

ACT II

Evening of the same day. The scene represents the interior of the servants' kitchen. The Peasants have taken off their outer garments and sit drinking tea at the table, and perspiring. Theodore Ivánitch is smoking a cigar at the other side of the stage. The discharged Cook is lying on the brick oven, and is unseen during the early part of the scene.

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. My advice is, don't hinder him! If it's his wish and hers, in Heaven's name let him do it. She is a good, honest girl. Never mind her being a bit dressy; she can't help that, living in town: she is a good girl all the same.

SECOND PEASANT. Well, of course, if it is his wish, let him! He'll have to live with her, not me. But she's certainly uncommon spruce. How's one to take her into one's hut? Why, she'll not let her mother-in-law so much as pat her on the head.

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. That does not depend on the spruceness, but on character. If her nature is good, she's sure to be docile and respectful.

SECOND PEASANT. Ah, well, we'll have her if the lad's bent on having her. After all, it's a bad job to live with one as one don't care for.

I'll consult my missus, and then may Heaven bless them!

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. Then let's shake hands on it!

SECOND PEASANT. Well, it seems it will have to come off.

FIRST PEASANT. Eh, Zachary! fortune's a-smiling on you! You've come to accomplish a piece of business, and just see what a duchess of a daughter-in-law you've obtained. All that's left to be done is to have a drink on it, and then it will be all in order.

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. That's not at all necessary. [An awkward silence].

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. I know something of your way of life too, you know. I am even thinking of purchasing a bit of land, building a cottage, and working on the land myself somewhere: maybe in your neighbourhood.

SECOND PEASANT. A very good thing too.

FIRST PEASANT. That's just it. When one has got the money one can get all kinds of pleasure in the country.

THIRD PEASANT. Say no more about it! Country life, let's say, is freer in every way, not like the town!

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. There now, would you let me join your Commune if I

settled among you?

SECOND PEASANT. Why not? If you stand drink for the Elders, they'll accept you soon enough!

FIRST PEASANT. And if you open a public-house, for example, or an inn, why, you'd have such a life you'd never need to die! You might live like a king, and no mistake.

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. Well, we'll see. I should certainly like to have a few quiet years in my old age. Though my life here is good enough, and I should be sorry to leave. Leoníd Fyódoritch is an exceedingly kind-hearted man.

FIRST PEASANT. That's just it. But how about our business? Is it possible that he is going to leave it without any termination?

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. He'd do it willingly.

SECOND PEASANT. It seems he's afraid of his wife.

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. It's not that he's afraid, but they don't hit things off together.

THIRD PEASANT. But you should try, father! How are we to live else? We've so little land ...

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. We'll see what comes of Tányá's attempt. She's taken the business into her hands now!

THIRD PEASANT [takes a sip of tea] Father, be merciful. We've so little land. A hen, let's say, we've no room for a hen, let alone the cattle.

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. If the business depended on me.... [To Second Peasant] Well, friend, so we've done our bit of match-making! It's agreed then about Tányá?

SECOND PEASANT. I've given my word, and I'll not go back on it without a good reason. If only our business succeeds!

Enter Servants' Cook who looks up at the oven, makes a sign, and then begins to speak animatedly to Theodore Ivánitch.

SERVANTS' COOK. Just now Simon was called upstairs from the front kitchen! The master and that other bald-headed one who calls up spirits with him, ordered him to sit down and take the place of Kaptchítch!

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. You don't say so!

SERVANTS' COOK. Yes, Jacob told Tányá.

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. Extraordinary!

Enter Coachman.

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. What do you want?

COACHMAN [to Theodore Ivánitch] You may just tell them I never agreed to live with a lot of dogs! Let any one who likes do it, but I will never agree to live among dogs!

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. What dogs?

COACHMAN. Three dogs have been sent into our room by Vasíly Leoníditch! They've messed it all over. They're whining, and if one comes near them they bite--the devils! They'd tear you to pieces if you didn't mind. I've a good mind to take a club and smash their legs for them!

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. But when did they come?

COACHMAN. Why, to-day, from the Dog Show; the devil knows what kind they are, but they're an expensive sort. Are we or the dogs to live in the coachmen's quarters? You just go and ask!

