

# **It's A Family Affair--We'll Settle It Ourselves**

BY ALEXANDER OSTROVSKY

A COMEDY IN FOUR ACTS

## CHARACTERS

SAMSÓN SÍLYCH BOLSHÓV[1], *a merchant*

[Footnote 1: Samsón Strengthson Bigman.]

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁTIEVNA, *his wife*

OLIMPIÁDA SAMSÓNOVNA (LÍPOCHKA), *their daughter*

LÁZAR ELIZÁRYCH PODKHALYÚZIN[2], *a clerk*

[Footnote 2: Sneaky.]

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA, *a professional match-maker*

SYSÓY PSÓICH RISPOLÓZHENSKY[3], *a lawyer*

[Footnote 3: Unfrocked.]

FOMÍNISHNA, *housekeeper* } } *in BOLSHÓV'S house* TÍSKA[4],  
boy }

[Footnote 4: A nickname for Tikhon.]

## ACT I

*Drawing-room in BOLSHÓV'S house*

## SCENE I

*LÍPOCHKA is sitting near the window with a book*

LÍPOCHKA. What a pleasant occupation these dances are! Very good indeed! What could be more delightful? You go to the assembly, or to somebody's wedding, you sit down, naturally, all beflowered like a doll or a magazine picture. Suddenly up runs a gentleman: "May I have the happiness, miss?" Well, you see, if he's a man of wit, or a military individual, you accept, drop your eyes a little, and answer: "If you please, with pleasure!" Ah! [*Warmly*] Most fas-ci-nat-ing! Simply beyond understanding! [*Sighs*] I dislike most of all dancing with students and government office clerks. But it's the real thing to dance with army men! Ah, charming! ravishing! Their mustaches, and epaulets, and uniforms, and on some of them even spurs with little bits of bells. Only it's killingly tiresome that they don't wear a sabre. Why do they take it off? It's strange, plague take it! The soldiers themselves don't understand how much more fascinatingly they'd shine! If they were to take a look at the spurs, the way they tinkle, especially if a uhlan or some colonel or other is showing off--wonderful! It's just splendid to look at them--lovely! And if he'd just fasten on a sabre, you'd simply never see anything more delightful, you'd just hear rolling thunder instead of the music. Now, what comparison can there be between a soldier and a civilian? A soldier! Why, you can see right off his cleverness and everything. But what does a civilian amount to? Just a dummy. [*Silence*] I wonder why it is that so many ladies sit down with their feet under their chairs. There's positively no difficulty in learning how! Although I was a little bashful before the teacher, I learned how to do it perfectly in twenty lessons. Why not learn how to dance? It's only a superstition not to. Here mamma sometimes gets angry because the teacher is always grabbing at my knees. All that comes from lack of education. What of it? He's a dancing-master and not somebody else. [*Reflecting*] I picture to myself: suddenly a soldier makes advances to me, suddenly a solemn betrothal, candles burn everywhere, the butlers enter, wearing white gloves; I, naturally, in a tulle or perhaps in a gauze gown; then suddenly they begin to play a waltz--but how confused I shall be before him! Ah, what a shame! Then where in the world shall I hide? What will he think? "Here," he'll say, "an uneducated little fool!" But, no, how can that be! Only,

you see I haven't danced for a year and a half! I'll try it now at leisure.  
[*Waltzing badly*] One--two--three; one--two--three--

## SCENE II

LÍPOCHKA *and* AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁTYEVNA

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁTYEVNA. [*Entering*] Ah, ha, shameless creature! My heart told me so; before it's fairly daylight, before you've eaten God's bread, you start off dancing right away!

LÍPOCHKA. Now, mamma, I've drunk my tea and eaten some curd-cakes. Look here, is this all right? One, two, three; one--two--

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁTYEVNA. [*Following her*] What difference does it make if you have had something to eat? I suppose I'll have to keep watching what sinful pranks you're up to! I tell you, don't whirl around!

LÍPOCHKA. Pooh! where's the sin in that! Everybody's doing it nowadays. One, two--

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁTYEVNA. Better knock your forehead against the table, but don't fiddle around with your feet. [*She runs after her*] What's the matter with you? Where did you get the idea of not obeying?

LÍPOCHKA. Who told you I didn't obey? Don't meddle; let me finish the way I want to! One, two, three--

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁTYEVNA. Shall I have to run after you long, old woman as I am? Ouf! You've worn me out, you barbarian! Do you hear? Stop! I'll complain to your father!

LÍPOCHKA. Right away, right away, mamma! This is the last time around! God created you expressly for complaining. Much I care for you! One--two--

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁT'YEVNA. What! you keep on dancing, and talk impudently into the bargain! Stop it this minute! It'll be so much the worse for you; I'll grab you by the skirt, and tear off the whole train.

LÍPOCHKA. Well, tear it, and much good may it do you! You'll simply have to sew it up again, and that's all there is to it! [*She sits down*] Phew! phew! my, I'm soaked through! as if I'd been pulling a van! Ouf! Mamma, give me a handkerchief to wipe off the perspiration.

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁT'YEVNA. Wait, I'll wipe it off myself. You've half killed yourself! And it's just as if somebody were making you do it. Since you don't respect your mother, you might at least respect these walls. Your father, my dear, has to make a great effort even to move his legs; but you skip about here like a jumping-jack!

LÍPOCHKA. Go away with your advice! How can I act according to your notions? Do you want me to get sick? That would be all right if I were a doctor's wife. Ouf! What disgusting ideas you have! Bah! What a woman you are, mamma, drat it! Honestly, I sometimes blush for your stupidity!

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁT'YEVNA. What a darling child you are! Just consider how you're insulting your mother! Ah, you stupid chatterbox! Is it right to dishonor your parents with such words? Was it for this I brought you into the world, taught you, and guarded you as carefully as if you were a butterfly?

LÍPOCHKA. You didn't teach me--strangers did; that'll do, if you please. You yourself, to tell the truth, had no bringing up. What of it? You bore a child--what was I then?--a child without understanding, I didn't understand the ways of society. But I grew up, I looked upon society manners, and I saw that I was far more educated than others. Why should I show too much indulgence for your foolishness? Why, indeed! Much reason for it, I must say!

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁT'YEVNA. Let up, let up, you shameless girl! You'll drive me out of patience; I'll go straight to your father, throw

myself at his feet, and say: "Samsón, dear, there's no living because of our daughter!"

LÍPOCHKA. Yes, there's no living for you! I imagine so. But do you give me any chance to live? Why did you send away my suitor? Could there have been a better match? Wasn't he a Coopid[1]? What did you find in him that was soft?

[Footnote 1: An attempt to reproduce Lipochka's illiterate pronunciation of the Russian word.]

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁT'YEVNA. He was soft enough; just a grinning booby. He came swaggering around, swaggered, strutted, strutted. What a rare bird!

LÍPOCHKA. Yes, much you know! Of course he's a born gentleman; he behaves in a delicate way. They always do like that in his circle-- But how do you dare to censure such people, of whom you haven't any idea? He, I tell you, is no cheap merchant. [*She whispers aside*] My darling, my beauty!

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁT'YEVNA. Yes, a good darling! Do tell! Pity we didn't marry you to some circus clown. Shame on you; there's some kind of folly in you; you whisper right under your mother's nose, just to spite her.

LÍPOCHKA. I've reason enough, because you don't desire my happiness. You and pa are only good for picking quarrels and tyrannizing!

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁT'YEVNA. You can think what you please. The Lord is your judge! But nobody feels the anxiety for her child that the mother who bore her does! Here you're always posing and kicking up all kinds of nonsense, while your father and I worry day and night about how to find you a good man, and establish you quickly.

LÍPOCHKA. Yes, easy for you to talk; but just let me ask, what good does that do me, if you please?

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁT'YEVNA. As if you thought I wasn't sorry for you! But what can I do? Have a mite of patience, even if you have been waiting a few years. It's impossible to find a husband for you in a second; it's only cats that catch mice in a jiffy.

LÍPOCHKA. What have I got to do with your cats! It's a husband I want. What's the use! I'm ashamed to meet my acquaintances; in all Moscow we weren't able to choose a husband; other girls kept having all the luck. Wouldn't it make anybody sick? All my friends were married long ago, and here I am like a kind of orphan! We found one man, and turned him down. Now, look here: find me a husband, and find him quick!... I tell you in advance, look me up a husband right off, or it'll be so much the worse for you: purposely, just to spite you, I'll secretly scare up an adorer; I'll run away with a hussar, and we'll get married on the quiet.

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁT'YEVNA. What! What! You lewd creature! Who drummed such nastiness into your head? Merciful Lord, I can't get my breath! Ah, you dirty hussy! Well, there's nothing to be done. It's evident. I'll have to call your father.

LÍPOCHKA. All you ever say is "father, father!" You have a lot to say when he's around, but just try it when you're by yourself!

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁT'YEVNA. So you think I'm a fool, do you? What kind of hussars do you know, you brazen-faced creature? Phoo! Diabolical idea! Perhaps you think I'm not able to make you mind? Tell me, you shameless-eyed girl, where did you get that spiteful look? What, you want to be sharper than your mother! It won't take me long, I tell you, to send you into the kitchen to boil the kettles. Shame, shame on you! Ah! Ah! My holy saints! I'll make you a hempen wedding-dress, and pull it on over your head directly. I'll make you live with the pigs, instead of your parents!

LÍPOCHKA. How's that? Will I allow anybody to boss me about? The idea!

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁT'YEVNA. Shut up, shut up, you babbling Bessie! Give in to your mother! What obstinate daring! Just peep another word and I'll stop your mouth with a potato. A beautiful

consolation the Lord has sent me in you! Impudent slut! You're a miserable tomboy and you haven't a womanly thought in your head! You're ready, I suppose, to jump on horseback and go off like a soldier!

LÍPOCHKA. I suppose you'll ring in the police, presently! You'd do better to keep still, since you weren't properly brought up. I'm absolutely vile; but what are you, after all? Do you want to send me to the other world before my time? Do you want to kill me with your caprices? [*She weeps*] Already I'm about coughing my lungs out! [*Weeps*].

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁT'YEVNA. [*Stands and looks at her*] Well, stop, stop!

LÍPOCHKA *weeps louder and then sobs*.

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁT'YEVNA. I tell you, that'll do! I'm talking to you; stop it! Well, it's my fault; only do stop--it's my fault!

LÍPOCHKA *weeps*.

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁT'YEVNA. Lipochka! Lipa! Come, come, do stop! [*Tearfully*] Now, don't get angry at me--[*She weeps*] A silly old woman--ignorant--[*They weep together*] Please forgive me--I'll buy you some earrings.

LÍPOCHKA. [*Weeping*] I don't want your old earrings; I have a drawer full already. You buy me some bracelets with emeralds.

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁT'YEVNA. I will, I will, only please stop crying!

LÍPOCHKA. [*Through her tears*] I won't stop crying till I get married. [*She weeps*].

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁT'YEVNA. You'll get married, my darling; you will! Now, give me a kiss! [*They kiss*] There, Christ be with you! Now let me wipe away the tears for you. [*She wipes the tears*] Ustinya Naúmovna wanted to come to-day; we're going to talk a bit.

LÍPOCHKA. [*In a voice still rather trembly*] Oh, dear, I wish she'd hurry up!

### SCENE III

*The same and* FOMÍNISHNA

FOMÍNISHNA. Just guess, my dear Agraféna Kondrátyevna, who's come to call on us!

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁTYEVNA. I can't say. Do you think I'm a witch at guessing, Fomínishna?

LÍPOCHKA. Why don't you ask me? Am I stupider than you or mamma?

FOMÍNISHNA. The fact is, I don't know how to tell you. You're pretty strong on talk; but when it comes to action you aren't there! I asked you, and asked you, to give me just a handkerchief--nothing expensive: two heaps of stuff are lying around on your closet floor now without any care; but it didn't do any good; it's always give it to strangers, give it to strangers!

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁTYEVNA. There, now, Fomínishna, I'll never make this out till doomsday.

LÍPOCHKA. Let her go; she had a drink of beer after breakfast, and so she's getting fuzzy in her head.

FOMÍNISHNA. That's all right; what are you laughing at? How's it coming out, Agraféna Kondrátyevna? Sometimes the beginning is worse than the end.

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁTYEVNA. One can never find out anything from you! As soon as you begin to talk, we have to stop up our ears! Now, who was it who came here?



LÍPOCHKA. A man or a woman?

FOMÍNISHNA. You can never see anything but men! Where in the world did one ever see a man wearing a widow's bonnet? This is a widow's affair--so what should her name be?

LÍPOCHKA. Naturally, a woman without a husband, a widow.

FOMÍNISHNA. So I was right? And it comes out that it is a woman!

LÍPOCHKA. What a senseless creature! Well, who is the woman?

FOMÍNISHNA. There, there now, you're clever, but no guesser; it couldn't be anybody else but Ustinya Naúmovna.

LÍPOCHKA. Ah, mamma, how lucky!

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁTIEVNA. Where has she been all this time? Bring her in quickly, Fomínishna.

FOMÍNISHNA. She'll appear herself in a second. She stopped in the yard, quarrelling with the porter; he didn't open the door quickly enough.

#### SCENE IV

*The same and* USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. [*Entering*] Ouf, fa, fa! Why do you have such a steep staircase, my jewels? You climb, and climb, and much as ever you get there!

LÍPOCHKA. Oh, here she is! How are you, Ustinya Naúmovna?

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. Don't get in a hurry! There's people older than you. I want to chatter with your mamma a bit first. [*Exchanges kisses with* AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁTIEVNA] How are you,

Agraféna Kondrátyevna? How did you feel when you got up? How did you pass the night? All alive, my precious?

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁTYEVNA. Thank the Lord! I'm alive, able to chew; I've been joking with my daughter all the morning.

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. All about dresses, I suppose. [*Exchanging kisses with LÍPOCHKA*] Well, your turn has come. What's this! It seems as if you had grown stouter, my jewel! Lord bless you! What could be better than to blossom out in beauty!

FOMÍNISHNA. Shame on you, temptress! You'll give us bad luck yet!

LÍPOCHKA. Oh, what nonsense! It just looks that way to you, Ustinya Naúmovna. I keep getting punier; first it's stomachache, then palpitation of the heart--just like the beating of a pendulum. Now I have a sinking feeling, or feel kind of seasick, and things swim before my eyes.

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. [*To FOMÍNISHNA*] Come on, you dear soul, let's have a kiss now. To be sure, we've already exchanged greetings in the yard, my jewel, so we don't need to rub lips again.

FOMÍNISHNA. Just as you wish. Of course I'm no lady of a household. I don't amount to much; all the same I have a soul in me, and not just vapor!

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁTYEVNA. [*Sitting down*] Sit down, sit down, Ustinya Naúmovna! Why do you stand up as stiff as a bean-pole? Fomínishna, go tell them to heat up the samovar.

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. I've had my tea, I've had it, my jewel; may I perish on the spot if I haven't; and I've just dropped in for a moment.

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁTYEVNA. What are you loafing about for, Fomínishna? Run off a little more nimbly, granny.

LÍPOCHKA. Let me, mamma, I'll go quicker; look how clumsy she is!

FOMÍNISHNA. Don't you meddle where you aren't asked! For my part, my dear Agraféna Kondrátyevna, this is what I think: wouldn't it be nicer to serve cordial and some herring?

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁTYEVNA. Cordial's all right, and the samovar's all right. Or are you stingy with other people's stuff? Well, when it's ready, have it brought here.

FOMÍNISHNA. Certainly! All right! [*She goes out.*]

## SCENE V

*The same, without FOMÍNISHNA*

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁTYEVNA. Well, haven't you any news, Ustinya Naúmovna? This girl of mine is simply grieved to death.

LÍPOCHKA. And really, Ustinya Naúmovna, you keep coming, and coming, and no good comes of it.

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. But one can't fix things up quickly with you, my jewels. Your daddy has his eye peeled for a rich fellow; he tells me he'll be satisfied with any bell-boy provided he has money and asks a small enough settlement. And your mamma also, Agraféna Kondrátyevna, is always wanting her own taste suited; you must be sure to give her a merchant, with a decoration, who keeps horses, and who crosses himself in the old way[1]. You also have your own notions. How's a person going to please you all?

## SCENE VI

*The same and FOMÍNISHNA, who enters and places vodka and relishes on the table.*

LÍPOCHKA. I won't marry a merchant, not for anything. I won't! As if I was brought up for that, and learned French[1], and to play the piano, and to dance! No, no; get him wherever you want to, but get me an aristocrat.

[Footnote 1: Evidently, Bolshóv and his family, like many other wealthy Moscow merchants, belonged to the sect of the Old Believers, one of whose dearest tenets is that the sign of the cross should be made with two fingers instead of with three.]

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁTJEVNA. Here, you talk with her.

