavel. Good-bye, friend.

Yagodin (*unhappily*): Good-bye, Pavel.

Ryabtsov: Good-bye. It's all right.

(*They lead Ryabtsov out.*)

Boboyedov (*to Levshin*): Do you know him, old man?

Levshin: Of course, I do. We work together.

Boboyedov: What's your name?

Levshin: Yefim Yefimovich Levshin.

Boboyedov (*quietly to Tatyana*): Watch developments now. (*To Levshin.*) Tell me the truth, Levshin; you're an old and sensible man. You should always tell your superiors the truth.

Levshin: Yes, indeed. Why should I lie?

Boboyedov (*gloating*): Good. Well, then, tell me honestly, what's hidden behind the icons in your house, eh? The truth, remember!

Levshin (*calmly*): Nothing.

Boboyedov: Is that the truth?

Levshin: Yes, it is.

Boboyedov: Shame on you, Levshin! Here you are, grey-haired and going bald, and yet you lie like a little boy. Your superiors know even what you think, let alone what you do. For shame, Levshin. What are these things in my hand?

Levshin: I can't see. My eyesight's bad.

Boboyedov: I'll tell you what they are. They're books which have been prohibited by our government, books challenging the people to rise up against their tsar. These books were found behind the icons in your house. Now what have you to say?

Levshin (*calmly*): Nothing.

Boboyedov: Do you admit that they belong to you?

Levshin: Maybe they do. All books look alike.

Boboyedov: Why do you lie in your old age?

Levshin: I told you the honest truth, sir. You asked me what was behind the icons in my house, and once you asked me such a question I knew there couldn't be anything there because you'd have taken them. So that's what I said: nothing. Why are you trying to make me feel ashamed? I've done nothing to be ashamed of.

Boboyedov (*confused*): So that's the way you look at it! But I must ask you not to talk so much. I'm not a person to be fooled with. Who gave you these books?

Levshin: Why should you want to know that? I can't tell you, because I've already forgotten where I got them. Don't let a little thing like that worry you.

Boboyedov: Wha-at? Very well! Alexei Grekov! Which of you is Grekov?

Grekov: I am.

Boboyedov: Were you arrested in Smolensk in connection with the spreading of revolutionary propaganda among the craftsmen?

Grekov: Yes, I was.

Boboyedov: Such a young person, and so talented! Very glad to make your acquaintance. Gendarmes, take these people out on the verandah. It's getting stuffy in here. Yakov Viripayev? Good. Andrei Svistov?

(The gendarmes lead them all out on the porch and Boboyedov follows with the list in his hand.)

Yakov (*softly*): I like those people.

Tatyana: I understand. But why is everything so simple for them? Why do they speak so simply and look at you so simply? Why? Have they no passions? No heroism?

Yakov: They have a calm faith in the justice of their cause.

Tatyana: It can't be that they are without passions— or heroism. I can fairly feel their contempt for everybody here.

Yakov: That Levshin is splendid. What sad, affectionate, understanding eyes he has! He seems to be saying, "What's the sense in all this? If you'd only get out of the way and give us our freedom! If you'd only get out of our way!"

Zakhar (*glancing through the door*): The stupidity of these gentlemen who represent the law is simply amazing. A fine trial

they've cooked up! Nikolai Vasilyevich acts like a world conqueror.

Yakov: The only objection you have, Zakhar, is that all this business is being carried on under your nose.

Zakhar: Well, they might have spared me the pleasure! Nadya has gone stark mad. She was insolent to Paulina and me, called Cleopatra a wildcat, and now she is sprawling on the divan in my room crying her eyes out. Heaven only knows what is going on!

Yakov (*thoughtfully*): I am growing more disgusted every minute, Zakhar.

Zakhar: I sympathize with you, but what else could we do? When a person's attacked, he has to defend himself. There's not a corner in the house that seems like home any more. Everything is upside down. And the rain makes everything so cold and damp. Such an early autumn!

(Nikolai and Cleopatra come in in an excited state.)