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. Yes, that will never do. I'll go and ask about it.

COACHMAN. They'd better be brought here to Loukérya.

SERVANTS' COOK [angrily] People have to eat here, and you'd like to lock dogs in here! As it is ...

COACHMAN. And I've got the liveries, and the sledge-covers and the harness there, and they expect things kept clean! Perhaps the porter's lodge might do.

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. I must ask Vasíly Leoníditch.

COACHMAN [angrily] He'd better hang the brutes round his neck and lug them about with him! But no fear: he'd rather ride on horseback himself. It's he as spoilt Beauty without rhyme or reason. That was a horse!... Oh dear! what a life! [Exit, slamming door].

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. That's not right! Certainly not right! [To Peasants] Well then, it's time we were saying good-bye, friends.

PEASANTS. Good-bye!

Exit Theodore Ivánitch.

As soon as he is gone a sound of groaning is heard from the top of the oven.

SECOND PEASANT. He's sleek, that one; looks like a general.

SERVANTS' COOK. Rather! Why, he has a room all to himself; he gets his washing, his tea and sugar, and food from the master's table.

DISCHARGED COOK [on the oven]. Why shouldn't the old beggar live well? He's lined his pockets all right!

SECOND PEASANT. Who's that up there, on the oven?

SERVANTS' COOK. Oh, it's only a man.

Silence.

FIRST PEASANT. Well, and you too, as I noticed a while since when you were supping, have capital food to eat.

SERVANTS' COOK. We can't complain. She's not mean about the food. We have wheat bread every Sunday, and fish when a holiday happens to be a fast-day too, and those who like may eat meat.

SECOND PEASANT. And does any one tuck into flesh on fast-days?

SERVANTS' COOK. Oh, they nearly all do! Only the old coachman--not the one who was here just now but the old one--and Simon, and I and the housekeeper, fast--all the others eat meat.

SECOND PEASANT. And the master himself?

SERVANTS' COOK. Catch him! Why, I bet he's forgotten there is such a thing as fasting!

THIRD PEASANT. Oh Lord!

FIRST PEASANT. That's the gentlefolks' way: they have got it all out of their books. 'Cos of their intelec!

THIRD PEASANT. Shouldn't wonder if they feed on wheat bread every day!

SERVANTS' COOK. Wheat bread indeed! Much they think of wheat bread! You should see what food they eat. No end of different things!

FIRST PEASANT. In course gentlefolks' food is of an arial kind.

SERVANTS' COOK. Arial, of course, but all the same they're good at stuffing themselves, they are!

FIRST PEASANT. Have healthy appekites, so to say.

SERVANTS' COOK. 'Cos they always rinse it down! All with sweet wines, and spirits, and fizzy liquors. They have a different one to suit every kind of food. They eat and rinse it down, and eat and rinse it down, they do.

FIRST PEASANT. And so the food's floated down in proportion, so to say.

SERVANTS' COOK. Ah yes, they are good at stuffing! It's awful! You see, it's not just sitting down, eating, then saying grace and going away--they're always at it!

SECOND PEASANT. Like pigs with their feet in the trough! [Peasants laugh].

SERVANTS' COOK. As soon as, by God's grace, they have opened their eyes, the samovár is brought in--tea, coffee, chocolate. Hardly is the second samovár emptied, a third has to be set. Then lunch, then dinner, then again coffee. They've hardly left off, then comes tea, and all sorts of tit-bits and sweetmeats--there's never an end to it! They even lie in bed and eat!

THIRD PEASANT. There now; that's good! [Laughs].

FIRST AND SECOND PEASANTS. What are you about?

THIRD PEASANT. If I could only live a single day like that!

SECOND PEASANT. But when do they do their work?

SERVANTS' COOK. Work indeed! What is their work? Cards and piano--that's all their work. The young lady used to sit down to the piano as soon as

she opened her eyes, and off she'd go! And that other one who lives here, the teacher, stands and waits. "When will the piano be free?" When one has finished, off rattles the other, and sometimes they'd put two pianos near one another and four of 'em would bust out at once. Bust out in such a manner, you could hear 'em down here!

THIRD PEASANT. Oh Lord!