FOMÍNISHNA. What put aristocrats into your head? What's the special relish in them? They don't even grow beards like Christians; they don't go to the public baths, and don't make pasties on holidays. But, you see, even if you're married, you'll get sick of nothing but sauce and gravy.

LÍPOCHKA. Fomínishna, you were born a peasant, and you'll turn up your toes a peasant. What's your merchant to me? What use would he be? Has he any ambition to rise in the world? What do I want of his mop?

FOMÍNISHNA. Not a mop, but the hair that God gave him, miss, that's it.

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁTJEVNA. See what a rough old codger your dad is; he doesn't trim his beard; yet, somehow, you manage to kiss him.

LÍPOCHKA. Dad is one thing, but my husband is another. But why do you insist, mamma? I have already said that I won't marry a merchant, and I won't! I'd rather die first; I'll cry to the end of my life; if tears give out, I'll swallow pepper.

FOMÍNISHNA. Are you getting ready to bawl? Don't you think of it!-  
-What fun do you get out of teasing her, Agraféna Kondrátyevna?

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁTJEVNA. Who's teasing her? She's mighty touchy.

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. Well, well, if you've got your mind set on a nobleman, we'll find you one. What sort do you want; rather stout, or rather lean?

LÍPOCHKA. Doesn't matter, it's all right if he's rather stout, so long as he's no shorty. Of course he'd better be tall than an insignificant little runt! And most of all, Ustinya Naúmovna, he mustn't be snub-nosed, and he absolutely must be dark-complexioned. It's understood, of course, that he must be dressed like the men in the magazines. [*She glances at the mirror*] Oh, Lord, my hair looks like a feather-duster to-day!

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. Now, my jewel, I have a husband for you of the very sort you describe: aristocratic, tall, and brown-complected.

LÍPOCHKA. Oh, Ustinya Naúmovna! Not brown-complected, but dark-complexioned!

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. Yes, much I need, in my old age, to split my tongue talking your lingo. What I said, goes. He has peasants, and wears a norder about his neck. Now you go get dressed, and your mamma and I will talk this thing over.

LÍPOCHKA. Oh, my dear, sweet Ustinya Naúmovna, come up to my room a bit later; I must talk with you. Let's go, Fomínishna.

FOMÍNISHNA. Ha, what a fidgety child you are!

[*They go out.*]

## SCENE VII

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁTJEVNA *and* USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁTJEVNA. Won't you have a sip of cordial before your tea, Ustinya Naúmovna?

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. Don't care if I do, my jewel.

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁTJEVNA. [*Pouring*] With my compliments.

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. You ought to drink first, my pearl.

[*Drinks.*]

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁTJEVNA. I'll look out for myself!

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. Ya! Phoo! Where d'you get this decoction?

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁTJEVNA. At the wine-shop. [*Drinks.*]

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. Buy it in bulk, I suppose?

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁTJEVNA. By the gallon. What should you want to buy in small quantities for? Our expenses, you see, are heavy.

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. What's the use of talking, my dear, what's the use! Now, I've been bustling about, bustling about for you, Agraféna Kondrátyevna; trudging, trudging over the pavement, and at last I've grubbed up a suitable man: you'll gasp for joy, my jewels, for a fact.

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁTJEVNA. At last you're talking sense!

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. A man of birth and of standing; such a grandee as you never even dreamed of.

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁTJEVNA. I see I'll have to ask Samsón Sílych for a couple of fivers for you.

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. That's all right, my jewel, I don't mind! And he has peasants, wears a norder on his neck; and as for intellect, why, he's simply a bonanza.

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁTYEVNA. Then, Ustinya Naúmovna, you ought to have informed him that our daughter hasn't got piles of money.

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. But he doesn't know where to put his own.

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁTYEVNA. That would be good, and jolly good; only, look here, Ustinya Naúmovna, and just consider it yourself, my friend: what am I going to do with a nobleman for a son-in-law? I shan't dare say a word to him; I'll be all at sea.

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. It's a little scary at first, my jewel, but afterwards you'll get used to things, you'll manage somehow or other. But, here, we must talk a bit with Samsón Sílych; he may even know him, this man of ours.

## SCENE VIII

*The same and* RISPOLÓZHENSKY

RISPOLÓZHENSKY. [*Entering*] I've come to you, my dear Agraféna Kondrátyevna. I was going to have a talk with Samsón Sílych, but he was busy, I saw, so I thought: now, I'll go to Agraféna Kondrátyevna. By the way, is that vodka, near you? I'll just take a thimbleful, Agraféna Kondrátyevna. [*Drinks*].

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁTYEVNA. With my compliments, my dear sir. Please sit down, won't you? How are you getting along?

RISPOLÓZHENSKY. What a life I live! Well, I'm just loafing, Agraféna Kondrátyevna; you know yourself, my family's large, business is dull. But I don't grumble; it's a sin to grumble, Agraféna Kondrátyevna.

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁTYEVNA. That's the last thing in the world to do, my dear sir.

RISPOLÓZHENSKY. Whoever grumbles, I think, offends against God, Agraféna Kondrátyevna. This is the way it happened--

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁTJEVNA. What are your front names, my dear sir? I keep forgetting.

RISPOLÓZHENSKY. Sysóy Psoich, my dear Agraféna Kondrátyevna.

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. What does Psoich mean, my jewel? What lingo is that[1]?

[Footnote 1: The name lends itself to the interpretation, "son of a dog (*pes*)."]

RISPOLÓZHENSKY. I can't tell you positively: they called my father Psoy--well, naturally, that makes me Psoich.

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. But, Psoich, like that, Psoich! However, that's nothing; there are worse, my jewel.

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁTJEVNA. Well, Sysóy Psoich, what was it you were going to tell us?

RISPOLÓZHENSKY. Well, it was like this, my dear Agraféna Kondrátyevna: it isn't as if it were a proverb, in a kind of fable, but a real occurrence. I'll just take a thimbleful, Agraféna Kondrátyevna. [*Drinks.*]

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁTJEVNA. Help yourself, my dear sir, help yourself.

RISPOLÓZHENSKY. [*Sits down*] There was an old man, a venerable old man--Here, I've forgotten where it was, my dear madam--only it was in some desert spot. He had twelve daughters, my dear madam; each younger than the other! He didn't have the strength to work himself; his wife, too, was very old, the children were still small; and one has to eat and drink. What they had was used up by the time they were old, and there was no one to give them food and drink. Where could they find refuge with their little children? Then he set to



thinking this way, then that way.--No, my dear lady, that's where thinking won't do any good. "I'll go," he said, "to the crossroads; perhaps I can get something from charitable people." He sat all day. "God'll help you," they told him. Sits there another day "God'll help you!" Well, my dear lady, he began to murmur.

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁTJEVNA. Holy saints!

RISPOLÓZHENSKY. "Good Lord!" he said, "I'm no extortioner, I'm no usurer--it would be better," he said, "to lay hands on myself."

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁTJEVNA. Merciful heavens!

RISPOLÓZHENSKY. And lo! my dear madam, there came a dream to him in the night----

## SCENE IX

The same and BOLSHÓV

BOLSHÓV. Ha, you here, sir? What's this you're preaching here?

RISPOLÓZHENSKY. [*Bows*] I hope you're well, Samsón Sílych.

USTÍNIA NAÚMOVNA. Why, my jewel! You seem to be growing thin. Or have you been crippled somehow?

BOLSHÓV. [*Sitting down*] Must be I've caught cold, or perhaps my blood's in a bad way.

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁTJEVNA. Well, Sysóy Psoich, and what happened to him next?

RISPOLÓZHENSKY. Some other time, Agraféna Kondrátyevna, some other time I'll finish telling; I'll run in some day about dusk and tell you about it fully.

BOLSHÓV. What's the matter with you; trying to be sanctimonious? Ha, ha, ha! It's time you came to!

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁTYEVNA. There, now, you're beginning! You won't let us have a heart-to-heart talk together.

BOLSHÓV. Heart-to-heart talk! Ha, ha, ha! But you just ask him how his case was lost from court; there's the story he'll tell you better.

RISPOLÓZHENSKY. On the contrary, it was not lost! That's not true, Samsón Sílych!

BOLSHÓV. Then what did they turn you out for?

RISPOLÓZHENSKY. This is why, my dear Agraféna Kondrátyevna. I took one case home with me from the court; on the way my friend and I just stepped aside--mortal man is weak; well, you understand--if you'll permit me to say it, into the wine-shop, so to speak. I left it there, and when I was rather tipsy, I suppose, I forgot it. What of that? It might happen to anybody. Afterwards, my dear lady, they missed that case in court; we looked and looked, and I went home twice with the bailiff--still we couldn't find it. They wanted to bring me to trial, but suddenly I remembered: it must be, now, I forgot that thing and left it in the wine-shop. I went there with the bailiff, and there it was.

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁTYEVNA. I declare! That may happen to a sober man as well as to one who drinks. What a pity!

BOLSHÓV. How is it they didn't send you off to Kamchatka?

RISPOLÓZHENSKY. To Kamchatka! But why, permit me to ask you, why should they send me off to Kamchatka?

BOLSHÓV. Why? Because you're drunk and disorderly. Do they have to show you any indulgence? Why, you'll just kill yourself drinking.

RISPOLÓZHENSKY. On the contrary, they spared me. You see, my dear Agraféna Kondrátyevna, they wanted to try me for that very thing--I went immediately to our general, and flopped at his feet!

"Your Excellency!" I said. "Don't ruin me! I've a wife," I said, "and little children!" "Well," he said, "deuce take you; they won't strike a man when he's down: tender your resignation, so I shan't see you here." So he spared me. What now! God bless him! He doesn't forget me even now; sometimes I run in to see him on a holiday: "Well," says he, "how are you, Sysóy Psoich?" "I came, your Excellency, to wish you a happy holiday." So, I went to the Troitsa monastery not long ago, and brought him a consecrated wafer. I'll just take a thimbleful, Agraféna Kondrátyevna. [*Drinks.*]

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁTYEVNA. With my compliments, my dear sir. Ustinya Naúmovna, let's you and me go out; the samovar is ready, I suppose; I'll show you that we have something new for the wedding outfit.

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. I suppose, my jewel, you have heaps of stuff ready.

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁTYEVNA. Why certainly. The new materials have come, and it seems as if we didn't have to pay money for them.

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. What's the use of talking, my pearl! You have your own shop, and it's as if they grew in your garden. [*They go out.*]

## SCENE X

BOLSHÓV and RISPOLÓZHENSKY

BOLSHÓV. Well, Sysóy Psoich, I suppose you've wasted a good deal of ink in your time on this pettifoggery?

RISPOLÓZHENSKY. He, he! Samsón Sílych, cheap goods! But I came to inquire how your business is getting on.

BOLSHÓV. You did! Much you need to know! Bah, you low-down people! You bloodsuckers! Just let you scent out something or other, and immediately you sneak round with your diabolical suggestions.

RISPOLÓZHENSKY. What kind of a suggestion could come from me, Samsón Sílych? What kind of a teacher should I be, when you yourself, perhaps, are ten times wiser than I am? I shall do what I'm asked to do. How can I help it? I'd be a hog if I didn't; because I, it may be said, am loaded with favors by you, and so are my kiddies. I'm too much of a fool to advise you; you know your own business yourself better than anybody else.

BOLSHÓV. Know my own business! That's the trouble; men like me, merchants, blockheads, understand nothing; and this just serves the turn of such leeches as you. And now you'll besiege me on every side and haunt me to death.

RISPOLÓZHENSKY. How can I help haunting you? If I didn't love you I wouldn't haunt you. Haven't I any feelings? Am I really a mere dumb brute?

BOLSHÓV. I know that you love me--you all love us; only one can't get anything decent out of you. Here I'm worrying, worrying with this business so that I'm worn out, if you believe me, with this one anxiety. If I could only get it over with, and out of my head.

RISPOLÓZHENSKY. Well, Samsón Sílych, you aren't the first, nor the last; aren't others doing it?

BOLSHÓV. How can they help it, brother? Others are doing it. But how do they do it; without shame, without conscience! They ride in carriages with easy springs; they live in three-storied houses. One of them will build a belvedere with pillars, in which he's ashamed to show his ugly phiz; and that's the end of him, and you can't get anything out of him. These carriages will roll away, Lord knows where; all his houses are mortgaged, and all the creditors will get out of it'll be three pairs of old boots. That's the whole story. And who is it that he'll fool? Just some poor beggars whom he'll send out into the world in nothing but their shirts. But my creditors are all rich men; what difference will it make to them?

RISPOLÓZHENSKY. Naturally. Why, Samsón Sílych, all that is in our hands.

BOLSHÓV. I know that it's in our hands; but are you equal to handling this affair? You see, you lawyers are a rum lot. Oh, I know you! You're nimble enough in words, and then you go and mess things up.

RISPOLÓZHENSKY. But come now, Samsón Sílych, if you please: do you think this is the first time for me! As though I didn't know that already! He, he, he! Yes, I've done such things before; and they've turned out fine. They'd have sent anybody else long ago for such jobs to the other side of nowhere.

BOLSHÓV. Oho! What kind of a scheme will you get up?

RISPOLÓZHENSKY. Why, we'll see--according to circumstances. I'll just take a thimbleful, Samsón Sílych. [*Drinks*] Now, the first thing, Samsón Sílych, we must mortgage the house and shops; or sell them. That's the first thing.

BOLSHÓV. Yes, that positively must be done right away. But on whom shall we shove the stuff? Shall it be my wife?

RISPOLÓZHENSKY. Illegal, Samsón Sílych! That's illegal! It is stated in the laws that such sales are not valid. It's an easy thing to do, but you'll have to see that there're no hitches afterward. If it's to be done, it must be done thoroughly, Samsón Sílych.

BOLSHÓV. That's it: there must be no loose ends.

RISPOLÓZHENSKY. If you make it over to an outsider, there's nothing they can cavil at. Let 'em try to make a row later, and try to dispute good legal papers.

BOLSHÓV. But here's the trouble: when you make over your house to an outsider, maybe it'll stick to him, like a flea to a soldier.

RISPOLÓZHENSKY. Well, Samsón Sílych, you must look for a man who knows what conscience is.

BOLSHÓV. But where are you going to find him nowadays?  
Everybody's watching his chance these days to grab you by the collar;  
and here you want conscience!

RISPOLÓZHENSKY. Here's my idea, Samsón Sílych, whether you  
want to listen to me or not: what sort of a fellow is your clerk?

BOLSHÓV. Which one? Do you mean Lázár?

RISPOLÓZHENSKY. Yes; Lázár Elizárych.

BOLSHÓV. All right, Lázár; make it over to him; he's a young man  
with understanding, and he has some capital.

RISPOLÓZHENSKY. What do you want, Samsón Sílych, a  
mortgage-deed or a purchase-deed?

BOLSHÓV. Whichever you can get at the lowest interest rate'll suit  
me. But do the thing up brown and I'll give you such a fee, Sysóy  
Psoich, as'll fairly make your hair curl.

RISPOLÓZHENSKY. Set your mind at rest, Samsón Sílych, I know  
my own business. But have you talked to Lázár Elizárych about this  
thing or not? Samsón Sílych, I'll just take a thimbleful. [*Drinks.*]

BOLSHÓV. Not yet. We'll talk it over to-day. He's a capable lad; only  
wink at him, and he understands. And he'll do the business up so tight  
that you can't get in a finger. Well! we'll mortgage the house; and then  
what?

RISPOLÓZHENSKY. Then we'll write out a statement that such and  
such notes are due, and that we'll pay twenty-five kopeks on the ruble:  
well, then go see the creditors. If anybody is especially stubborn, you  
can add a bit, and if a man gets real angry, pay him the whole bill.  
You'll pay him on the condition that he writes that he accepted  
twenty-five kopeks--just for appearances, to show the others. "That's  
the way *he* did," you see; and the others, seeing the document, will  
agree.

BOLSHÓV. That's right, there's no harm in bargaining: if they don't take it at twenty-five kopeks, they'll take it at half a ruble; but if they won't take it at half a ruble, they'll grab for it with both hands at seventy kopeks. We'll profit, anyhow. There, you can say what you please, but I have a marriageable daughter; I want to pass her on, and get rid of her. And then, my boy, it'll be time for me to take a rest; I'll have an easy time lying on my back; and to the devil with all this trading! But here comes Lázar.

## SCENE XI

*The same and* PODKHALYÚZIN, *who enters*

BOLSHÓV. What do you say, Lázar? Just come from town? How are your affairs?

PODKHALYÚZIN. Oh, they're getting on so-so; thank God, sir! Good morning, Sysóy Psoich! [*Bows.*]

RISPOLÓZHENSKY. How do you do, my dear Lázar Elizárych! [*Bows.*]

BOLSHÓV. If they're getting on, let 'em get. [*After a short silence*] But, look here, Lázar, when you make up the balance for me at your leisure, you might deduct the retail items sold to the gentry, and the rest of that sort of thing. You see, we're trading and trading, my boy, but there's not a kopek of profit in it. Maybe the clerks are going wrong and are carrying off stuff to their folks and mistresses. You ought to give 'em a word of advice. What's the use of fooling around without making any profits? Don't they know the tricks of the trade? It's high time, it seems to me.