Nikolai: Now I am convinced that they bribed him!

Cleopatra: They couldn't have thought that up themselves. There's someone with a good head on his shoulders involved here.

Nikolai: You suspect Sintsov?

Cleopatra: Who else? Ah, Captain Boboyedov.

Boboyedov (*entering from the verandah*): At your service!

Nikolai: I am convinced that that young boy has been bribed. (*Speaks in a whisper.*)

Boboyedov (*softly*): Oh-h! Hm-m.

Cleopatra (*to Boboyedov*): Do you understand?

Boboyedov: Hm. Fancy that! The rascals!

(Nikolai and the Captain disappear through the double doors in animated conversation. Cleopatra glances about and sees Tatyana.)

Cleopatra: Oh! So here you are!

Tatyana: Has anything else happened?

Cleopatra: I don't suppose it makes any difference to you. Have you heard about Sintsov?

Tatyana: Yes.

Cleopatra (*challengingly*): He's been arrested. I'm very glad they've weeded out all the bad elements at the factory at last. Aren't you?

T a t y a n a : I don't think it matters to you how I feel.

Cleopatra (*with malicious pleasure*): You were in sympathy with that Sintsov. (*Her face softens as she watches Tatyana.*) What a strange look you're wearing! And your face seems drawn. Why is that?

T a t y a n a : The weather, I suppose.

Cleopatra (*coming up to her*): Listen, perhaps this is stupid, but I'm the one who always speaks her mind. I've seen a lot of life; I've suffered a lot, and become embittered. I know that only a woman can be a woman's friend.

T a t y a n a : You want to ask me something?

Cleopatra : Tell you something. I like you. You're always so free in your manners, so well dressed, and so at ease with men. I envy you your walk and your manner of speaking. But sometimes I don't like you. I even hate you.

T a t y a n a : That's interesting. Why?

Cleopatra (*in an odd voice*): Who are you?

T a t y a n a : That is—

Cleopatra : I can't make out who you are. I like to have a clear picture of people and to know what they want. It seems to me that people who aren't sure of what they want are dangerous. They can't be trusted.

T a t y a n a : That's a strange thing to say. Why should you tell me your views?

Cleopatra (*impetuously and with alarm*): People ought to live in close friendship, so that they could trust each other. Can't you see what's happening? They're killing us off! They want to rob us! Haven't you noticed the thievish faces on those men who have been arrested? Oh, they know what they want! They live in close friendship! *They* trust each other! I hate them and I'm afraid of them! We live at enmity, not believing in anything, not bound by anything, every man for himself. We depend on soldiers and gendarmes—they depend on themselves. And they're stronger than we are.

T a t y a n a : I, too, should like to ask you a question. Were you happy with your husband?

Cleopatra : Why do you ask that?

T a t y a n a : Sheer curiosity.

Cleopatra (*after a moment's consideration*): No. He was always too busy with other matters to think of me.

Paulina (*entering*): Have you heard? It turns out that that clerk Sintsov is a Socialist. And Zakhar always told him

everything and even wanted to make him assistant book-keeper! Of course that isn't of any great importance, but just think how complicated life has become! Your born enemies can live beside you without your ever suspecting it!

T a t y a n a : Thank goodness I'm not rich!

P a u l i n a : You won't say that when you're old. (*Gently.*) Cleopatra Petrovna, they're expecting you for a fitting. They've sent the crepe.

C l e o p a t r a : Very well. My heart is beating so! I can't bear to have anything the matter with me.

P a u l i n a : If you wish, I can give you some drops for your heart. They really help.

C l e o p a t r a (*going out*): Very kind of you.

P a u l i n a : I'll join you in a second. (*To Tatyana.*) We must be more gentle with her—it acts as a sedative. I'm glad you spoke with her. I envy you, Tanya. You have the knack of always finding a comfortable, neutral position. I'll go and give her some drops.

(When she is left to herself, Tatyana looks out on to the verandah where the soldiers have lined up the men who have been arrested. Yakov pokes his head through the door.)