SERVANTS' COOK. Well, and that's all the work they do! Piano or cards! As soon as they have met together--cards, wine, smoking, and so on all night long. And as soon as they are up: eating again!

Enter Simon.

SIMON. Hope you're enjoying your tea!

FIRST PEASANT. Come and join us.

SIMON [comes up to the table] Thank you kindly. [First Peasant pours out a cup of tea for him].

SECOND PEASANT. Where have you been?

SIMON. Upstairs.

SECOND PEASANT. Well, and what was being done there?

SIMON. Why, I couldn't make it out at all! I don't know how to explain it.

SECOND PEASANT. But what was it?

SIMON. I can't explain it. They have been trying some kind of strength in me. I can't make it out. Tányá says, "Do it, and we'll get the land for our peasants; he'll sell it them."

SECOND PEASANT. But how is she going to manage it?

SIMON. I can't make it out, and she won't say. She says, "Do as I tell you," and that's all.

SECOND PEASANT. But what is it you have to do?

SIMON. Nothing just now. They made me sit down, put out the lights and told me to sleep. And Tányá had hidden herself there. They didn't see her, but I did.

SECOND PEASANT. Why? What for?

SIMON. The Lord only knows--I can't make it out.

FIRST PEASANT. Naturally it is for the distraction of time.

SECOND PEASANT. Well, it's clear you and I can make nothing of it. You had better tell me whether you have taken all your wages yet.

SIMON. No, I've not drawn any. I have twenty-eight roubles to the good, I think.

SECOND PEASANT. That's all right! Well, if God grants that we get the land, I'll take you home, Simon.

SIMON. With all my heart!

SECOND PEASANT. You've got spoilt, I should say. You'll not want to plough?

SIMON. Plough? Only give me the chance! Plough or mow,--I'm game. Those are things one doesn't forget.

FIRST PEASANT. But it don't seem very desirous after town life, for example? Eh!

SIMON. It's good enough for me. One can live in the country too.

FIRST PEASANT. And Daddy Mity here, is already on the look-out for your place; he's hankering after a life of luckshury!

SIMON. Eh, Daddy Mítry, you'd soon get sick of it. It seems easy enough when one looks at it, but there's a lot of running about that takes it out of one.

SERVANTS' COOK. You should see one of their balls, Daddy Mítry, then you would be surprised!

THIRD PEASANT. Why, do they eat all the time?

SERVANTS' COOK. My eye! You should have seen what we had here awhile ago. Theodore Ivánitch took me upstairs and I peeped in. The ladies--awful! Dressed up! Dressed up, bless my heart, and all bare down to here, and their arms bare.

THIRD PEASANT. Oh Lord!

SECOND PEASANT. Faugh! How beastly!

FIRST PEASANT. I take it the climate allows of that sort of thing!

SERVANTS' COOK. Well, daddy, so I peeped in. Dear me, what it was like! All of 'em in their natural skins! Would you believe it: old women--our mistress, only think, she's a grandmother, and even she'd gone and bared her shoulders.

THIRD PEASANT. Oh Lord!

SERVANTS' COOK. And what next? The music strikes up, and each man of 'em went up to his own, catches hold of her, and off they go twirling round and round!

SECOND PEASANT. The old women too?

SERVANTS' COOK. Yes, the old ones too.

SIMON. No, the old ones sit still.

SERVANTS' COOK. Get along,--I've seen it myself!

SIMON. No they don't.

DISCHARGED COOK [in a hoarse voice, looking down from the oven] That's the Polka-Mazurka. You fools don't understand what dancing is. The way they dance ...

SERVANTS' COOK. Shut up, you dancer! And keep quiet--there's some one coming.

Enter Gregory; old Cook hides hurriedly.

GREGORY [to Servants' Cook] Bring some sour cabbage.

SERVANTS' COOK. I am only just up from the cellar, and now I must go down again! Who is it for?

GREGORY. For the young ladies. Be quick, and send it up with Simon. I can't wait!

SERVANTS' COOK. There now, they tuck into sweetmeats till they are full up, and then they crave for sour cabbage!

FIRST PEASANT. That's to make a clearance.

SERVANTS' COOK. Of course, and as soon as there is room inside, they begin again! [Takes basin, and exit].