PODKHALYÚZIN. How in the world can they help knowing, Samsón Sílych? It seems as if I were always in town and always talking to them, sir.

BOLSHÓV. But what do you say?

PODKHALYÚZIN. Why, the usual thing, sir. I try to have everything in order and as it should be. "Now, my boys," I say, "look sharp, now. Maybe there's a chance for a sale; some idiot of a purchaser may turn up, or a colored pattern may catch some young lady's eye, and click!" I say, "you add a ruble or two to the price per yard."

BOLSHÓV. I suppose you know, brother, how the Germans in our shops swindle the gentlemen. Even if we're not Germans, but orthodox Christians, we, too, like to eat stuffed pasties. Ain't that so? Ha?

RISPOLÓZHENSKY *laughs*.

PODKHALYÚZIN. Why certainly, sir. "And you must measure," I say, "more naturally: pull and stretch ju-u-u-st enough, God save us, not to tear the cloth: you see," I say, "we don't have to wear it afterwards. Well, and if they look the other way, nobody's to blame if you should happen to measure one yard of cloth twice."

BOLSHÓV. It's all one. I suppose the tailor'd steal it. Ha? He'd steal it, I suppose?

RISPOLÓZHENSKY. He'd steal it, Samsón Sílych, certainly that rascal would steal it; I know these tailors.

BOLSHÓV. That's it; the whole lot of them are rascals, and we get the thanks.

RISPOLÓZHENSKY. Quite right, Samsón Sílych, you're certainly speaking the truth.

BOLSHÓV. Ah, Lázár, profits are rotten these days: it's not as it used to be. [*After a moment of silence*] Well, did you bring the paper?

PODKHALYÚZIN. [*Taking it from his pocket and handing it over*] Be so good as to read it, sir.

BOLSHÓV. Just give it here; we'll take a look. [*He puts on his spectacles and examines the paper*].



RISPOLÓZHENSKY. Samsón Sílych, I'll just take a thimbleful. *He drinks, then puts on his spectacles, sits down beside BOLSHÓV, and looks at the newspapers.*

BOLSHÓV. [*Reads aloud*] "Crown announcements, and from various societies. One, two, three, four, five, and six, from the Foundlings' Hospital." That's not in our line: it's not for us to buy peasants. "Seven and eight from Moscow University, from the Government Regencies, from the Office of the Board of Charities." Well, we'll pass that up, too. "From the City Council of Six." Now, sir, maybe there's something here! [*He reads*] "The Moscow City Council of Six hereby announces: Would not some one care to take in his charge the collection of taxes as named below?" That's not our line, you have to give security. "The Office of the Widows' Home hereby invites--" Let it invite, we won't go. "From the Orphans' Court." I haven't any father or mother, myself. [*Examines farther*] Aha! Here something's slipped up! Listen here, Lázar! "Year so-and-so, twelfth day of September, according to the decision of the Commerce Court, the merchant Fedót Selivérstov Pleshkóv, of the first guild, was declared an insolvent debtor, in consequence of which--" What's the use of explaining? Everybody knows the consequences. There you are, Fedót Selivérstov! What a grandee he was, and he's gone to smash! But say, Lázar, doesn't he owe us something?

PODKHALYÚZIN. He owes us a very little, sir. They took somewhere between six and eight barrels of sugar for home use.

BOLSHÓV. A bad business, Lázar. Well, he'll pay me back in full, out of friendliness.

PODKHALYÚZIN. It's doubtful, Sir.

BOLSHÓV. We'll settle it somehow. [*Reads*] "Moscow merchant of the first guild, Antíp Sysóyev Enótov, declared an insolvent debtor--" Does *he* owe us anything?

PODKHALYÚZIN. For vegetable oil, sir; just before Lent they took about three kegs, sir.

BOLSHÓV. Those blooming vegetarians that keep all the fasts! They want to please God at other people's expense. Brother, don't you trust their sedate ways! Those people cross themselves with one hand, and slip the other into your pocket. Here's the third; "Moscow merchant of the second guild, Efrém Lúkin Poluarshínnikov[1], declared an insolvent debtor." Well, what about him?

[Footnote 1: Half a yard.]

PODKHALYÚZIN. We have his note, sir.

BOLSHÓV. Protested?

PODKHALYÚZIN. Yes, sir. He himself's in hiding, sir.

BOLSHÓV. Well! And the fourth there, Samopálov. Why! have they got a combination against us?

PODKHALYÚZIN. Such an underhanded gang, sir.

BOLSHÓV. [*Turning over the pages*] One couldn't get through reading them until to-morrow. Take it away!

PODKHALYÚZIN. They only dirty the paper. What a moral lesson for the whole merchant corporation! [*Silence.*]

RISPOLÓZHENSKY. Good-by, Samsón Sílych, I'll run home now; I have some little matters to look after.

BOLSHÓV. You might sit a little while longer.

RISPOLÓZHENSKY. No, confound it, Samsón Sílych, I haven't time. I'll come to you as early as possible to-morrow morning.

BOLSHÓV. Well, as you choose!

RISPOLÓZHENSKY. Good-by! Good-by, Lázár Elizárych! [*He goes out.*]

## SCENE XII

BOLSHÓV *and* PODKHALYÚZIN

BOLSHÓV. Now consider, Lázár, what trading's like: just think about it. You think it's getting money for nothing? "Money, not much!" they tell you; "ain't seen any for a long time. Take my note," they say. But what are you going to get from some people on a note? Here I have about a hundred thousand rubles' worth of 'em lying around, and with protests. You don't do anything but add to the heap each year. If you want, I'll sell you the whole pile for half a ruble in silver. You'll never catch the men who signed 'em even with bloodhounds. Some have died off, some have run away; there's not even a single man to put in the pen. Suppose you do send one there, Lázár, that doesn't do you any good; some of 'em will hold on so that you can't smoke 'em out. "I'm all right here," they say, "you go hang!" Isn't that so, Lázár?

PODKHALYÚZIN. Just so, that's the way it happens.

BOLSHÓV. Always notes, notes! But what on earth is a note? Absolutely nothing but paper, if I may say so. And if you discount it, they do it at a rate that makes your belly ache, and you pay for it later with your own property. [*After a brief silence*] It's better not to have dealings with provincials: always on credit, always on credit; and if he ever does bring the money, it's in slick small change--you look, and there's neither head nor tail to the coins, and the denomination's rubbed off long ago. But do as you please here! You'd better not show your goods to the tradesman of this place; any one of 'em'll go into any warehouse and sniff and peck, and peck, and then clear out. It'd be all right if there were no goods, but what do you expect a man to trade in? I've got one apothecary shop, one dry goods, the third a grocery. No use, none of them pays. You needn't even go to the market; they cut the prices down worse than the devil knows what; but if you sell a horse-collar, you have to throw in trimmings and earnest money, and treat the fellows, and stand all sorts of losses through wrong weights. That's the way it goes! Don't you realize that?

PODKHALYÚZIN. Seems I ought to realize it, sir.

BOLSHÓV. There's business for you, and that's the way to do it.  
[*Silence*] Well, Lázár, what do you think?

PODKHALYÚZIN. What should I think, sir? That's just as you please. My business is that of a subordinate.

BOLSHÓV. What do you mean, subordinate? Just speak out freely. I'm asking you about the business.

PODKHALYÚZIN. Again, Samsón Sílych, it's just as you please, sir.

BOLSHÓV. You twaddle one thing: "As you please." But what do you think?

PODKHALYÚZIN. That I can't say, sir.

BOLSHÓV. [*After a brief silence*] Tell me, Lázár, on your conscience; do you love me? [*Silence*] Do you love me or not? Why are you silent? [*Silence*] I've given you food and drink, set you up in the world; haven't I?

PODKHALYÚZIN. Oh, Samsón Sílych! What's the use of talking about it, sir? Don't have any doubts about me! Only one word: I'm just such as you see me.

BOLSHÓV. What do you mean by that?

PODKHALYÚZIN. Why, if you need anybody or anything whatsoever, you can count on me. I shan't spare myself.

BOLSHÓV. Well, then, there's nothing more to be said. In my opinion, Lázár, now is the most proper time; we have a good deal of ready cash, and all the notes have fallen due. What's the use of waiting? You'll wait, if you please, until some merchant just like yourself, the dirty cur, will strip you bare, and then, you'll see, he'll make an agreement at ten kopeks on the ruble, and he'll wallow in his millions, and won't think you're worth spitting at. But you, an honorable tradesman, must just watch him, and suffer--keep on staring. Here's what I think, Lázár: to offer the creditors such a

proposition as this--will they accept from me twenty-five kopeks on the ruble? What do you think?

PODKHALYÚZIN. Why, according to my notion, Samsón Sílych, if you're going to pay at the rate of twenty-five kopeks, it would be more decent not to pay at all.

BOLSHÓV. Why, really, that's so. You won't scare anybody by a bluff; but it's better to settle the affair on the quiet. Then wait for the Lord to judge you at the Second Coming. Only it's a heap of trouble. I'm going to mortgage my house and shops to you.

PODKHALYÚZIN. Impossible to do it without some bother, sir. You'll have to get rid of the notes for something, sir; have the merchandise transferred somewhere further off. We'll get busy, sir!

BOLSHÓV. Just so. Although an old man, I'm going to get busy. But are you going to help?

PODKHALYÚZIN. Good gracious, Samsón Sílych, I'll go through fire and water, sir.

BOLSHÓV. What could be better! Why the devil should I scratch around for pennies. I'll make one swoop, and that's an end to it! Only God give us the nerve! Thanks, Lázár. You've treated me like a friend. [*He rises*] Now, get busy! [*He goes up to him and taps him on the shoulder*] If you get the thing done properly, you and I'll divide the profits. I'll reward you for the rest of your life.

[*He goes to the door.*]

PODKHALYÚZIN. I don't need anything, Samsón Sílych, except your peace of mind, sir. I've lived with you since my earliest years, and I've received countless favors from you; it may be said, sir, you took me as a little brat, to sweep out your shops; consequently I simply must be grateful.

ACT II

*Office in the house of BOLSHÓV. Rear centre a door; on the left a staircase leading to the floor above.*

## SCENE I

*TISHKA near the front of the stage, with a brush*

TISHKA. What a life, what a life! Sweep the floors before daylight! And is it my business to sweep floors? Things aren't the same here as with decent folks. Now if the other bosses have a boy, he lives with the boys; that is, he hangs around the shop. But with me it's now here, now there, tramp the pavement all day as if you were crazy. You'll soon feather your nest--I don't think! Decent people keep a porter for running around; but at our place he lies on the stove with the kittens, or he hangs around with the cook; but *you're* in demand. At other people's it's easy-going; if you get into mischief now and then, they make allowances for your youth. But at our house--if it isn't he, then it's somebody else; either the old man or the old woman will give you a hiding; otherwise there's the clerk Lázar, or there's Fomínishna, or there's--any old rascal can lord it over you. What a cursed life it is! But if you want to tear yourself away from the house and go somewhere with friends to play three-card monte, or have a game of handball--don't think of such a thing! Now, really, there's something feels wrong in my head. [*He climbs upon a chair on his knees and looks in the mirror*] How do you do, Tikhon Savostyánovich! How are you getting along? Are you all top notch? Now, then, Tishka, just do a stunt. [*He makes a grimace*] That's what! [*Another*] Exactly like----

*[He bursts out laughing.]*

## SCENE II

*TISHKA and PODKHALYÚZIN, who steals in and seizes him by the collar.*

PODKHALYÚZIN. What are you doing there, you little imp?

TISHKA. What? You know what! I was wiping off dust!

PODKHALYÚZIN. Were you wiping it off with your tongue? As if you could find any dust on the mirror! I'll show you some dust! You're showing off! I'll just warm up the nape of your neck so you'll know it.

TISHKA. Know what? Now what have I done?

PODKHALYÚZIN. What have you done? What have you done? Say another word and you'll find out what! Just let out a peep!

TISHKA. Yes, a peep! I'm going to tell the boss, and then you'll catch it!

PODKHALYÚZIN. Going to tell the boss! What's your boss to me? Why, if it came to that--what's your boss to me!--Why, you're just a kid that has to be taught; what were you thinking of? If we didn't wallop you imps there'd be no good come of you. That's the regular way of doing things. I, myself, my boy, have come through fire, water, and copper pipes.

TISHKA. I know you did.

PODKHALYÚZIN. Shhh--you little devil! [*Threatening him.*]

TISHKA. Ha, just try it! I'll sure tell, honest to goodness I will.

PODKHALYÚZIN. What are you going to tell, you devil's pepper-pot?

TISHKA. What'll I say? Why, that you scold!

PODKHALYÚZIN. Great impression that'll make! You're quite a gentleman! Come here, sir! Has Sysóy Psoich been here?

TISHKA. He sure has.

PODKHALYÚZIN. Talk sense, you little devil! Was he going to come again?

TISHKA. He was that!

PODKHALYÚZIN. Well, you can run along, now.

TISHKA. Do you want any vodka?

PODKHALYÚZIN. Yes, I do. I'll have to treat Sysóy Psoich. [*He gives money*] Buy a bottle, but you keep the change for gingerbread. But see that you hurry, so they don't miss you here!

TISHKA. I'll be home before a short-haired girl can twist her braids. Off I go, hippity-hop.

### SCENE III

PODKHALYÚZIN *alone*

PODKHALYÚZIN. What a misfortune! Here's where a misfortune has come upon us! What's to be done now? Well, it's a bad business. Now we can't avoid declaring ourselves bankrupt. Well, suppose the boss should have something left over; but where do I come in? What shall I do with myself? Sell junk in the second-hand market! I've worked, I've worked about twenty years, and then to be sent rambling! Now, how am I going to settle this matter? Perhaps with merchandise? Here, he said to sell the notes. [*He draws them out and reads them*] It must be that it's going to be possible to profit by it. [*He walks about the room*] They say a fellow ought to know what conscience is. Well, of course he ought to; but in what sense must he understand that? Everybody has conscience where a good man is concerned; but when the man himself is cheating others, then where does your conscience come in? Samsón Sílych is a very rich merchant, and has hatched up this whole business now just to kill time, so to speak. But I'm a poor man! If I should make a little extra profit in this business--then there can't be any sin in it; because he himself is acting dishonorably, and going against the law. And why should I pity him? The course is



clear; well, don't slip up on it: he follows his politics, and you look out for your interest. I'd have seen the thing through with him, but I don't feel like it. Hm!--What day-dreams will come into a man's head! Of course, Olimpiáda Samsónovna is a cultivated young lady; and it must be said, there're none on earth like her; but of course that suitor won't take her now; he'll say, "Give me money!" But where are you going to get money? And now she can't marry a nobleman because she hasn't any money. Sooner or later they'll have to marry her to a merchant. [*He walks on in silence*] I'll raise the dough, and bow to Samsón Sílych. "Samsón Sílych," says I, "I'm at an age when I must think about the continuance of posterity; and I, now, Samsón Sílych, haven't grudged my sweat and blood for your tranquillity. To be sure, now, Olimpiáda Samsónovna is a cultivated young lady; but I, Samsón Sílych, am no common trash; you can see for yourself, if you please. I have capital, and I'm a good manager in that line." Why shouldn't he give her to me? Ain't I a man? I haven't been detected in any knavery; I'm respectful to my elders. But in addition to all that, as Samsón Sílych has mortgaged his house and shops to me, I can frighten him with the mortgage. Knowing as I do the disposition of Samsón Sílych to be what it is, that may very easily happen. This is the way with his sort: once they get an idea into their head, you simply can't drive it out. It's just as when, three years ago, he wanted to shave his beard. No matter how much Agraféna Kondrátyevna begged and wept, "No," he said, "afterwards I'll let it grow again; but for the time being I'll have my own way." And he took and shaved it. It's the same way with this business; if I make a hit with him, or the idea strikes him all right--then it's sweet wedding-bells to-morrow, and that's all, and don't you dare argue! I could jump from the tower of Ivan the Great for the joy of it.

*Enter TISHKA with the bottle.*

#### SCENE IV

PODKHALYÚZIN *and* TISHKA

TISHKA. [*Coming in with the bottle*] Here I am! I've come.

PODKHALYÚZIN. Listen, Tishka, is Ustinya Naúmovna here?

TISHKA. Up-stairs there. And the shyster's coming.

PODKHALYÚZIN. Well, put the vodka on the table, and bring some relishes.

TISHKA *puts down the vodka and brings relishes; then goes out.*

## SCENE V

PODKHALYÚZIN *and* RISPOLÓZHENSKY

PODKHALYÚZIN. Ah, my respects to you, sir!