Y a k o v (*teasingly*): I was standing here eavesdropping all the time.

T a t y a n a (*absent-mindedly*): They say it isn't nice to eavesdrop.

Y a k o v : It's very unpleasant to overhear what people say. It makes you pity them. Well, Tanya, I'm leaving.

T a t y a n a : Where are you going?

Y a k o v : I don't know yet. Good-bye.

T a t y a n a (*affectionately*): Good-bye. Write to me.

Y a k o v : This place has become detestable.

T a t y a n a : When are you leaving?

Y a k o v (*with an odd smile*): Today. Perhaps you'll leave too?

T a t y a n a : Yes, I intend to. Why are you smiling?

Y a k o v : For no reason in particular. We may never see each other again.

T a t y a n a : Nonsense!

Y a k o v : Forgive me. (*Tatyana kisses his forehead. He laughs lightly as he pushes her away.*) You kissed me as if I were a corpse.

(He goes out slowly. As Tatyana watches him, she has an impulse to follow him, but she checks it and makes a weak little gesture. Nadya comes in. She has an umbrella.)

N a d y a : Come out into the garden with me, please do. I have a headache from crying. I've been crying like a fool. If I'm alone I'll begin again.

T a t y a n a : Why should you cry, child? There's nothing to cry about.

N a d y a : It's all so vexing. I can't make head or tail of it. Who's right? Uncle says he is, but I don't believe him. Is he a kind person—uncle? I always thought he was, but now I'm not sure. When he talks to me I feel wicked and stupid. And when I begin to think about him and ask myself questions I don't understand a thing!

T a t y a n a (*sadly*): If you begin asking yourself questions you'll become a revolutionary, and you'll never be able to weather that storm, darling.

N a d y a : Well, I have to become something, don't I? (*Tatyana laughs softly.*) What are you laughing at? Of course, I do. A person can't go on living with his mouth hanging open, not understanding anything!

T a t y a n a : I'm laughing because everybody is saying that today—everybody—all of a sudden.

(They go out, and are met on the way by the General and the Lieutenant. The latter nimbly steps out of their way.)

G e n e r a l : Mobilization is essential, Lieutenant! It serves a double purpose—(*To Nadya and Tatyana.*) And where might you be going?

T a t y a n a : For a walk.

G e n e r a l : If you meet that clerk ... er ... what's his name? Lieutenant, what was the name of that fellow I introduced you to a while ago?

L i e u t e n a n t : Pology, sir.

G e n e r a l (*to Tatyana*): Send him to me. I'll be in the dining-room having tea with cognac and the Lieutenant, ha-ha-ha! (*Claps his hand over his mouth and glances about guiltily.*) Thank you, Lieutenant! You have an excellent memory. Very commendable. An officer should remember the name and face of every soldier in his regiment. When a soldier is a green recruit,

he's a sly brute—sly and stupid and lazy. The officer crawls under his skin and rearranges everything to make a man out of the brute—a sensible man, one who knows his duty.

(Zakhar comes in looking worried.)

Zakhar: Uncle, have you seen Yakov?

General: No, I haven't. Are they serving tea in there?

Zakhar: Yes. *(The General and the Lieutenant go out. Kon, angry and dishevelled, enters from the verandah.)* Kon, have you seen my brother?

Kon *(sullenly)*: No. I'm keeping my mouth shut from now on. I wouldn't say so even if I had seen him. I've had my say, thank you.

Paulina *(entering)*: Those muzhiks have come again to ask you to postpone the payment of their rent.

Zakhar: They've chosen a fine time!

Paulina: They complain there was a bad harvest and so they have nothing to pay with.

Zakhar: They're always complaining. You didn't happen to see Yakov anywhere, did you?

Paulina: No. What shall I tell them?

Zakhar: The muzhiks? Let them go to the office. I don't intend talking to them.

Paulina: But there's nobody in the office. You know yourself that everything's in an upheaval. It's almost lunch-time, but that corporal keeps asking for tea. The samovar hasn't been taken out of the dining-room since morning. We're living in a mad-house!