GREGORY [at Peasants] Look at them, how they've established themselves down here! Mind, if the mistress finds it out she'll give it you hot, like she did this morning! [Exit, laughing].

FIRST PEASANT. That's just it, she did raise a storm that time--awful!

SECOND PEASANT. That time it looked as if the master was going to step in, but seeing that the missus was about to blow the very roof off the house, he slams the door. Have your own way, thinks he.

THIRD PEASANT [waving his arm] It's the same everywhere. My old woman, let's say, she kicks up such a rumpus sometimes--it's just awful! Then I

just get out of the hut. Let her go to Jericho! She'll give you one with the poker if you don't mind. Oh Lord!

Jacob enters hurriedly with a prescription.

JACOB. Here, Simon, you run to the chemist's and get these powders for the mistress!

SIMON. But master told me not to go out.

JACOB. You've plenty of time; your business won't begin till after their tea. Hope you are enjoying your tea!

FIRST PEASANT. Thanks, come and join us.

Exit Simon.

JACOB. I haven't time. However, I'll just have one cup for company's sake.

FIRST PEASANT. And we've just been having a conversation as to how your mistress carried on so haughty this morning.

JACOB. Oh, she's a reg'lar fury! So hot-tempered, that she gets quite beside herself. Sometimes she even bursts out crying.

FIRST PEASANT. Now, there's a thing I wanted to ask you about. What, for example, be these mikerots she was illuding to erewhile? "They've infested the house with mikerots, with mikerots," she says. What is one to make of these same mikerots?

JACOB. Mikerogues, you mean! Well, it seems there is such a kind of bugs; all illnesses come from them, they say. So she says there are some of 'em on you. After you were gone, they washed and washed and sprinkled the place where you had stood. There's a kind of physic as kills these same bugs, they say.

SECOND PEASANT. Then where have we got these bugs on us?

JACOB [drinking his tea] Why, they say they're so small that one can't see 'em even through a glass.

SECOND PEASANT. Then how does she know I've got 'em on me? Perhaps there's more of that muck on her than on me!

JACOB. There now, you go and ask her!

SECOND PEASANT. I believe it's humbug.

JACOB. Of course it's bosh. The doctors must invent something, or else what are they paid for? There's one comes to us every day. Comes,--talks a bit,--and pockets ten roubles!

SECOND PEASANT. Nonsense!

JACOB. Why, there's one as takes a hundred!

FIRST PEASANT. A hundred? Humbug!

JACOB. A hundred. Humbug, you say? Why, if he has to go out of town, he'll not do it for less than a thousand! "Give a thousand," he says, "or else you may kick the bucket for what I care!"

THIRD PEASANT. Oh Lord!

SECOND PEASANT. Then does he know some charm?

JACOB. I suppose he must. I served at a General's outside Moscow once: a cross, terrible proud old fellow he was--just awful. Well, this General's daughter fell ill. They send for that doctor at once. "A thousand roubles, then I'll come." Well, they agreed, and he came. Then they did something or other he didn't like, and he bawled out at the General and says, "Is this the way you show your respect for me? Then I'll not attend her!" And, oh my! The old General forgot all his pride, and starts wheedling him in every way not to chuck up the job!

FIRST PEASANT. And he got the thousand?

JACOB. Of course!

SECOND PEASANT. That's easy got money. What wouldn't a peasant do with such a sum!

THIRD PEASANT. And I think it's all bosh. That time my foot was festering I had it doctored ever so long. I spent nigh on five roubles on it,--then I gave up doctoring, and it got all right!

Discharged Cook on the oven coughs.

JACOB. Ah, the old crony is here again!

FIRST PEASANT. Who might that man be?

JACOB. He used to be our master's cook. He comes to see Loukérya.

FIRST PEASANT. Kitchen-master, as one might say. Then, does he live here?

JACOB. No, they won't allow that. He's here one day, there another. If he's got a copper he goes to a dosshouse; but when he has drunk all, he comes here.

SECOND PEASANT. How did he come to this?

JACOB. Simply grew weak. And what a man he used to be--like a gentleman! Went about with a gold watch; got forty roubles a month wages. And now look at him! He'd have starved to death long ago if it hadn't been for Loukérya.