RISPOLÓZHENSKY. Mine to you, my dear Lázar Elizárych, mine to you! Fine. I think, now, perhaps there's something I can do. Is that vodka, near you? I'll just take a thimbleful, Lázar Elizárych. My hands have begun to shake mornings, especially the right one. When I go to write something, Lázar Elizárych, I have to hold it with my left. I swear I do. But take a sip of vodka, and it seems to do it good.  
*[Drinks.]*

PODKHALYÚZIN. Why do your hands shake?

RISPOLÓZHENSKY. *[Sits down by the table]* From anxiety, Lázar Elizárych; from anxiety, my boy.

PODKHALYÚZIN. Indeed, sir! But I suppose it's because you're plundering people overmuch. God is punishing you for your unrighteousness.

RISPOLÓZHENSKY. He, he, he!--Lázar Elizárych! How could I plunder anybody? My business is of a small sort. I'm like a little bird, picking up small grains.

PODKHALYÚZIN. You deal in small quantities, of course?

RISPOLÓZHENSKY. You'd deal even in small quantities if you couldn't get anything else. Well, it wouldn't matter so much if I were alone; but, you see, I have a wife and four kiddies. They all want to eat, the little dears. One says, "Daddy, give me!" Another says, "Daddy, give me!" And I'm a man who feels strongly for his family. Here I entered one boy in the high school; he has to have a uniform, and then something else. And what's to become of the old shack?-- Why, how much shoe-leather you wear out simply walking from Butírky to the Voskresénsky Gates.

PODKHALYÚZIN. That's right, sir.

RISPOLÓZHENSKY. And why do you make the trip? You write a little petition for one man, you register somebody else in the citizen class. Some days you'll not bring home half a ruble in silver. I vow, I'm not lying! Then what're you going to live on? Lázár Elizárych, I'll just take a thimbleful. [*Drinks*] "So," I think, "I'll just drop in on Lázár Elizárych; perhaps he'll spare me a little change."

PODKHALYÚZIN. For what sort of knavery, sir?

RISPOLÓZHENSKY. What do you mean by knavery! Come, that's a sin, Lázár Elizárych! Don't I serve you? I'm your servant till the grave; command me what you want. And I fixed up the mortgage for you!

PODKHALYÚZIN. See here, you've been paid! And it's not your business to keep harping on the same string!

RISPOLÓZHENSKY. Just so, Lázár Elizárych, I've been paid. Just so! Ah, Lázár Elizárych, poverty has crushed me!

PODKHALYÚZIN. Poverty crushed you! Oh, that happens, sir. [*He approaches and sits down by the table*] Well, sir, I have a little extra money; I've no place to put it. [*Lays his pocketbook on the table.*]

RISPOLÓZHENSKY. What, you, Lázár Elizárych? Extra money? I'm afraid you're joking.

PODKHALYÚZIN. All joking aside, sir.

RISPOLÓZHENSKY. Well, if you have a little extra money, why not help a poor man? God'll reward you for it.

PODKHALYÚZIN. But d'you need much?

RISPOLÓZHENSKY. Give me just three rubles.

PODKHALYÚZIN. Is that all, sir?

RISPOLÓZHENSKY. Well, give me five.

PODKHALYÚZIN. Oh, ask more!

RISPOLÓZHENSKY. Well, then, if you'll be so good, give me ten.

PODKHALYÚZIN. Ten, sir! What, for nothing?

RISPOLÓZHENSKY. Indeed not! I'll work it off, Lázár Elizárych; we'll be quits sometime or other.

PODKHALYÚZIN. That's all talk, sir. The snail keeps going, and sometime she'll get there! But here's the little business I want to put up to you now: did Samsón Sílych promise you much for fixing up this scheme?

RISPOLÓZHENSKY. I'm ashamed to tell you, Lázár Elizárych! A thousand rubles and an old coon-skin overcoat. No one will accept less than I, by heavens; just go and inquire prices.

PODKHALYÚZIN. Well, here's what, Sysóy Psoich; I'll give you two thousand for that identical business, sir.

RISPOLÓZHENSKY. Oh, Lázár Elizárych, my benefactor! I and my wife and children'll be your slaves!

PODKHALYÚZIN. One hundred in silver, spot cash; but the rest later upon the completion of the whole business, sir!

RISPOLÓZHENSKY. Now, then, how can one help praying for people like you! Only a kind of ignorant swine could fail to feel that. I bow down to your feet, Lázár Elizárych!

PODKHALYÚZIN. Really now, what for, sir? Only, Sysóy Psoich, don't run about like a chicken with its head cut off, but go in for accuracy--straight to the point, and walk the line. Do you understand, sir?

RISPOLÓZHENSKY. How can I help understanding? Why, Lázár Elizárych, do you think I'm still a boy? It's time I understood!

PODKHALYÚZIN. Yes, but what do you understand? Here's the way things are, sir. Just listen first. Samsón Sílych and I came to town, and we brought along the list as was proper. Then he went to the creditors: this one didn't agree, that one didn't agree; that's the way, and not a single one will take up the proposition. That's the way the affair stands.

RISPOLÓZHENSKY. What's that you say, Lázár Elizárych? Oh! Just think of it, what a gang.

PODKHALYÚZIN. And how are we going to make a good thing out of this business now? Do you understand me, or not?

RISPOLÓZHENSKY. That is, the insolvency, Lázár Elizárych?

PODKHALYÚZIN. The insolvency will take care of itself; but I mean my own business affairs.

RISPOLÓZHENSKY. He, he, he!--That is, the house and the shops--even--the house--he, he, he!----

PODKHALYÚZIN. What's the matter, sir?

RISPOLÓZHENSKY. No, sir; that's just my foolishness; I was just joking.

PODKHALYÚZIN. Fine jokes, indeed! Don't you joke about that, sir. The house is nothing; I have such a dream in my head now about that

subject, that I must talk it over with you at length. Just come to my room, sir. Tishka!

## SCENE VI

*The same and TISHKA*

PODKHALYÚZIN. Put all this in order! Well, let's go, Sysóy Psoich!

TISHKA *is about to carry away the vodka.*

RISPOLÓZHENSKY. Wait, wait! Eh, my boy, what an idiot you are! If you see that a fellow wants to drink, just wait a bit. You just wait a bit. You're young yet, but you just be polite and condescending. Lázár Elizárych, I'll just take a thimbleful.

PODKHALYÚZIN. Help yourself, only hurry up; I'm afraid *he'll* come.

RISPOLÓZHENSKY. Right away, my dear Lázár Elizárych, right away! [*Drinks and smacks his lips*] But it would be better to take it with us. [*They go out.*]

TISHKA *arranges something or other; from above descend*  
USTÍNAYA NAÚMOVNA *and* FOMÍNISHNA. TISHKA *goes out.*

FOMÍNISHNA. Now do fix it up for her, Ustinya Naúmovna! You see the girl is all worked up; and, indeed, it's time, my dear. Youth isn't a bottomless kettle, and they say it gets empty. I can say that from my own experience. I got married when I was thirteen; but in another month she'll have passed her nineteenth year. Why let her pine away for nothing? Others of her age have long since borne children. And so, my dear, why let her pine away?

USTÍNAYA NAÚMOVNA. I keep thinking about that myself, my jewel; but the thing isn't held up on my account; I have a whole pack of suitors, all right. But, confound it, she and her mother are mighty particular.

FOMÍNISHNA. Why should they be particular? Well, the chief thing is that they should be fresh-complexioned people, not bald, and not smell bad; and then anything'll pass, so it's a man!

USTÍNAYA NAÚMOVNA. [*Sitting down*] Sit down a minute, my jewel. I have worn myself out the livelong day; from early morning I've been tearing around like a wet hen. But, you see, I couldn't neglect anything; I'm an indispensable person everywhere. Naturally, my jewel, every person is a human being: a man needs a wife, a girl a husband; give it to them if you have to rob the cradle; then here and there there's a genuine wedding. And who fixes them up? Why, I do. Ustinya Naúmovna has to bear the burden for all of them. And why does she have to? Because that's the way things are; from the beginning of the world, that's the way the wheel was wound up. However, to tell the truth, they don't cheat me for my trouble: one gives me the material for a dress, another a fringed shawl, another makes up a cap for you, and here and there you'll get a gold piece, and here and there something better--just what the job deserves and they're able to pay.

FOMÍNISHNA. What's the use of talking, my dear; what's the use of talking!

USTÍNAYA NAÚMOVNA. Sit down, Fomínishna; your legs are old and rickety.

FOMÍNISHNA. Eh! Haven't time, my dear! You see, it's just awful; because *he* doesn't come home we're all scared to death: he may come home drunk at any time. And then what a bad one, good Lord! Then what a row he'll kick up.

USTÍNAYA NAÚMOVNA. Naturally; a rich peasant is worse than the devil to talk to.

FOMÍNISHNA. We've seen him do terrible things. One night last week he came home drunk. He tore around, and what a row! It was simply awful; he smashed the china--"Ooo!" he said, "I'll kill the whole crowd of you at once!"

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. Vulgarity!

FOMÍNISHNA. That's the truth, my dear. But I'll just run up-stairs, darling--Agraféna Kondrátyevna is alone in my room. When you're going home, come back to me; I'll tie up a bit of ham for you. [*She mounts the stairs.*]

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. I'll follow, my jewel, I'll follow.

PODKHALYÚZIN *enters.*

## SCENE VII

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA *and* PODKHALYÚZIN

PODKHALYÚZIN. Ah! Ustinya Naúmovna! It's been ages since I've seen you, ma'am.

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. How are you, dear soul! How've you been?

PODKHALYÚZIN. Oh, able to be around, ma'am.

[*He sits down.*]

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. I'll capture a little mamzelle for you if you want me to. PODKHALYÚZIN. Thank you kindly--I don't need one yet.

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. If you don't want one yourself, my jewel, I'll do a good turn for your friends. I suppose you have friends around town, a whole pack.

PODKHALYÚZIN. I have quite a few, ma'am.

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. Well, if you have, thank the Lord! If you know of a marriageable man, whether he's a bachelor, unmarried, or a widower--drag him straight to me.



PODKHALYÚZIN. Will you find him a wife?

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. I will. Why shouldn't I find him a wife? I'll do it in a jiffy.

PODKHALYÚZIN. That's very fine, ma'am, But now I ask you, Ustinya Naúmovna, why do you come here to us so confoundedly often?

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. What's that to you? Why shouldn't I come? I'm no thief, no sheep without a name. What do you mean by that question?

PODKHALYÚZIN. But, really, aren't you wasting your time coming?

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. Wasting my time? Where did you get that idea, my jewel? Just see here, what sort of a husband I've found: an aristocrat, has peasants, and a fine young man.

PODKHALYÚZIN. Why has the thing come to a halt, ma'am?

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. It hasn't come to a halt! He wanted to come to-morrow to get acquainted. So we'll hitch him up, and it'll all be over.

PODKHALYÚZIN. Hitch him up, try it--he'll give you the slip.

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. What's the matter, are you in your right mind, my jewel?

PODKHALYÚZIN. You'll see!

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. May I die before to-night, but you're either drunk, my jewel, or you've wandered clean out of your head.

PODKHALYÚZIN. Be so good as not to trouble yourself about that; you look out for yourself; but I know what I know.

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. Well, what do you know?

PODKHALYÚZIN. No matter what I know, ma'am.

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. If you know something, tell me what it is: I suppose your tongue won't fall off.

PODKHALYÚZIN. That's the point of the thing--that I can't tell it.

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. Why can't you? Why do you hesitate to tell me, my jewel? Go ahead, talk--it doesn't matter what it is.

PODKHALYÚZIN. It's not a matter of conscience. But if I tell you, of course you'll go and blab!

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. Curst if I do! You may chop off my hand!

PODKHALYÚZIN. That's it, ma'am; a promise is better than money.

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. Of course. Well, what do you know?

PODKHALYÚZIN. Here's what, Ustinya Naúmovna: isn't it possible to throw over that suitor you've found, ma'am?

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. What's the matter with you; are you gone daft?

PODKHALYÚZIN. Gone daft nothing, ma'am! But if you want to have a heart-to-heart talk, honor bright, ma'am; then here's the sort of thing it is, ma'am: at my house there's a certain Russian merchant I know, who is very much in love with Olimpiáda Samsónovna, ma'am. "No matter what I have to give," says he, "so long as I get married," says he; "I shan't grudge any sum."

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. Why didn't you tell me about that before, my jewel?

PODKHALYÚZIN. There was nothing to tell for the good reason that I only just now found out about it, ma'am.

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. But it's late now, my jewel!

PODKHALYÚZIN. And what a suitor he is, Ustinya Naúmovna! He'll shower you with gold from head to foot, ma'am; he'll have a cloak made for you out of live sables.

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. But, my dear, it's impossible! I'd be tickled to death, but I've given my word.

PODKHALYÚZIN. Just as you please, ma'am! But if you betroth her to the other fellow, you'll bring such bad luck upon yourself, that you'll not get clear afterwards!

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. But just consider yourself, how'll I have the nerve to show my face before Samsón Sílych? I gave it to him hot and heavy: that the fellow is rich, and handsome, and so much in love that he is half dead; and now what'll I say? You know yourself what a fellow Samsón Sílych is; you see he'll pull my cap over my ears before you know it.

PODKHALYÚZIN. Pull your cap nothing, ma'am!

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. And I've got the girl all worked up. Twice a day she sends to me and asks: "What's the matter with my suitor?" and, "What's he like?"

PODKHALYÚZIN. But don't you run away from your own good fortune, Ustinya Naúmovna. Do you want two thousand rubles and a sable cloak for merely arranging this wedding, ma'am? But let our understanding about the match be private. I tell you, ma'am, that this suitor's such a sort as you've never seen; there's only one thing, ma'am: he's not of aristocratic origin.

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. But is she an aristocrat? Pity if she is, my jewel! That's the way things go these days: every peasant girl is trying to worm her way into the nobility.--Now, although this here Olimpiáda Samsónovna--of course, God give her good health--gives presents like a princess, yet, believe me, her origin's no better than ours. Her father, Samsón Sílych, dealt in leather mittens on the Balchug; respectable people called him Sammy, and fed him with thumps behind the ears. And her mother, Agraféna Kondrátyevna, was

little more than a peasant girl, and he got her from Preobrazhénskoye. They got together some capital, climbed into the merchant class--so the daughter has her eye peeled for the title of princess. And all that through money. How much worse am I than she? Yet I have to trot at her heels. God knows what kind of bringing-up she's had: she walks like an elephant crawls on his belly; whether French or piano, it's a bit here and a bit there, and there's nothing to it; and when she starts to dance--I have to stuff a handkerchief in my mouth.

PODKHALYÚZIN. But, look here--it'd be more proper for her to marry a merchant.

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. But how'll I stand with the first suitor, my jewel? I've already assured him that Olimpiáda Samsónovna is such a beauty, that she's the real ticket for him; "and educated," I said, "in French, and is trained in all sorts of society ways." And now what am I going to say to him?

PODKHALYÚZIN. Why, just tell him also: "Now, she is a beauty, and cultivated in a good many ways; only they've lost all their money." And he'll break off himself!

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. Well, now, that's so, my jewel! But, no, wait! You see I told him that Samsón Sílych is rolling in money.

PODKHALYÚZIN. See here, you talk too much. But how do you know how much money Samsón Sílych has; you haven't counted it, have you?

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. Ask anybody you please; every one knows that Samsón Sílych is the richest sort of merchant.

PODKHALYÚZIN. Yes! Much you know! But what'll happen when, after you've engaged a man of standing, Samsón Sílych won't give any money? Afterwards the fellow'll come up and say, says he: "I'm no merchant, that you can cheat me out of the dowry!" Furthermore, like a man of standing he'll file a complaint at court, because a man of standing has his own way everywhere, ma'am; then Samsón Sílych and I'll be ruined, and there'll be no getting out of it for you. Here, you yourself know you can cheat anybody of our sort out of a dowry,

that'll work; but just try to fool a man of standing, and you'll not get away with it afterwards.

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. That's enough trying to scare me! You've muddled my head completely.

PODKHALYÚZIN. Here, take these hundred rubles in silver as earnest-money, and give us your hand on it, ma'am.

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. And you say, my jewel, two thousand rubles and a sable cloak?

PODKHALYÚZIN. Exactly so, ma'am. Be at rest on that score!--And you'll put on that sable cloak, Ustinya Naúmovna, and you'll go out walking--why, anybody will think you're a general's wife.

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. Do you think so? Well, now, indeed! When I put on that sable cloak, I'll look my perkiest, with my hands by my sides; then your bearded friends will stare with their mouths wide open. They'll get to sighing so that you couldn't stop them with a fire engine; the women will all turn up their noses from jealousy.

PODKHALYÚZIN. Just so, ma'am!

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. Give me the earnest-money! Here goes!

PODKHALYÚZIN. But, Ustinya Naúmovna, you're doing this of your own free will; don't back out.