Zakhar: Do you know that Yakov has suddenly taken it into his head to go away?

Paulina: It's a good thing, even if I shouldn't say so.

Zakhar: You're right, of course. He's become very annoying of late—always talking nonsense. Just a while back he kept pestering me to know if one could kill a crow with my revolver. He was very insulting. Then he went off and took the revolver with him. He's always drunk.

(Sintsov enters from the verandah in the care of two gendarmes and Kvach. Paulina looks at him through her lorgnette and goes out. Zakhar adjusts his glasses in some embarrassment, and moves away from him as he speaks.)

Z a k h a r (*reproachfully*): Very unfortunate, Mr. Sintsov. I am extremely sorry, extremely.

S i n t s o v (*smiling*): Don't let it trouble you. It isn't worth it.

Z a k h a r: Yes, it is! People should sympathize with one another. Even if a person whom I trusted has proved unworthy of my trust, I still consider it my duty to sympathize with him when he is overtaken by misfortune. That is how I see it. Good-bye, Mr. Sintsov.

S i n t s o v: Good-bye.

Z a k h a r: You have no complaints to make of me?

S i n t s o v: None whatever.

Z a k h a r (*embarrassed*): Good. Well, good-bye. Your salary will be forwarded to you. (*Going out.*) This is unbearable! My house has been turned into a kind of headquarters for the gendarmes.

(*Sintsov chuckles. Kvach keeps studying him intently, especially his hands. On noticing this, Sintsov stares back at him. Suddenly Kvach smiles.*)

S i n t s o v: Well, what's so amusing?

K v a c h (*happily*): Nothing. Nothing at all.

B o b o y e d o v (*coming in*): Mr. Sintsov, you are being sent into town.

K v a c h (*happily*): He isn't Mr. Sintsov at all, sir. He's somebody quite different.

B o b o y e d o v: What's that? Be more explicit.

K v a c h: I know him. He used to work at the Bryansk factory, and there his name was Maxim Markov. We arrested him there two years ago, sir. He has no nail on his left thumb. I know him. He must have made an escape if he's living under a false name.

B o b o y e d o v (*pleasantly surprised*): Is that the truth, Mr. Sintsov?

K v a c h: It's the honest truth, sir.

B o b o y e d o v: So you aren't Sintsov at all! Well, well, well!

S i n t s o v: Whoever I am, you're obliged to be civil. Don't forget that!

B o b o y e d o v: Oho! It's easy to see you're not a person to be fooled with! You'll be in charge of him, Kvach. Keep your eyes open!

K v a c h: You can be sure I will, sir!

B o b o y e d o v (*happily*): Well then, Mr. Sintsov, or whatever

your name is, we're sending you into town. (*To Kvach.*) As soon as you get there, tell the authorities all you know about him and immediately demand his police record—but I had better see to that myself. Stay here, Kvach. (*Hurries out.*)

K v a c h (*amiably*): So here we meet again!

S i n t s o v (*smiling*): Are you glad?

K v a c h : Why not? An old acquaintance.

S i n t s o v (*with disgust*): I should think you'd have had enough of this by now. Your hair's gone grey, and still you go on tracking people down like a dog. Don't you find it degrading?

K v a c h (*amiably*): Oh, I'm used to it—been at it for twenty-three years. And not at all like a dog! The higher-ups have a good opinion of me—promise me a decoration. Now they're sure to give it to me.

S i n t s o v : On my account?

K v a c h : Yes. Where did you run away from?

S i n t s o v : You'll find out in due time.

K v a c h : That we will. Remember that dark-haired fellow in glasses at the Bryansk factory—Savitsky? He was a teacher, I think. We arrested him again, too. Not long ago. But he died in jail—very sick, he was. After all, there aren't many of you.

S i n t s o v (*pensively*): There will be lots of us—just wait.

K v a c h : Glad to hear it. The more political, the better for us!

S i n t s o v : More awards?