Enter Servants' Cook with the sour cabbage.

JACOB [to Servants' Cook] I see you've got Paul Petróvitch here again?

SERVANTS' COOK. And where's he to go to? Is he to go and freeze?

THIRD PEASANT. What liquor does.... Liquor, let's say ... [Clicks his tongue sympathetically].

SECOND PEASANT. Of course. A firm man's firm as a rock; a weak man's weaker than water.

DISCHARGED COOK [gets off the oven with trembling hands and legs] Loukérya, I say, give us a drop!

SERVANTS' COOK. What are you up to? I'll give you such a drop!...

DISCHARGED COOK. Have you no conscience? I'm dying! Brothers, a copper ...

SERVANTS' COOK. Get back on the oven, I tell you!

DISCHARGED COOK. Half a glass only, cook, for Heaven's sake! I say, do you understand? I ask you in the name of Heaven, now!

SERVANTS' COOK. Come along, here's some tea for you.

DISCHARGED COOK. Tea; what is tea? Weak, sloppy stuff. A little vódka--just one little drop ... Loukérya!

THIRD PEASANT. Poor old soul, what agony it is!

SECOND PEASANT. You'd better give him some.

SERVANTS' COOK [gets out a bottle and fills a wine-glass] Here you are; you'll get no more.

DISCHARGED COOK [clutches hold of it and drinks, trembling all over] Loukérya, Cook! I am drinking, and you must understand ...

SERVANTS' COOK. Now then, stop your chatter! Get on to the oven, and let not a breath of you be heard! [The old Cook meekly begins to climb up, muttering something to himself].

SECOND PEASANT. What it is, when a man gives way to his weakness!

FIRST PEASANT. That's just it--human weakness.

THIRD PEASANT. That goes without saying.

The Discharged Cook settles down, muttering all the time. Silence.

SECOND PEASANT. I want to ask you something: that girl of Aksinya's as comes from our village and is living here. How is she? What is she like? How is she living--I mean, does she live honest?

JACOB. She's a nice girl; one can say nothing but good of her.

SERVANTS' COOK. I'll tell you straight, daddy; I know this here establishment out and out, and if you mean to have Tanya for your son's wife--be quick about it, before she comes to grief, or else she'll not escape!

JACOB. Yes, that's true. A while ago we had a girl here, Nataly. She was a good girl too. And she was lost without rhyme or reason. No better than that chap! [Pointing to the old Cook].

SERVANTS' COOK. There's enough to dam a mill-pool, with the likes of us, as perish! 'Cos why, every one is tempted by the easy life and the good food. And see there,--as soon as one has tasted the good food she goes and slips. And once she's slipped, they don't want her, but get a fresh one in her place. So it was with dear little Nataly; she also slipped, and they turned her out. She had a child and fell ill, and died in the

hospital last spring. And what a girl she used to be!

THIRD PEASANT. Oh Lord! People are weak; they ought to be pitied.

DISCHARGED COOK. Those devils pity? No fear! [He hangs his legs down from the oven] I have stood roasting myself by the kitchen range for thirty years, and now that I am not wanted, I may go and die like a dog.... Pity indeed!...

FIRST PEASANT. That's just it. It's the old circumstances.

SECOND PEASANT.

While they drank and they fed, you were "curly head."

When they'd finished the prog, 'twas "Get out, mangy dog!"

THIRD PEASANT. Oh Lord!

DISCHARGED COOK. Much you know. What is "Sautey a la Bongmont"? What is "Bavassary"? Oh, the things I could make! Think of it! The Emperor tasted my work, and now the devils want me no longer. But I am not going to stand it!

SERVANTS' COOK. Now then, stop that noise, mind.... Get up right into the corner, so that no one can see you, or else Theodore Ivánitch or some one may come in, and both you and me'll be turned out! [Silence].

JACOB. And do you know my part of the country? I'm from Voznesénsky.

SECOND PEASANT. Not know it? Why, it's no more'n ten miles from our village; not that across the ford! Do you cultivate any land there?

JACOB. My brother does, and I send my wages. Though I live here, I am dying for a sight of home.

FIRST PEASANT. That's just it.