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. Back out, what for? Just look: two thousand rubles, and a sable cloak!

PODKHALYÚZIN. I tell you, we'll make it out of live sables. There's nothing more to be said.

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. Well, good-by, my emerald! I'll run off now to the suitor. We'll see each other to-morrow, and then I'll report to you.

PODKHALYÚZIN. Wait a minute! Where're you going! Just follow me--we'll just take a drink of vodka, ma'am. Tishka! Tishka! [*Enter TISHKA*] You keep a lookout, and if you see the boss coming, run for me straight off.

[*They go out.*]

## SCENE VIII

TISHKA *alone.*

TISHKA. [*Sits down beside the table and takes some money out of his pocket*] Half a ruble in silver--that's what Lázar gave me to-day. And the other day, when I fell from the steeple, Agraféna Kondrátyevna gave me ten kopeks; I won twenty-five kopeks at heads and tails; and day before yesterday the boss forgot and left one whole ruble on the counter. Gee, here's money for you! [*He counts to himself. The voice of FOMÍNISHNA is heard behind the scene: "Tishka, oh, Tishka! How long have I got to call you?"*] Now what's the matter there? [*"Is Lázar at home?"*]-He was, but he's sure gone now! [*"Well, where has he sneaked to?"*] How in the world should I know? He doesn't ask my leave. If he had, I'd know.

FOMÍNISHNA *comes down the stairs.*

FOMÍNISHNA. You see Samsón Sílych has come, and seems to be tipsy.

TISHKA. Phew! We're goners!

FOMÍNISHNA. Run for Lázar, Tishka; there's a dear; run quick!

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁTYEVNA. [*Appearing at the head of the stairs*] What's this, Fomínishna dear, where's he bound for?

FOMÍNISHNA. This way, I guess, my dear! Ah, I'll close the doors, good heavens, I'll close them; let him go up-stairs, but you stay here, my dear.

*A knock at the door, and the voice of SAMSÓN SÍLYCH: "Hey! open up; who's there?" AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁTYEVNA disappears.*

FOMÍNISHNA. Come in, honey, come in and go to sleep; God bless you!

BOLSHÓV. [*Behind the door*] What's the matter with you, you old cripple; have you lost your wits?

FOMÍNISHNA. Ah, my dear boy! Ah, I'm a blind old granny. But, you see, I was fool enough, somehow, to think you'd come home tipsy. Forgive me, I've gotten deaf in my old age.

SAMSÓN SÍLYCH *comes in.*

## SCENE IX

FOMÍNISHNA *and* BOLSHÓV

BOLSHÓV. Has that shyster been cooking up any devilry here?

FOMÍNISHNA. They've cooked cabbage soup with corned beef, and roast goose.

BOLSHÓV. Are you gone daft, you old fool?

FOMÍNISHNA. No, dear! I gave the order to the cook myself!

BOLSHÓV. Get out! [*He sits down.*

FOMÍNISHNA *goes to the door*; PODKHALYÚZIN *and* TISHKA *come in.*

FOMÍNISHNA. [*Returning*] Ah, I'm a fool, a fool! Don't punish me for my bad memory. The cold roast sucking pig had entirely jumped out of my mind.

SCENE X

PODKHALYÚZIN, BOLSHÓV, *and* TISHKA

BOLSHÓV. Go to the pigs yourself! [FOMÍNISHNA *goes out. To TISHKA*] What are you gaping at? Haven't you anything to do?

PODKHALYÚZIN. [*To TISHKA*] You've been spoken to, haven't you?

TISHKA *goes out.*

BOLSHÓV. Has the shyster been here?

PODKHALYÚZIN. He has, sir.

BOLSHÓV. Did you talk with him?

PODKHALYÚZIN. Why, Samsón Sílych? Does he have any feeling? Isn't his soul naturally nothing but ink, sir? He just thrums on one string--to declare yourself bankrupt.

BOLSHÓV. If I must declare myself bankrupt, I'll do it, and there's an end to it.

PODKHALYÚZIN. Ah, Samsón Sílych, what's that you're saying!

BOLSHÓV. What! pay out money? Where did you get that notion? I will rather burn everything in the fire, before I'll give them a kopek. Transfer the merchandise, sell the notes, let 'em pilfer, let anybody steal who wants to; but I'm not going to pay a kopek.

PODKHALYÚZIN. Pardon me, Samsón Sílych, we had the business all going fine; and now everything has to be thrown into confusion.

BOLSHÓV. What affair was it of yours? It ain't yours. You just work hard--I'll not forget you.



PODKHALYÚZIN. I'm not in need of anything after the kindness you have shown me, and you're quite wrong in having any such idea about me. I'm ready to give away my whole soul for you, and by no means to do anything tricky. You're getting on in years; Agraféna Kondrátyevna is a very gentle lady; Olimpiáda Samsónovna is an accomplished young lady, and of suitable years; and you've got to spend some thought on her. But now such are the circumstances; there's no knowing what may come of all this.

BOLSHÓV. Well, what could come of it? I'm the only one responsible.

PODKHALYÚZIN. Why talk about you! You, Samsón Sílych, have already had a long life; thank God, you're in a ripe old age; but Olimpiáda Samsónovna, of course, is a young lady whose like can't be found on earth. I'm speaking to you conscientiously, Samsón Sílych; that is, absolutely according to my feelings. If I'm exerting myself on your behalf now, and am putting in my whole strength, too, it may be said, grudging neither sweat nor blood--then it's mostly because I'm sorry for your family.

BOLSHÓV. Come, really now?

PODKHALYÚZIN. If you please, sir. Now, suppose all this ends well. Very good, sir. You'll have something left with which to establish Olimpiáda Samsónovna.--Well, of that there's nothing to say; let there be money, and suitors'll be found, sir. Well, but what a sin, Lord save us! if they object, and begin to hound you through the courts; and such a stigma falls upon the family, and if, furthermore, they should take away the property. Sir, the ladies'd be obliged to endure hunger and cold, and without any care, like shelterless birdies. But Lord save them from that! What would happen then? [*He weeps.*]

BOLSHÓV. What are you crying about?

PODKHALYÚZIN. Of course, Samsón Sílych, I merely say that just for instance--talk at the right time, keep still at the wrong time; words don't hurt. But you see, the Old Nick is powerful--he shakes the hills.

BOLSHÓV. What's to be done, my boy? Evidently such is the will of God, and you can't oppose it.

PODKHALYÚZIN. That's just it, Samsón Sílych! But all the same, according to my foolish way of reasoning, you should settle Olimpiáda Samsónovna in good time upon a good man; and then she will be, at any rate, as if behind a stone wall, sir. But the chief thing is that the man should have a soul, so that he'll feel. As for that noble's courting Olimpiáda Samsónovna--why he's turned tail already.

BOLSHÓV. Turned tail how? What gave you that notion?

PODKHALYÚZIN. It isn't a notion, Samsón Sílych. You ask Ustinya Naúmovna. Must be some one who knows him heard something or other.

BOLSHÓV. What of it! As my affairs are going now there's no need of such a person.

PODKHALYÚZIN. Samsón Sílych, just take into consideration! I'm a stranger, and no relative of yours, but for the sake of your well-being I know no rest by day or by night, my very heart is all withered. But they're marrying to him the young lady who, it may be said, is an indescribable beauty; and they're giving money, sir; but he swaggers and carries it high! Well, is there any soul in him, after all that?

BOLSHÓV. Well, if he don't want her he needn't have her, and we won't cry about it.

PODKHALYÚZIN. No, Samsón Sílych, you just consider about that: has the man any soul? Here I am, a total stranger, yet I can't see all this without tears. Just understand that, Samsón Sílych! Nobody else would care enough about it to pine away because of another man's business, sir. But you see, even if you drive me out now, even if you beat me, still I won't leave you; because I cannot--I haven't that kind of a heart.

BOLSHÓV. But how in the world could you think of leaving me? You see my only hope now is you. I'm old, and my affairs have gotten

into a tight fix. Just wait! It may be we'll still swing some kind of a deal such as you're not expecting.

PODKHALYÚZIN. Oh, I can't do that, Samsón Sílych. Just understand this much: I'm absolutely not that kind of a man! To anybody else, Samsón Sílych, of course it's all the same; he doesn't care whether the grass grows; but I can't do that way, sir. Kindly see yourself, sir, whether I'm hustling or not. I'm simply wasting away now like some poor devil, on account of your business, sir; because I'm not that kind of a man, sir. I'm doing all this because I feel sorry for you, and not for you so much as for your family. You ought to realize that Agraféna Kondrátyevna is a very tender lady, Olimpiáda Samsónovna a young lady whose like can't be found on earth, sir----

BOLSHÓV. Not on earth? Look here, brother, aren't you hinting around a little?

PODKHALYÚZIN. Hinting, sir? No, I didn't mean, sir!----

BOLSHÓV. Aha! Brother, you'd better speak more openly. Are you in love with Olimpiáda Samsónovna?

PODKHALYÚZIN. Why, Samsón Sílych, must be you want to joke me.

BOLSHÓV. Joke, fiddlesticks! I'm asking you seriously.

PODKHALYÚZIN. Good heavens, Samsón Sílych, could I dare think of such a thing, sir?

BOLSHÓV. Why shouldn't you dare? Is she a princess or something like that?

PODKHALYÚZIN. Maybe she's no princess; but as you've been my benefactor and taken the place of my own father--But no, Samsón Sílych, how is it possible, sir, how can I help feeling it!

BOLSHÓV. Well, then, I suppose you don't love her?

PODKHALYÚZIN. How can I help loving her, sir? Good gracious, it seems as if I loved her more than anything on earth. But no, Samsón Sílych, how is it possible, sir!

BOLSHÓV. You ought to have said: "I love her, you see, more than anything on earth."

PODKHALYÚZIN. How can I help loving her, sir? Please consider yourself: all day, I think, and all night, I think--Oh, dear me, of course Olimpiáda Samsónovna is a young lady whose like can't be found on earth--But no, that cannot be, sir. What chance have I, sir?

BOLSHÓV. What cannot be, you poor soft-head?

PODKHALYÚZIN. How can it be possible, Samsón Sílych? Knowing you, sir, as I do, like my own father, and Olimpiáda Samsónovna, sir; and again, knowing myself for what I'm worth--what chance have I with my calico snout, sir?

BOLSHÓV. Calico nothing. Your snout'll do! So long as you have brains in your head--and you don't have to borrow any; because God has endowed you in that way. Well, Lázár, suppose I try to make a match between you and Olimpiáda Samsónovna, eh? That indescribable beauty, eh?

PODKHALYÚZIN. Good gracious, would I dare? It may be that Olimpiáda Samsónovna won't look kindly on me, sir!

BOLSHÓV. Nonsense! I don't have to dance to her piping in my old age! She'll marry the man I tell her to. She's my child: if I want, I can eat her with my mush, or churn her into butter! You just talk to me about it!

PODKHALYÚZIN. I don't dare, Samsón Sílych, talk about it with you, sir! I don't want to appear a scoundrel to you.

BOLSHÓV. Get along with you, you foolish youngster! If I didn't love you, would I talk with you like this? Do you understand that I can make you happy for life? I can simply make your life for you.

PODKHALYÚZIN. And don't I love you, Samsón Sílych, more than my own father? Damn it all!--what a brute I am.

BOLSHÓV. Well, but you love my daughter?

PODKHALYÚZIN. I've wasted away entirely, sir. My whole soul has turned over long since, sir!

BOLSHÓV. Well, if your soul has turned over, we'll set you up again. Johnny's the boy for our Jenny!

PODKHALYÚZIN. Daddy, why do you favor me? I'm not worth it. I'm not worth it! My poor face would positively crack a mirror.

BOLSHÓV. What of your face! Here, I transfer all the property to you; so that afterwards the creditors will be sorry that they didn't take twenty-five kopeks on the ruble.

PODKHALYÚZIN. You can bet they'll be sorry, sir!

BOLSHÓV. Well, you get off to town now, and after a while come back to the girl; we'll play a little joke on 'em.

PODKHALYÚZIN. Very good, daddy, sir! [*They go out.*]

### ACT III

*Setting as in ACT I*

### SCENE I

*BOLSHÓV comes in and sits down in the armchair; for some time he looks into the corners and yawns.*

BOLSHÓV. Here's the life; it's well said: vanity of vanities, and all is vanity. The devil knows, I myself can't make out what I want. If I

were to take a snack of something, I'd spoil my dinner, and if I sit still I'll go crazy. Perhaps I might kill a little time drinking tea. [*Silence*] Here's all there is to it; a man lives, and lives, and all at once he dies and he turns to dust. Oh, Lord, oh, Lord!

[*He yawns and looks into the corners.*]

## SCENE II

*AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁTYEVNA* comes in with *LÍPOCHKA*, who is very much dressed up.

*AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁTYEVNA*. Get along, get along, my darling; don't catch yourself on the sides of the doorway. Just look, Samsón Sílych, my dear lord and master, and admire how I've rigged up our daughter! Phew! go away! What a peony-rose she is now! [*To her*] Ah, you little angel, you princess, you little cherub, you! [*To him*] Well, Samsón Sílych, isn't it all right? Only she ought to ride in a six-horse carriage.

*BOLSHÓV*. She'll go in a two-horse carriage--she's no highflying proprietress.

*AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁTYEVNA*. To be sure, she's no general's daughter, but, all the same, she's a beauty! Well, pet the child a little; what are you growling like a bear for?

*BOLSHÓV*. Well, how do you want me to pet her? Shall I lick her hands, or bow down to her feet? Fine circus, I must say! I've seen something more elegant than that.

*AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁTYEVNA*. But what have you seen? No matter what; but this is your daughter, your own child, you man of stone!

*BOLSHÓV*. What if she is my daughter? Thank God she has shoes, dresses, and is well fed--what more does she want?

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁT'YEVNA. What more! Look here, Samsón Sílych, have you gone out of your head? Well fed! What if she is well fed! According to the Christian law we should feed everybody; people look after strangers, to say nothing of their own folks. Why, it's a sin to say that, when people can hear you. Anyhow, she's your own child!

BOLSHÓV. I know she's my own child--but what more does she want? What are you telling me all these yarns for? You don't have to put her in a picture-frame! I know I'm her father.

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁT'YEVNA. Then, my dear, if you're her father, then don't act like a stepfather! It's high time, it seems to me, that you came to your senses. You'll soon have to part with her, and you don't grind out one kind word; you ought, for her good, to give her a bit of good advice. You haven't a single fatherly way about you!

BOLSHÓV. No, and what a pity; must be God made me that way.

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁT'YEVNA. God made you that way! What's the matter with you? It seems to me God made her, too, didn't he? She's not an animal, Lord forgive me for speaking so!--but ask her something!

BOLSHÓV. What shall I ask her? A goose is no playmate for a pig; do what you please.

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁT'YEVNA. We won't ask you when it comes to the point; meantime, say something. A man, a total stranger, is coming--no matter how much you try, a man is not a woman--he's coming for his first visit, when we've never seen him before.

BOLSHÓV. I said, stop it!

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁT'YEVNA. What a father you are! And yet you call yourself one! Ah, my poor abandoned little girl, you're just like a little orphan with drooping head! He turns away from you, and won't recognize you! Sit down, Lipočka; sit down, little soul, my charming little darling! [*She makes her sit down.*]

LÍPOCHKA. Oh, stop it, mamma! You've mussed me all up!

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁTYEVNA. All right, then, I'll look at you from a distance.

LÍPOCHKA. Look if you want to, only don't rave! Fudge, mamma, one can't dress up properly without your going off into a sentimental fit.

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁTYEVNA. So, so, my dear! But when I look at you, it seems such a pity.

LÍPOCHKA. Why so? It had to come some time.

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁTYEVNA. All the same, it's a pity, you little fool. We've been raising you all these years, and you've grown up--but now for no reason at all we're giving you over to strangers, as if we were tired of you, and as if you bored us by your foolish childishness, and by your sweet behavior. Here, we'll pack you out of the house, like an enemy from the town; then we'll come to, and look around, and you'll be gone forever. Consider, good people, what it'll be like, living in some strange, far-away place, choking on another's bread, and wiping away your tears with your fist! Yes, good God, she's marrying beneath her; some blockhead will be butting in--a blockhead, the son of a blockhead! [*She weeps.*]

LÍPOCHKA. There you go, crying! Honestly, aren't you ashamed, mamma? What do you mean by blockhead?

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁTYEVNA. [*Weeping*] The words came out of themselves. I couldn't help it.

BOLSHÓV. What made you start this bawling? If anybody asks you, you don't know yourself.

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁTYEVNA. I don't know, my dear, I don't know; the fit just came over me.

BOLSHÓV. That's it, just foolishness. Tears come cheap with you.



AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁT'YEVNA. Yes, my dear, they do! They do! I know myself that they come cheap; but how can you help it?

LÍPOCHKA. Fudge, mamma, how you act! Stop it! Now, he'll come any moment--what's the use?