(*Boboyedov, the General, the Lieutenant, Cleopatra and Nikolai appear in the doorway.*)

N i k o l a i (*looking at Sintsov*): Somehow I expected this. (*Disappears.*)

G e n e r a l : A fine chap he turned out to be!

C l e o p a t r a : Now it's clear who the instigator was.

S i n t s o v (*sarcastically*): Doesn't it seem to you that you are conducting this very clumsily, Captain?

B o b o y e d o v : Don't try to teach your betters!

S i n t s o v (*insistently*): But I must. Do put an end to this absurd show!

G e n e r a l : Hear that?

B o b o y e d o v (*shouting*): Kvach! Take him away!

K v a c h : Yes, sir. (*Leads Sintsov away.*)

G e n e r a l : Must be a real tiger, eh? Does he roar?

C l e o p a t r a : I'm certain he started everything.

Boboyedov: That's probable—highly probable.

Lieutenant: Will there be a trial?

Boboyedov (*smiling*): Oh, no. We gobble them down without any sauce. They're just as good without it.

General: Like an oyster—smack!

Boboyedov: We'll make quick work of dividing up the game, sir, and relieve you of all this nuisance. Nikolai Vasilyevich! Where are you?

(Everyone goes out. The Chief of Police enters from the verandah.)

Chief of Police (*to Kon*): Will the examination be held in here?

Kon (*sullenly*): I don't know. I don't know anything.

Chief of Police: A table, papers—evidently it is to be held in here. (*Addressing someone out on the verandah.*) Bring them all in here! (*To Kon.*) The deceased made a mistake. He said it was a red-head who shot him, but it turns out the criminal is dark.

Kon (*muttering*): Even the living make mistakes.

(Again they bring in the men who have been arrested.)

Chief of Police: Line them up over there. Take your place at the end of the line, old man. Aren't you ashamed of yourself, you old devil?

Grekov: Why should you use such language?

Levshin: Don't bother, Alexei. He isn't worth it.

Chief of Police (*threateningly*): I'll show you!

Levshin: That's his job—to insult people.

(Nikolai and Boboyedov come in and sit down behind the table. The General takes his place in an armchair in the corner with the Lieutenant standing behind him. In the doorway stand Cleopatra and Paulina who are later joined by Tatyana and Nadya. Zakhar looks unhappily over their shoulders. Pology appears, hitching in cautiously, bowing to those sitting at the table and stopping in confusion in the middle of the room. The General beckons to him. He goes over on tiptoe and stands by the General's armchair. They bring in Ryabtsov.)

Nikolai: Attention! Proceedings have begun. Pavel Ryabtsov?

Ryabtsov: Well?

Boboyedov: Not "Well," you fool, but "Yes, Your Honour."

Nikolai: Do you insist that it was you who killed the director?

Ryabtsov (*annoyed*): I've already told you so. What else do you want?

Nikolai: Do you know Alexei Grekov?

Ryabtsov: Who's he?

Nikolai: The fellow next to you.

Ryabtsov: He works at our place.

Nikolai: You are acquainted with him?

Ryabtsov: We're all acquainted with each other.

Nikolai: I understand. But do you visit him and spend your free time with him? In other words, do you know him well? Are you his friend?

Ryabtsov: I spend my free time with all of them. We're all friends.

Nikolai: Is that so? I'm afraid you're not telling the truth. Mr. Pology, be so good as to tell us just what is the relationship between Ryabtsov and Grekov?

Pology: A relationship of close friendship. There are two groups represented here. The younger one is headed by Grekov, a young man who is most insolent in his attitude toward people incomparably his superiors. The elder group is headed by Yefim Levshin, a person of fantastic speech and foxy manners.

Nadya (*softly*): The wretch!

(Pology looks around at her, then turns enquiringly to Nikolai. Nikolai also glances at Nadya.)

Nikolai: Go on.