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁT'YEVNA. I'll stop, child, I'll stop; I'll stop right off!

### SCENE III

*The same, and USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA*

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. [*Entering*] How are you, my jewels! What are you gloomy and down in the dumps for?

*[Kisses are exchanged.]*

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁT'YEVNA. We'd about given you up.

LÍPOCHKA. Well, Ustinya Naúmovna, will he come soon?

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. It's my fault, I own up at once; it's my fault! But our affairs, my jewels, aren't in a very good way.

LÍPOCHKA. How! What do you mean by that?

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁT'YEVNA. Now what new notion have you got?

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. Why, my pearls, our suitor is wavering.

BOLSHÓV. Ha, ha, ha! You're a great go-between! How are you going to make a match?

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. He's like a balky horse, he won't whoa nor giddup. You can't get a sensible word out of him.

LÍPOCHKA. But what's this, Ustinya Naúmovna? What do you mean, really?

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁTJEVNA. Holy saints! How can it be!

LÍPOCHKA. Have you just seen him?

USTÍNJA NAÚMOVNA. I was at his house this morning. He came out just as he was, in his dressing-gown; but he treated me, be it said to his honor. He ordered coffee, and rum, and heaps of fancy crackers--simply piles of them. "Eat away!" says he, "Ustinya Naúmovna." I had come on business, you know, so it was necessary to find out something definite. So I said: "You wanted to go to-day and get acquainted." But on that subject he wouldn't say a sensible word to me. "Well," he said, "we'll think it over, and advise about it." And all he did was pull at the cords of his dressing-gown.

LÍPOCHKA. Why does he just fold his arms and sentimentalize? Why, it's disgusting to see how long this lasts.

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁTJEVNA. Really, now, why is he showing off? Aren't we as good as he is?

USTÍNJA NAÚMOVNA. Plague take him; can't we find another fellow?

BOLSHÓV. Don't you look for another, or the same thing will happen again. I'll find another for you myself.

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁTJEVNA. Yes, much you will, unless you get down off the stove and hustle. You've actually forgotten, I think, that you have a daughter.

BOLSHÓV. We'll see!

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁTJEVNA. We'll see what? We'll see nothing! Bah--don't talk to me, please; don't aggravate me. [*She sits down.*]

*BOLSHÓV bursts out laughing; USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA walks off with LÍPOCHKA to the other side of the stage. USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA inspects the girl's dress.*

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. My! how you're dolled up--that dress certainly makes you look better. You didn't make it yourself, did you?

LÍPOCHKA. Horrible need I had of making it! Why, do you think we're beggars? What are dressmakers for?

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. Beggars, the idea! Who's saying anything so foolish to you? They can tell from your house-keeping that you didn't make it yourself. However, your dress is a fright.

LÍPOCHKA. What's the matter with you? Have you lost your wits? Where are your eyes? What gave you that wild notion?

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. What are you getting on your high horse for?

LÍPOCHKA. Nonsense! Think I'll stand such rubbish? What, am I an uncultivated hussy!

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. What are you taking on so for? Where did such a caprice come from? Am I finding fault with your dress? Why, isn't it a dress?--and anybody will say it's a dress. But it isn't becoming to you; it's absolutely not the right thing for your style of beauty--blot out my soul if I lie. For you a gold one would be little enough; let's have one embroidered with seed-pearls. Ah! there you smile, my jewel! You see, I know what I'm talking about!

TISHKA. [*Entering*] Sysóy Psoich wants me to ask whether he, says he, can come in. He's out there with Lázar Elizárych.

BOLSHÓV. March! Call him in here with Lázar.

TISHKA *goes out.*

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁT'YEVNA. Well, now, the relish isn't ready for nothing: we'll take a snack. Now, Ustinya Naúmovna, I suppose you've been wanting a drop of vodka for a long time?

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. Just the thing--it's one o'clock, the admiral's lunch-time.

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁT'YEVNA. Now, Samsón Sílych, move out of that place; what are you sitting there like that for?

BOLSHÓV. Wait a minute; they're coming up. There's time enough.

LÍPOCHKA. Mamma, I'll go change my dress.

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁT'YEVNA. Run along, my dear, run along.

BOLSHÓV. Wait a minute before changing--there's a suitor coming.

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁT'YEVNA. What sort of a suitor can that be? Quit your fooling.

BOLSHÓV. Wait a bit, Lipa, there's a suitor coming.

LÍPOCHKA. Who is it, daddy? Do I know him or not?

BOLSHÓV. You'll see him in a minute; and then, perhaps, you'll recognize him.

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁT'YEVNA. What are you listening to him for? What sort of a clown is coming? He's just talking to hear himself talk.

BOLSHÓV. I told you that he was coming; and I usually know what I'm talking about.

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁT'YEVNA. If anybody were actually coming, then you'd be talking sense; but you keep saying he's coming, he's coming, but God knows who it is that's coming. It's always like that.

LÍPOCHKA. Well, in that case I'll stay, mamma. [*She goes to the mirror and looks at herself. Then to her father*] Daddy!

BOLSHÓV. What do you want?

LÍPOCHKA. I'm ashamed to tell you, daddy!

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁT'YEVNA. Ashamed of what, you little fool? Speak out if you need anything.

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. Shame isn't smoke--it won't eat out your eyes.

LÍPOCHKA. No, by heavens, I'm ashamed!

BOLSHÓV. Well, hide your face if you're ashamed!

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁT'YEVNA. Do you want a new hat; is that it?

LÍPOCHKA. There! you didn't guess it. No, not a hat.

BOLSHÓV. Then what do you want?

LÍPOCHKA. To marry a soldier!

BOLSHÓV. Just listen to that!

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁT'YEVNA. Wake up, you shameless girl! Lord help you!

LÍPOCHKA. Why--you see, others marry soldiers.

BOLSHÓV. Well, let 'em marry 'em; you just sit by the sea and wait for a fair breeze.

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁT'YEVNA. And don't you dare give me any of your lip! I won't give you my mother's blessing.

#### SCENE IV

*The same and* LÁZAR, RISPOLÓZHENSKY, *and* FOMÍNISHNA *in the doorway.*

RISPOLÓZHENSKY. How do you do, my dear Samsón Sílych! How do you do, my dear Agraféna Kondrátyevna! Olimpiáda Samsónovna, how do you do!

BOLSHÓV. How are you, old man, how are you! Do us the favor to sit down. You sit down, too, Lázar!

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁTYEVNA. Won't you have a snack? I have a relish all ready for you.

RISPOLÓZHENSKY. Why shouldn't I, dear lady? I'd just like a thimbleful of something now.

BOLSHÓV. Let's all go in together pretty soon; but now, meanwhile, we can have a little talk.

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. Why not have a little talk? D'you know, my jewels, I heard--it must have been printed in the newspaper, whether it's true or not--that a second Bonaparte has been born, and it may be, my jewels----

BOLSHÓV. Bonaparte's all right, but we'll trust most of all in the mercy of God; it's not a question of that now.

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. What is it a question of, my pearl?

BOLSHÓV. Why, about the fact that our years are approaching their decline; our health also is failing every minute, and the Creator alone can foresee what is ahead. So we have proposed, while we're still living, to give in marriage our only daughter; and in regard to her settlement we may hope also that she'll not bring into ill repute our resources and origin; above all, in other people's eyes.

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. Just hear how sweetly he tells that, the jewel!

BOLSHÓV. And since now our daughter is here in person, and in view of the fact that we are convinced of the honorable conduct and the sufficient means of our future son-in-law, which for us is a matter of extreme concern, in consideration of God's blessing, we hereby designate him in the presence of these witnesses. Lipa, come here.

LÍPOCHKA. What do you want, daddy?

BOLSHÓV. Come here to me. I shan't eat you, never fear. Well, now, Lázár, toddle up!

PODKHALYÚZIN. Been ready a long time, sir!

BOLSHÓV. Now, Lipa, give me your hand.

LÍPOCHKA. How! What nonsense is this? Where did you get this rubbish?

BOLSHÓV. Look out that I don't have to force you!

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. Now you're catching it, young lady!

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁTJEVNA. Lord! What on earth is this?

LÍPOCHKA. I don't want to! I don't want to! I won't marry anything so disgusting!

FOMÍNISHNA. The power of the cross be with us!

PODKHALYÚZIN. Evidently, daddy, it's not for me to see happiness in this world! Evidently, sir, it can't be as you would wish!

BOLSHÓV. [*Seizes LÍPOCHKA violently by the arm; takes LÁZAR'S hand*] Why can't it, if I want it to be? What am I your father for, if not to command you? Have I fed her for nothing?

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁTJEVNA. What're you doing! What're you doing! Recollect yourself!

BOLSHÓV. Stay on your own side of the fence! This is none of your business! Well, Lipa! Here's your future husband! I ask you to love and cherish him! Sit down side by side and talk nice; and then we'll have a fine dinner and set about the wedding.

LÍPOCHKA. What! Do you think I want to sit down with that booby! What nonsense!

BOLSHÓV. If you won't sit down, I'll sit you down, and put an end to your monkey-business!

LÍPOCHKA. Who ever heard of educated young ladies being married off to their employees!

BOLSHÓV. Better shut up! If I say so, you'll marry the porter.  
[*Silence.*]

USTÍNAYA NAÚMOVNA. Say, now, Agraféna Kondrátyevna, if that isn't a pity!

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁTYEVNA. I myself, the mother, am as much in the dark as a clothes-closet. And I can't understand what in the world has caused this!

FOMÍNISHNA. Lord! I'm past sixty, and how many weddings I've seen; but I've never seen anything so shameful as this.

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁTYEVNA. What do you mean, you murderers; do you want to dishonor the girl?

BOLSHÓV. Yes, much I have to listen to your high-falutin' talk. I've decided to marry my daughter to a clerk, and I'll have my way, and don't you dare argue; I don't give a hang for anybody. Come now, we'll go take a snack; but just let them kid each other, and maybe they'll make it up somehow or other.

RISPOLÓZHENSKY. Let's go, Samsón Sílych, and you and I, for company, will just take a thimbleful. Yes, yes, Agraféna Kondrátyevna, that's the first duty, that children should obey their parents. We didn't start that custom, and we shan't see the last of it.



*They all rise and go out except LÍPOCHKA, PODKHALYÚZIN, and AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁTYEVNA.*

LÍPOCHKA. Mamma, what does this mean? Does he want to make a cook of me? [*She weeps.*]

PODKHALYÚZIN. Mamma, ma'am! Such a son-in-law as will respect you and, naturally, make your old age happy, aside from me you won't find, ma'am.

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁTYEVNA. How are you going to do that, my dear?

PODKHALYÚZIN. Mamma, ma'am! God has made me aspire so high, ma'am for this reason, ma'am, because the other fellow, mamma, will turn you down flat, ma'am; but I, till I land in my coffin [*weeps*], must have feeling, ma'am!

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁTYEVNA. Ah, saints alive! But how can this be?

BOLSHÓV. [*Through the door*] Wife, come here!

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁTYEVNA. Coming, my dear, coming!

PODKHALYÚZIN. Mamma, you remember the word I said just now!

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁTYEVNA *goes out.*

SCENE V

LÍPOCHKA *and* PODKHALYÚZIN

*Silence*

PODKHALYÚZIN. Olimpiáda Samsónovna, ma'am! Olimpiáda Samsónovna! I suppose you abominate me? Say only one word, ma'am! Just let me kiss your little hand!

LÍPOCHKA. You blockhead, you ignorant lout!

PODKHALYÚZIN. But why, Olimpiáda Samsónovna, do you want to insult me, ma'am?

LÍPOCHKA. I'll tell you once, now and forever, that I won't marry you, and I won't!

PODKHALYÚZIN. That's just as you please, ma'am! Love can't be forced. Only here's what I want to announce to you, ma'am----

LÍPOCHKA. I won't listen to you; go away from me! As if you were an educated gentleman! You see that I wouldn't marry you for anything in the world--you ought to break off yourself!

PODKHALYÚZIN. Now, Olimpiáda Samsónovna, you were pleased to say "break off." Only, if I should break off, what would happen then, ma'am?

LÍPOCHKA. Why, the thing that would happen would be that I'd marry an aristocrat.

PODKHALYÚZIN. An aristocrat, ma'am! But an aristocrat won't take you without a dowry!

LÍPOCHKA. What do you mean, without dowry? What are you talking about? Just take a look and see what kind of a dowry I have; it fairly hits you in the face!

PODKHALYÚZIN. Those dish-rags, ma'am? A nobleman won't take dish-rags. A nobleman wants it in cash, ma'am.

LÍPOCHKA. What of it? Dad will give cash!

PODKHALYÚZIN. All right, if he will, ma'am! But what if he hasn't any to give? You don't know about your papa's affairs, but I know 'em mighty well; your papa's a bankrupt, ma'am.

LÍPOCHKA. What do you mean, bankrupt? And the house and shops?

PODKHALYÚZIN. The house and shops--are mine, ma'am!

LÍPOCHKA. Yours! Get out! Are you trying to make a fool of me? Look for a bigger goose than I am.

PODKHALYÚZIN. But I have here some legal documents. [*He produces them.*]

LÍPOCHKA. So you bought them of dad?

PODKHALYÚZIN. I did, ma'am!

LÍPOCHKA. Where'd you get the money?

PODKHALYÚZIN. Money! Glory to God, I have more money than any nobleman.

LÍPOCHKA. What in the world are they doing to me? They've been bringing me up all these years, and then go bankrupt! [*Silence.*]

PODKHALYÚZIN. Now suppose, Olimpiáda Samsónovna, that you married a nobleman--what will that ever amount to, ma'am? Only the glory of being a lady, but not the least pleasure, ma'am. Please consider: ladies themselves often go to the market on foot, ma'am. And if they do drive out anywhere, then it's only the glory of having four horses; but the whole team ain't worth one merchant's horse. By heaven, it ain't, ma'am! And they don't dress so blazed superbly either, ma'am! But if, Olimpiáda Samsónovna, you should marry me, ma'am--here's the first word: you'll wear silk gowns even at home, and visiting, and to the theatre, ma'am--and we shan't dress you in anything but velvets. In respect to hats and cloaks--we won't care what's in style with the nobility, but we'll furnish you the finest ever! We'll get horses from the Orlov stud. [*Silence*] If you have doubts on

the question of my looks, then that's just as you like, ma'am; I'll put on a dress coat, and trim my beard or cut it off, according to the fashion, ma'am; that's all one to me, ma'am.

LÍPOCHKA. You all talk that way before the wedding; but afterwards you cheat us.

PODKHALYÚZIN. May I die on the spot, Olimpiáda Samsónovna! Damnation blast me if I lie! Why should I, Olimpiáda Samsónovna? D'you think we'll live in a house like this? We'll buy one in the Karetny, ma'am; and how we'll decorate it! We'll have birds of paradise on the ceilings, sirens, various Coopids[1]--people'll pay good money just to look at it.

[Footnote 1: These are not the only words that Podkhalyúzin mispronounces; *Olimpiáda* is another.]

LÍPOCHKA. They don't paint Coopids any more nowadays.

PODKHALYÚZIN. Then we'll let 'em paint bókays. [*Silence*] If you'd only agree on your side, then I don't want anything more in life. [*Silence*] How unfortunate I am, anyhow, that I can't say nice compliments.

LÍPOCHKA. Why don't you talk French, Lázár Elizárych?

PODKHALYÚZIN. Because there was no reason why I should. [*Silence*] Make me happy, Olimpiáda Samsónovna; grant me that blessing, ma'am. [*Silence*] Just tell me to kneel to you.

LÍPOCHKA. Well, do it! [PODKHALYÚZIN *kneels*] What a horrid waistcoat you have on!

PODKHALYÚZIN. I'll give this one to Tishka, ma'am, and I'll get myself one on the Kuznetsky Bridge, only don't ruin me! [*Silence*] Well, Olimpiáda Samsónovna, ma'am?

LÍPOCHKA. Let me think.

PODKHALYÚZIN. Think about what, ma'am?

LÍPOCHKA. How can I help thinking?

PODKHALYÚZIN. Why, you don't need to think!

LÍPOCHKA. I'll tell you what, Lázar Elizárych!

PODKHALYÚZIN. What're your orders, ma'am?

LÍPOCHKA. Carry me off on the quiet.

PODKHALYÚZIN. But why on the quiet, ma'am, when your papa and mamma are so willing?

LÍPOCHKA. That's quite the thing to do. Well, if you don't want to carry me off, why, let it go as it is.

PODKHALYÚZIN. Olimpiáda Samsónovna, just let me kiss your little hand! [*He kisses it; then he jumps up and runs to the door*]  
Daddy, sir!

LÍPOCHKA. Lázar Elizárych! Lázar Elizárych! Come here!

PODKHALYÚZIN. What do you want, ma'am?