Pology (*sighing*): They are linked by Mr. Sintsov, who is on good terms with all of them. This individual does not resemble the average individual with a normal mind. He peruses all kinds of books and has his own views on everything. His flat, which I might add is just across the hall from mine, consists of three rooms—

Nikolai: You may omit details.

Pology: I beg your pardon, but truth requires completeness of form. All types of people visit his apartment, including some who happen to be present here—namely, Grekov, and—

Nikolai: Grekov. is that true?

Grekov (*calmly*): Ask me no questions. I refuse to answer them.

Nikolai: To no good purpose.

Nadya (*loudly*): Good for you!

Cleopatra: What does this mean!

Zakhar: Nadya, my dear—

Boboyedov: Sh!

(*Confusion out on the verandah.*)

Nikolai: I see no reason why we should tolerate the presence of those who do not belong here.

General: Hm. Just what do you mean by those who do not belong here?

Boboyedov: Kvach, go and see what all that noise is.

Kvach: Someone is trying to force the door, sir. Swearing and trying to get in, sir.

Nikolai: What does he want? Who is he?

Boboyedov: Go and find out.

Pology: Is it your desire that I go on, or shall I discontinue my testimony?

Nadya: Loathsome creature!

Nikolai: Discontinue. I must ask those who do not belong here to leave!

General: Just how am I to take that?

Nadya (*shouting energetically*): You are the one who doesn't belong here! Not me, but you! You don't belong anywhere! This is my house! I have a right to demand that you get out!

Zakhar (*to Nadya in exasperation*): Leave at once, do you hear me? At once!

Nadya: Do you mean it? Very well. And so I really don't belong here. I'll go away, but first let me tell you—

Paulina: Take her in hand, or she'll say something dreadful!

Nikolai (*to Boboyedov*): Tell the gendarmes to close the doors.

Nadya: You have no conscience! No heart! You're all miserable and contemptible!

K v a c h (*entering joyfully*): Another one wants to confess, sir!

B o b o y e d o v : What?

K v a c h : Another murderer has given himself up!

(*Akimov, a young chap with reddish hair and a long moustache, walks unhurriedly over to the table.*)

N i k o l a i (*involuntarily starting up*): What do you want?

A k i m o v : I'm the one who killed the director.

N i k o l a i : You!

A k i m o v : Yes, me.

C l e o p a t r a (*quietly*): You wretch! So you've got a conscience!

P a u l i n a : Good heavens! What horrible people!

T a t y a n a (*calmly*): These people will win out in the end.

A k i m o v (*sullenly*): Well, here I am. Are you glad?

(*General embarrassment. Nikolai whispers something to Boboyedov, who smiles in confusion. Those who have been arrested stand silent and motionless. Nadya stands looking at Akimov from the doorway and crying. Paulina and Zakhar whisper together. The quiet voice of Tatyana is distinctly heard in the silence.*)

T a t y a n a (*to Nadya*): Don't cry; these people will win out in the end.

L e v s h i n : Tck, Akimov! You oughtn't to have—

B o b o y e d o v : Silence!

N a d y a (*to Akimov*): Why did you do it? Why?

L e v s h i n : Don't shout, sir. I'm older than you are.

A k i m o v (*to Nadya*): You don't understand. You'd better go out.

C l e o p a t r a : And what a saint that wretched old man pretended to be!

B o b o y e d o v : Kvach!

L e v s h i n : Well, what are you waiting for, Akimov? Speak up. Tell how he stuck a revolver in your chest, and that's why—

B o b o y e d o v (*to Nikolai*): Do you hear what he's teaching them, the old liar?

Levshin: I am *not* a liar!

Nikolai: Well, how do you feel now, Ryabtsov?

Ryabtsov: Quite all right.

Levshin: Don't say anything. Keep your mouth shut. They're sly. They can use words better than we can.

Nikolai (*to Boboyedov*): Throw him out!

Levshin: Oh, no, you don't! There's no throwing us out! Enough of your rowdy methods! We've been kept in the dark without any rights long enough! Now we've caught fire, and none of your threats can quench our fire! None of them—ever!

CURTAIN