LÍPOCHKA. Oh, if you knew, Lázar Elizárych, what my life here is like! Mamma says one thing one day, and another the next; papa, when he isn't drunk, has nothing to say; but when he's drunk he's apt to beat you at any moment. How's a cultivated young lady going to endure such a life? Now, if I could marry a nobleman, I'd go out of this house, and could forget about all that. But now everything will go on as before.

PODKHALYÚZIN. No, ma'am, Olimpiáda Samsónovna; it won't be that way! Olimpiáda Samsónovna, as soon as we've celebrated the wedding, we'll move into our own house, ma'am. And then we won't let 'em boss us. No, here's an end to all that, ma'am! That'll do for them--they ran things in their day, now it's our turn.

LÍPOCHKA. Just look here, Lázar Elizárych, we shall live by ourselves at our house, and they by themselves at their house. We'll do everything fashionably, and they, just as they please.

PODKHALYÚZIN. That's the idea, ma'am.

LÍPOCHKA. Well, call papa now.

*[She rises and prinks before the mirror.]*

PODKHALYÚZIN. Papa! Papa! Sir! Mamma!

## SCENE VI

*The same, BOLSHÓV, and AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁTYEVNA*

PODKHALYÚZIN. *[Goes to meet SAMSÓN SÍLYCH and throws his arms about him in an embrace]* Olimpiáda Samsónovna has agreed, sir!

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁTYEVNA. I'm coming, my dears, I'm coming!

BOLSHÓV. Well, that's talking! Just the thing! I know what I'm doing; it's not for you to teach me.

PODKHALYÚZIN. *[To AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁTYEVNA]* Mamma, ma'am! Let me kiss your hand!

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁTYEVNA. Kiss away, my dear; they're both clean. Ah, you blessed child, has it been long since you decided? Ah? Good heavens! What's this? I absolutely didn't know how to decide this matter. Oh, my own little darling, you!

LÍPOCHKA. Mamma, I positively didn't know that Lázar Elizárych was such a well-educated gentleman! But now I see at once that he's infinitely more respectful than the others.

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁTYEVNA. Well, well, well, you little goose! As if your father would wish you any harm! Ah, mamma's little dove! What a little story, eh? Oh, my holy saints! What in the world is this? Fomínishna! Fomínishna!

FOMÍNISHNA. Coming, coming, my dear, coming! [*She comes in.*]

BOLSHÓV. Stop, you gabbler! Now you two just sit down side by side, and we'll have a look at you. Fomínishna, bring up a little bottle of fizz.

PODKHALYÚZIN *and* LÍPOCHKA *sit down.*

FOMÍNISHNA. Right away, my dear, right away! [*She goes out.*]

## SCENE VII

*The same, USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA, and RISPOLÓZHENSKY*

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁTYEVNA. Congratulate the bride and groom to be, Ustinya Naúmovna! God has brought us to a ripe old age; we have lived to see happiness!

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. What have I got to congratulate you with, my jewels? My mouth's too dry to sing your praises.

BOLSHÓV. Well, now, we'll wet your whistle.

## SCENE VIII

*The same, FOMÍNISHNA, and TISHKA, who is bringing wine on a tray.*

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. Aha! here's a matter of a different sort. Well, God grant you live long, keep young, grow fat, and be rich!

*[She drinks]* It's bitter, my jewels! *[LÍPOCHKA and LÁZAR kiss]* Ah! that sweetens it!

BOLSHÓV. Just let me drink their health. *[He takes the glass; LÍPOCHKA and LÁZAR stand up]* Live as you think best--you're reasonable beings. But so that you won't find life a bore, the house and shops go to you, Lázar, in place of dowry, and I'll throw in some ready cash.

PODKHALYÚZIN. Many thanks, daddy; I'm well satisfied with what you've done for me as it is.

BOLSHÓV. Nothing to thank me for! They're my own goods--I made 'em myself. I give 'em to whomever I please. Pour me another! *[TISHKA pours another glass]* But what's the good of talking! Kindness is no crime! Take everything, only feed me and the old woman, and pay off the creditors at ten kopeks on the ruble.

PODKHALYÚZIN. Why, daddy, that's not worth talking about, sir! Don't I know what feeling is? It's a family affair--we'll settle it ourselves.

BOLSHÓV. I tell you, take it all, and there's an end to it! And nobody can boss me! Only pay my creditors. Will you pay 'em?

PODKHALYÚZIN. If you please, dad, that's my first duty, sir.

BOLSHÓV. Only you look out--don't give 'em much. As it is, I suppose you'll be fool enough to pay the whole debt.

PODKHALYÚZIN. Oh, we'll settle it later, daddy, somehow. If you please, it's a family affair.

BOLSHÓV. Come, all right! Don't you give 'em more than ten kopeks. That'll do for them. Well, kiss each other!

*LÍPOCHKA and LÁZAR do so.*

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁT'YEVNA. Ah, my little doves! How in the world did it happen! I declare I've quite lost my head.



USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA.

"Whoever heard or saw such things? The elephant's learning to fly with wings; The hen laid a door-knob instead of an egg; And piggy is dancing a jig on a keg!"

*She pours out wine and goes up to RISPOLÓZHENSKY; RISPOLÓZHENSKY bows and declines the wine.*

BOLSHÓV. Drink to their happiness, Sysóy Psoich.

RISPOLÓZHENSKY. I can't, Samsón Sílych--it turns my stomach!

BOLSHÓV. Go along with you! Drink to their happiness.

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. He's always showing off!

RISPOLÓZHENSKY. It turns my stomach, Samsón Sílych! By heaven, it does! I'll just take a thimbleful of vodka. But my nature won't stand the other. I have such a weak constitution.

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. Bah! you long-necked goose! Nonsense--much your nature won't stand it! Give it here. I'll pour it down his collar if he won't drink it!

RISPOLÓZHENSKY. No fair, Ustinya Naúmovna! That ain't nice for a lady to do. Samsón Sílych, I can't, sir! Would I have refused it? He! he! he! What kind of a blockhead am I, that I should do anything so rude? I've seen high society, I know how to live. Now, I never refuse vodka; if you don't mind, I'll just take a thimbleful! But this I simply can't drink--it turns my stomach. Samsón Sílych, don't you allow all this disorderly conduct; it's easy to insult a man, but it ain't nice.

BOLSHÓV. Give it to him hot and heavy, Ustinya Naúmovna, hot and heavy!

RISPOLÓZHENSKY *runs away from her.*

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. *[Placing the wine on the table]* You shan't get away from me, you old son of a sea-cook! *[She pushes him into a corner and seizes him by the collar.]*

RISPOLÓZHENSKY. Police!

*All burst out laughing.*

## ACT IV

*A richly furnished chamber in the house of PODKHALYÚZIN*

### SCENE I

*OLIMPIÁDA SAMSÓNOVNA is sitting luxuriously near the window; she wears a silk waist, and a bonnet of the latest fashion. PODKHALYÚZIN, in a stylish frock coat, stands before the mirror. Behind him TISHKA is adjusting his master's clothes, and adding the finishing touches.*

TISHKA. There now, it fits you to a T!

PODKHALYÚZIN. Well, Tishka, do I look like a Frenchman? Ah! Step away and look at me!

TISHKA. Like as two peas.

PODKHALYÚZIN. Go along, you blockhead! Now you just look at me. *[He walks about the room]* There now, Olimpiáda Samsónovna! And you wanted to marry an officer, ma'am! Ain't I a sport, though? I picked the smartest coat I could find and put it on.

OLIMPIÁDA SAMSÓNOVNA. But you don't know how to dance, Lázár Elizárych.

PODKHALYÚZIN. What of it--won't I learn, though, and the raggiest ever! In the winter we're going to attend the Merchants' Assemblies. You just watch us, ma'am! I'm going to dance the polka.

OLIMPIÁDA SAMSÓNOVNA. Now, Lázár Elizárych, you buy that carriage we saw at Arbatsky's.

PODKHALYÚZIN. Of course, Olimpiáda Samsónovna, ma'am! Of course, by all means!

OLIMPIÁDA SAMSÓNOVNA. They've brought me a new cloak; you and I ought to go Friday to Sokolniki.

PODKHALYÚZIN. Of course, most certainly we'll go, ma'am; and we'll drive in the park on Sundays. You see our carriage is worth a thousand rubles, and the horses a thousand, and the harness mounted with silver--just let 'em look! Tishka! My pipe. *[TISHKA goes out. PODKHALYÚZIN sits down beside OLIMPIÁDA SAMSÓNOVNA]* Just so, ma'am, Olimpiáda Samsónovna; you just let 'em watch us.

*[Silence.]*

OLIMPIÁDA SAMSÓNOVNA. Well, why don't you kiss me, Lázár Elizárych?

PODKHALYÚZIN. Why, sure! Permit me, ma'am! With great pleasure! If you please, your little hand, ma'am! *[He kisses it. Silence]* Olimpiáda Samsónovna, say something to me in the French dialect, ma'am!

OLIMPIÁDA SAMSÓNOVNA. What shall I say to you?

PODKHALYÚZIN. Oh, say anything--any little thing, ma'am. It's all the same to me, ma'am!

OLIMPIÁDA SAMSÓNOVNA. *Kom voo zet zholi!*

PODKHALYÚZIN. What does that mean, ma'am?

OLIMPIÁDA SAMSÓNOVNA. How nice you are!

PODKHALYÚZIN. [*Jumping up from his chair*] Aha! now here's a wife for you, ma'am! Hooray, Olimpiáda Samsónovna! You've treated me fine! Your little hand, please!

*Enter TISHKA with the pipe.*

TISHKA. Ustinya Naúmovna has come.

PODKHALYÚZIN. What the devil is she here for!

TISHKA *goes out.*

## SCENE II

*The same and USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA*

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. How are you managing to live, my jewels?

PODKHALYÚZIN. Thanks to your prayers, Ustinya Naúmovna, thanks to your prayers.

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. [*Kissing OLIMPIÁDA SAMSÓNOVNA*] Why, I believe you've grown better looking, and have filled out a bit!

OLIMPIÁDA SAMSÓNOVNA. Bah, what nonsense you're chattering, Ustinya Naúmovna! Now, what struck you to come here?

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. What nonsense, my jewel! Here's what's up. Whether you like it or not, you can't help it.--If you like to slide down-hill you've got to pull up your sled.--Now, why have you forgotten me completely, my jewels? Or haven't you had a chance yet to look about you? I suppose you're all the time billing and cooing.

PODKHALYÚZIN. We have that failing, Ustinya Naúmovna; we have it.

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. Come, come now: just see what a nice sweetheart I got for you.

PODKHALYÚZIN. We're well satisfied, Ustinya Naúmovna; we're well satisfied.

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. How could you be dissatisfied, my ruby? What's the matter with you! I suppose you're all the time bustling around over new clothes, now. Have you laid in a stock of stylish things yet?

OLIMPIÁDA SAMSÓNOVNA. Not much so far, and that mostly because the new stuffs have just come in.

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. Naturally, my pearl, you can't help it; let 'em be of poor goods, so long's they're blue! But what kind of dresses did you order most of, woollens or silks?

OLIMPIÁDA SAMSÓNOVNA. All sorts--both woollens and silks; not long ago I had a crape made with gold trimmings.

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. How much have you, all-in-all, my jewel?

OLIMPIÁDA SAMSÓNOVNA. Here, count: my wedding-dress of blond lace over a satin slip; and three velvets--that makes four; two gauze and a crape embroidered with gold--that's seven; three satin, and three grosgrain--that's thirteen; gros de Naples and gros d'Afrique, seven--that's twenty; three marceline, two mousseline de ligne, two Chine royale--how many's that?--three and four's seven, and twenty--twenty-seven; four crape Rachel--that's thirty-one. Then there are muslins, bouffe mousseline and calico, about twenty, and then waists and morning jackets--about nine or ten. And then I've just had one made of Persian stuff.

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. Lord help you, what heaps you've got! But you go and pick out for me the largest of the gros d'Afrique ones.

OLIMPIÁDA SAMSÓNOVNA. I won't give you a gros d'Afrique. I have only three myself; besides, it wouldn't suit your figure: now, if you want to, you can take a crape Rachel.

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. What in time do I want with a tripe Rachel. Evidently there's nothing to be done with you; I'll be satisfied with a satin one, and let it go at that.

OLIMPIÁDA SAMSÓNOVNA. Well, and the satin, too--it's not quite the thing, cut ballroom style, very low--you understand? But I'll look up a crape Rachel jacket; we'll let out the tucks, and it'll fit you like the paper on the wall.

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. Well, bring on your tripe Rachel! You win, my ruby; go open the clothes closet.

OLIMPIÁDA SAMSÓNOVNA. Right away; wait just a minute.

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. I'll wait, my jewel, I'll wait. Besides, I have to have a little talk with your husband. [OLIMPIÁDA SAMSÓNOVNA *goes out*] What's this, my jewel, have you entirely forgotten about your promise?

PODKHALYÚZIN. How could I forget, ma'am? I remember. [*He takes out his pocketbook and gives her a note.*]

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. Why, what's this, my diamond?

PODKHALYÚZIN. One hundred rubles, ma'am!

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. Only one hundred? Why, you promised me fifteen hundred!

PODKHALYÚZIN. Wha--at, ma'am?

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. You promised me fifteen hundred!

PODKHALYÚZIN. Ain't that a bit steep? Won't you be living too high?

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. What's this, you barnyard cockerel; are you trying to joke with me, man? I'm a mighty cocky lady myself!

PODKHALYÚZIN. But why should I give you money? I'd do it if there were any occasion for it.

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. Whether for something or for nothing, give it here--you promised it yourself!

PODKHALYÚZIN. What if I did promise! I promised to jump from the Tower of Ivan the Great, provided I married Olimpiáda Samsónovna; should I jump?

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. Do you think I won't have the law on you? Much I care that you're a merchant of the second guild; I'm in the fourteenth class myself, and even if that ain't much, I'm an official's wife all the same.

PODKHALYÚZIN. You may be a general's wife--it's all the same to me; I won't have anything to do with you! And there's an end to it!

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. You lie, it ain't! You promised me a sable cloak.

PODKHALYÚZIN. What, ma'am?

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. A sable cloak! Have you grown deaf, maybe?

PODKHALYÚZIN. Sable, ma'am! He, he, he!

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. Yes, sable! What are you laughing and stretching your mouth at?

PODKHALYÚZIN. You haven't gone out for a stroll with your mug in a sable cloak[1] yet, have you?

[Footnote 1: Russian fur cloaks, it may be useful to remember, have broad collars that can be turned up to protect the face.]

OLIMPIÁDA SAMSÓNOVNA *brings in a dress and hands it to*  
USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA.

SCENE III

*The same and* OLIMPIÁDA SAMSÓNOVNA

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. What in the world is the matter with you; do you want to rob me, maybe?

PODKHALYÚZIN. Rob you, nothing! You just go to the devil, and be done with you!

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. Are you going to turn me out? And I, senseless idiot, agreed to work for you: I can see now your vulgar blood!

PODKHALYÚZIN. What, ma'am! Speak, if you please!

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. When it comes to that, I don't care to look at you! Not for any amount of money on earth will I agree to associate with you! I'll go twenty miles out of my way, but I won't go by you! I'll sooner shut my eyes and bump into a horse, than stand and look at your dirty den! Even if I want to spit, I'll never set foot in this street again! Break me in ten pieces if I lie! You can go to the infernal jim-jams if you ever see me here again!

PODKHALYÚZIN. Easy now, aunty, easy!

USTÍNYA NAÚMOVNA. I'll show you up, my jewels: you'll find out! I'll give you such a rep in Moscow that you won't dare show your face in public!--Oh! I'm a fool, a fool to have anything to do with such a person! And I, a lady of rank and position!--Fah, fah, fall! [*She goes out.*]

PODKHALYÚZIN. Well, the blue-blooded lady flew off the handle! Oh, Lord, what an official she is! There's a proverb that says: "The thunderbolt strikes, not from the clouds, but from the dung-heap." Good Lord! Just look at her; what a lady!



OLIMPIÁDA SAMSÓNOVNA. Bright idea of yours, Lázár Elizárych, ever to have anything to do with her!

PODKHALYÚZIN. Really, a very absurd woman.

OLIMPIÁDA SAMSÓNOVNA. [*Glancing out of the window*] I believe they've let daddy out of the pen; go see, Lázár Elizárych.

PODKHALYÚZIN. Well, no, ma'am; they won't let daddy out of the pen soon, either; most likely they ordered him to the meeting of the creditors, and then he got leave to come home. Mamma, ma'am! Agraféna Kondrátyevna! Daddy's coming, ma'am!

#### SCENE IV

*The same, BOLSHÓV, and AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁTYEVNA*

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁTYEVNA. Where is he? Where is he? My own children, my little doves! [*Kisses are exchanged.*]

PODKHALYÚZIN. Daddy, how do you do, our respects!

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁTYEVNA. My little dove, Samsón Sílych, my treasure! You've left me an orphan in my old age!

BOLSHÓV. That'll do, wife; stop!

OLIMPIÁDA SAMSÓNOVNA. What's the matter with you, ma? you're crying over him as if he were dead! God only knows what's happened.

BOLSHÓV. That's just it, daughter; God only knows; but all the same your father's in jail.

OLIMPIÁDA SAMSÓNOVNA. Why, daddy, there are better people than you and me there, too.

BOLSHÓV. There are, that's so! But how does it feel to be there? How'd you like to go through the street with a soldier? Oh, daughter! You see they've known me here in this city for forty years; for forty years they've all bowed to me down to their belts, but now the street brats point their fingers at me.

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁT'YEVNA. You haven't any color at all, my darling! You look like a ghost.

PODKHALYÚZIN. Ah, daddy, God is merciful! When the rough places are smoothed over it'll all be pleasant again. Well, daddy, what do the creditors say?

BOLSHÓV. Here's what: they've agreed on the terms. "What's the use," they say, "of dragging it out? Maybe it'll do good, maybe it won't; but just give something in cash, and deuce take you!"

PODKHALYÚZIN. Why not give 'em something, sir! By all means do, sir! But do they ask much, daddy?

BOLSHÓV. They ask twenty-five kopeks.

PODKHALYÚZIN. That's a good deal, daddy!

BOLSHÓV. Well, man, I know myself that it's a good deal; but what's to be done? They won't take less.

PODKHALYÚZIN. If they'd take ten kopeks, then it'd be all right sir. Seven and a half for satisfaction, and two and a half for the expenses of the meeting.

BOLSHÓV. That's the way I talked; but they won't listen to it.

PODKHALYÚZIN. They carry it blamed high! But won't they take eight kopeks in five years?

BOLSHÓV. What's the use, Lázár, we'll have to give twenty-five; that's what we proposed at first.

PODKHALYÚZIN. But how, daddy! You yourself used to say not to give more than ten kopeks, sir. Just consider yourself: at the rate of twenty-five kopeks, that's a lot of money. Daddy, wouldn't you like to take a snack of something, sir? Mamma! order them to bring some vodka, and have them start the samovar; and we, for company's sake, 'll just take a thimbleful, sir.--But twenty-five kopeks's a lot, sir!

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁTJEVNA. Right away, my dear, right away!  
[She goes out.]

BOLSHÓV. But what are you talking to me for: of course, I know it's a good deal, but how can I help it? They'll put you in the pen for a year and a half; they'll have a soldier lead you through the streets every week, and if you don't watch out, they'll even transfer you to prison: so you'd be glad to give even half a ruble. You don't know where to hide yourself from mere shame.

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁTJEVNA *enters with vodka*; TISHKA *brings in relishes, and goes out.*

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁTJEVNA. My own little dove! Eat, my dear, eat! I suppose they half starve you there!

PODKHALYÚZIN. Eat, daddy! Don't be particular; we're offering you such as we have.

BOLSHÓV. Thanks, Lázár, thanks! [*He drinks*] Take a drink yourself.

PODKHALYÚZIN. Your health! [*He drinks*] Mamma, won't you have some, ma'am? Please do!

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁTJEVNA. Holy saints, what am I to do now? Such is the will of God! O Lord, my God! Ah, my own little dove, you!

PODKHALYÚZIN. Ah, mamma, God is merciful; we'll get out of it somehow. Not all at once, ma'am!

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁT'YEVNA. Lord grant we may! As it is, it makes me pine away simply looking at him.

BOLSHÓV. Well, what about it, Lázar?

PODKHALYÚZIN. Ten kopeks, if you please, I'll give, sir, as we said.

BOLSHÓV. But where am I going to get fifteen more? I can't make 'em out of door-mats.

PODKHALYÚZIN. Daddy, I can't raise 'em, sir! God sees that I can't, sir!

BOLSHÓV. What's the matter, Lázar? What's the matter? What have you done with the money?

PODKHALYÚZIN. Now you just consider: here I'm setting up in business--have fixed up a house. But do have something to eat, daddy! You can have some Madeira if you want it, sir! Mamma, pass daddy something.

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁT'YEVNA. Eat, Samsón Silych, dear! Eat! I'll pour out a little punch for you, dear!

BOLSHÓV. [*Drinks*] Rescue me, my children, rescue me!

PODKHALYÚZIN. Here, daddy, you were pleased to ask what I had done with the money?--How can you ask, sir? Just consider yourself: I'm beginning to do business; of course, without capital it's impossible, sir; there's nothing to begin on. Here, I've bought a house; we've ordered everything that a good house ought to have, horses, and one thing and another. Just consider yourself! One has to think about the children.

OLIMPIÁDA SAMSÓNOVNA. Why, daddy, we can't strip ourselves bare! We're none of your common townspeople.

PODKHALYÚZIN. Daddy, please consider: to-day, without capital, sir, without capital you can't do much business.

OLIMPIÁDA SAMSÓNOVNA. I lived with you until I was twenty years old, daddy, and was a regular stay-at-home. What, would you have me give back the money to you, and go about again in calico-print clothes?

BOLSHÓV. What are you saying? What are you saying? Recollect! You see I'm not asking any kindness of you, but my rights. Are you human beings?

OLIMPIÁDA SAMSÓNOVNA. Why, of course, daddy, we're human beings; we're not animals.

BOLSHÓV. Lázár, you just recollect; you see, I've given away everything to you, fairly wiped my slate clean; here's what I've got left, you see! You see, I took you into my house when you were a little rascal, you heartless scoundrel! I gave you food and drink as if I were your own father, and set you up in the world. But did I ever see any sort of gratitude in you? Did I? Recollect, Lázár, how many times have I noticed that you were light-fingered! What of it? I didn't drive you away as if you were a beast, I didn't tell on you all over town. I made you my head clerk; I gave all my property away to you; and to you, Lázár, I gave even my daughter, with my own hand. If you hadn't received permission from me, you'd never have dared look at her.

PODKHALYÚZIN. If you please, daddy, I feel all that very keenly, sir.

BOLSHÓV. Yes, you do! You ought to give everything away as I did, and leave yourself nothing but your shirt, just to rescue your benefactor. But I don't ask that, I don't need to; you simply pay out for me what's expected now.

PODKHALYÚZIN. And why shouldn't I pay, sir? Only they ask a price that's wholly unreasonable.

BOLSHÓV. But am *I* asking it? I begged out of every one of your kopeks I could; I begged, and bowed down to their feet; but what can I do, when they won't come down one little bit?

OLIMPIÁDA SAMSÓNOVNA. We have told you, daddy, that we can't pay more than ten kopeks--and there's no use saying any more about it.

BOLSHÓV. And so, daughter, you say: "Go along now, you old devil, you, into the pen! Yes, into the pen! Off to prison with him, the old blockhead! And it serves him right!"--Don't chase after great wealth, be contented with what you have. But if you do chase after wealth, they'll take away the last you have, and strip you clean. And it'll come about that you'll run out onto the Stone Bridge, and throw yourself into the river Moscow. And they'll haul you out by your tongue, and put you in prison. [*All are silent; BOLSHÓV drinks*] But you just think a bit: what kind of a walk am I going to have to the pen now? How am I going to shut my eyes? Now the Ilyínka will seem to me a hundred miles long. Just think, how it will seem to walk along the Ilyínka! It's just as if the devils were dragging my sinful soul through torment; Lord, forgive me for saying so! And then past the Iver Chapel[1]: how am I going to look upon her, the Holy Mother?--You know, Lázar; Judas, you see, sold even Christ for money, just as we sell our conscience for money. And what happened to him because of it?--And then there are the government offices, the criminal tribunal!--You see, I did it with set purpose, with malice aforethought.--You see, they'll exile me to Siberia. O Lord!--If you won't give me the money for any other reason, give it as charity, for Christ's sake. [*He weeps.*]

[Footnote 1: In which there is a miracle-working image of the Virgin.]

PODKHALYÚZIN. What's the matter, what's the matter, daddy? There, there, now! God is merciful! What's the matter with you? We'll fix it up somehow. It's all in our hands.

BOLSHÓV. I need money, Lázar, money. There's nothing else to fix it with. Either money or Siberia.

PODKHALYÚZIN. And I'll give you money, sir, if you'll only let up. As it is, I'll add five kopeks more.

BOLSHÓV. What have we come to! Have you any Christian feeling in you? I need twenty-five kopeks, Lázar!

PODKHALYÚZIN. No, daddy, that's a good deal, sir; by heaven, that's a good deal!

BOLSHÓV. You nest of snakes!

*[He falls with his head upon the table.]*

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁT'YEVNA. Barbarian, you barbarian! Robber that you are! You shan't have my blessing! You'll dry up, money and all; you'll dry up, dying before your time! You robber! Robber that you are!

PODKHALYÚZIN. That'll do, mamma; you're angering God. Why are you cursing me when you haven't looked into the business? You can see that daddy has got a bit tipsy, and you start to make a row.

OLIMPIÁDA SAMSÓNOVNA. It would be better for you, ma, to keep still! You seem to enjoy sending people to the third hell. I know: you'll catch it for this. It must be for that reason God didn't give you any more children.

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁT'YEVNA. Keep still yourself, shameless creature! You were enough of a punishment for God to send me!

OLIMPIÁDA SAMSÓNOVNA. You think everybody's shameless and that you're the only good person. But you ought to take a good look at yourself: all you can do is fast one day extra every week, and not a day goes by that you don't bark at somebody.

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁT'YEVNA. Shame on you! Shame on you! Oh! Oh! Oh!--I'll curse you in all the churches!

OLIMPIÁDA SAMSÓNOVNA. Curse away if you want to!

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁT'YEVNA. Yes, that's it! You'll die, and not rot! Yes!

OLIMPIÁDA SAMSÓNOVNA. Much I shall!

BOLSHÓV. [*Rising*] Well, good-by, children!

PODKHALYÚZIN. Why, daddy, sit still! We've got to settle this business somehow or other.

BOLSHÓV. Settle what? I see plainly enough that the jig is up. You'll make a mistake if you don't do me up brown! Don't you pay anything for me; let 'em do what they please. Good-by, it's time I was going.

PODKHALYÚZIN. Good-by, daddy! God is merciful---you'll get out of this somehow.

BOLSHÓV. Good-by, wife.

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁTJEVNA. Good-by, Samsón Sílych, dear! When'll they let us come to see you in jail?

BOLSHÓV. Don't know.

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁTJEVNA. Then I'll inquire, otherwise you'll die there without our seeing you.

BOLSHÓV. Good-by, daughter! Good-by, Olimpiáda Samsónovna! Well, now you're going to be rich, and live like a princess. That means assemblies and balls--devil's own amusements! But don't you forget, Olimpiáda Samsónovna, that there are cells with iron bars, and poor prisoners are sitting in them. Don't forget us poor prisoners.

[*He goes out with* AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁTJEVNA.]

PODKHALYÚZIN. Ah! Olimpiáda Samsónovna, ma'am! How awkward, ma'am! I pity your father, by heaven I pity him, ma'am! Hadn't I better go myself and compound with his creditors? Don't you think I'd better, ma'am? Yet he himself will soften them better. Ah! Or shall I go? I'll go, ma'am! Tishka!

OLIMPIÁDA SAMSÓNOVNA. Do just as you please--it's your business.



PODKHALYÚZIN. Tishka! [TISHKA *enters*] Give me my old coat, the worst one there is. [TISHKA *goes out*] As I am, they'd think I must be rich; and in that case, there'd be no coming to terms.

## SCENE V

*The same*, RISPOLÓZHENSKY and AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁTJEVNA

RISPOLÓZHENSKY. My dear Agraféna Kondrátyevna, haven't you pickled your cucumbers yet?

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁTJEVNA. No, my dear. Cucumbers now, indeed! What do I care about them! But have you pickled yours?

RISPOLÓZHENSKY. Certainly we have, my dear lady. Nowadays they're very dear; they say the frost got them. My dear Lázar Elizárych, how do you do? Is that vodka? I'll just take a thimbleful, Lázar Elizárych.

AGRAFÉNA KONDRÁTJEVNA *goes out with* OLIMPIÁDA SAMSÓNOVNA.

PODKHALYÚZIN. Why is it you've favored us with a visit, may I inquire?

RISPOLÓZHENSKY. He, he, he!--What a joker you are, Lázar Elizárych! Of course you know why.

PODKHALYÚZIN. And what may that be, I should like to know, sir?

RISPOLÓZHENSKY. For money, Lázar Elizárych, for money! Anybody else might come for something different, but I always come for money!

PODKHALYÚZIN. You come mighty blamed often for money.

RISPOLÓZHENSKY. How can I help it, Lázár Elizárych, when you give me only five rubles at a time? You see I have a family.

PODKHALYÚZIN. You couldn't expect me to give you a hundred at a time!

RISPOLÓZHENSKY. If you'd give it to me all at once, I shouldn't keep coming to you.

PODKHALYÚZIN. You know about as much about business as a pig does about pineapples; and what's more, you take bribes. Why should I give you anything?

RISPOLÓZHENSKY. Why, indeed!--You yourself promised to!

PODKHALYÚZIN. I myself promised! Well, I've given you money--you've made your profit, and that'll do; it's time to turn over a new leaf.

RISPOLÓZHENSKY. What do you mean by "time to turn over a new leaf"? You still owe me fifteen hundred rubles.

PODKHALYÚZIN. Owe you! Owe you! As if you had some document! And what for? For your rascality!

RISPOLÓZHENSKY. What do you mean by "rascality"? For my toil, not for my rascality!

PODKHALYÚZIN. Your toil!

RISPOLÓZHENSKY. Well, whatever it may be for, just give me the money, or a note for it.

PODKHALYÚZIN. What, sir! A note! Not much, you come again when you're a little older.

RISPOLÓZHENSKY. Do you want to swindle me with my little children?

PODKHALYÚZIN. Swindle, indeed! Here, take five rubles more, and go to the devil.

RISPOLÓZHENSKY. No, wait! You'll not get rid of me with that.

TISHKA *enters*.

PODKHALYÚZIN. What are you going to do to me?

RISPOLÓZHENSKY. My tongue isn't bought up yet.

PODKHALYÚZIN. Oh, perhaps you want to lick me, do you?

RISPOLÓZHENSKY. No, not lick you, but to tell the whole thing to all respectable people.

PODKHALYÚZIN. What are you going to talk about, you son of a sea-cook! And who's going to believe you?

RISPOLÓZHENSKY. Who's going to believe me?

PODKHALYÚZIN. Yes! Who's going to believe you? Just take a look at yourself!

RISPOLÓZHENSKY. Who's going to believe me? Who's going to believe me? You'll see! Yes, you'll see! Holy saints, but what can I do? It's my death! He's swindling me, the robber, swindling me! No, you wait! You'll see! It's against the law to swindle!

PODKHALYÚZIN. But what'll I see?

RISPOLÓZHENSKY. Here's what you'll see! You just wait, just wait, just wait! You think I won't have the law on you? You wait!

PODKHALYÚZIN. Wait; yes, wait!--As it is, I've waited long enough. Quit your bluffing, you don't scare me.

RISPOLÓZHENSKY. You think no one will believe me? Won't believe me? Well, let 'em insult me! I--here's what I'll do: Most honorable public!

PODKHALYÚZIN. What're you doing? What're you doing? Wake up!

TISHKA. Shame on you; you're just running around drunk!

RISPOLÓZHENSKY. Wait, wait!--Most honorable public! I have a wife, four children--look at these miserable boots!--

PODKHALYÚZIN. All lies, gentlemen! A most dishonorable man, gentlemen! That'll do for you, that'll do!--You'd better look out for yourself first, and see what you're up to!

RISPOLÓZHENSKY. Lemme go! He plundered his father-in-law! And he's swindling me.--A wife, four children, worn-out boots!

TISHKA. You can have 'em half-soled.

RISPOLÓZHENSKY. What're you talking about? You're a swindler, too!

TISHKA. Not at all, sir; never mind.

PODKHALYÚZIN. Oh! But what are you moralizing about?

RISPOLÓZHENSKY. No, you wait! I'll remember you! I'll send you to Siberia!

PODKHALYÚZIN. Don't believe him, it's all lies, gentlemen! There, gentlemen, he's a most dishonorable man himself, gentlemen; he isn't worth your notice! Bah, my boy, what a lout you are! Well, I never knew you--and not for any blessings on earth would I have anything to do with you.

RISPOLÓZHENSKY. Hold on there, hold on! Take that, you dog! Well, may you be strangled with my money, and go to the devil! [*He goes out.*]

PODKHALYÚZIN. How mad he got! [*To the public*] Don't you believe him, I mean him who was talking, gentlemen--that's all lies.

None of that ever happened. He must have seen all that in a dream.  
But now we're just opening a little shop: favor us with your patronage.  
Send the baby to us, and we won't sell him a wormy apple!