SECOND PEASANT. Then Anísim is your brother?

JACOB. Own brother. He lives at the farther end of the village.

SECOND PEASANT. Of course, I know; his is the third house.

Enter Tányá, running.

TÁNYA. Jacob, what are you doing, amusing yourself here? She is calling you!

JACOB. I'm coming; but what's up?

TÁNYA. Frisk is barking; it's hungry. And she's scolding you. "How cruel he is," she says. "He's no feeling," she says. "It's long past Frisk's

dinner-time, and he has not brought her food!" [Laughs].

JACOB [rises to go] Oh, she's cross? What's going to happen now, I wonder?

SERVANTS' COOK. Here, take the cabbage with you.

JACOB. All right, give it here. [Takes basin, and exit].

FIRST PEASANT. Who is going to dine now?

TÁNYA. Why, the dog! It's her dog. [Sits down and takes up the tea-pot] Is there any more tea? I've brought some. [Puts fresh tea into the tea-pot.]

FIRST PEASANT. Dinner for a dog?

TÁNYA. Yes, of course! They prepare a special cutlet for her; it must not be too fat. And I do the washing--the dog's washing, I mean.

THIRD PEASANT. Oh Lord!

TÁNYA. It's like that gentleman who had a funeral for his dog.

SECOND PEASANT. What's that?

TÁNYA. Why, some one told me he had a dog--I mean the gentleman had a dog. And it died. It was winter, and he went in his sledge to bury that dog. Well, he buried it, and on the way home he sits and cries--the gentleman does. Well, there was such a bitter frost that the coachman's nose keeps running, and he has to keep wiping it. Let me fill your cup! [Fills it] So he keeps wiping his nose, and the gentleman sees it, and says, "What are you crying about?" And the coachman, he says, "Why, sir, how can I help it; is there another dog like him?" [Laughs].

SECOND PEASANT. And I daresay he thinks to himself, "If your own self was to kick the bucket I'd not cry." [Laughs].

DISCHARGED COOK [from up on the oven] That is true; that's right!

TÁNYA. Well, the gentleman, he gets home and goes straight to his lady: "What a good-hearted man our coachman is; he was crying all the way home about poor Dash. Have him called.... Here, drink this glass of vódka," he says, "and here's a rouble as a reward for you." That's just like her saying Jacob has no feelings for her dog! [The Peasants laugh].

FIRST PEASANT. That's the style!

SECOND PEASANT. That was a go!

THIRD PEASANT. Ay, lassie, but you've set us a-laughing!

TÁNYA [pouring out more tea] Have some more! Yes, it only seems that our life is pleasant; but sometimes it is very disgusting,--clearing up all their messes! Faugh! It's better in the country. [Peasants turn their cups upside-down, as a polite sign that they have had enough. Tánya pours out more tea] Have some more, Efim Antónitch. I'll fill your cup, Mítry Vlásitch.

THIRD PEASANT. All right, fill it, fill it.

FIRST PEASANT. Well, dear, and what progression is our business making?

TÁNYA. It's getting on ...

FIRST PEASANT. Well, dear, and what progression is our business making?

TÁNYA. It's getting on ...]

FIRST PEASANT. Simon told us ...

TÁNYA [quickly] Did he?

SECOND PEASANT. But he could not make us understand.

TÁNYA. I can't tell you now, but I'm doing my best--all I can! And I've got your paper here! [Shows the paper hidden under the bib of her apron]

If only one thing succeeds.... [Shrieks] Oh, how nice it would be!

SECOND PEASANT. Don't lose that paper, mind. It has cost money.

TÁNYA. Never fear. You only want him to sign it? Is that all?

THIRD PEASANT. Why, what else? Let's say he's signed it, and it's done!
[Turns his cup upside-down] I've had enough.

TÁNYA [aside] He'll sign it; you'll see he will... Have some more.
[Pours out tea].

FIRST PEASANT. If only you get this business about the sale of the land settled, the Commune would pay your marriage expenses. [Refuses the tea].

TÁNYA [pouring out tea] Do have another cup.

THIRD PEASANT. You get it done, and we'll arrange your marriage, and I myself, let's say, will dance at the wedding. Though I've never danced in all my born days, I'll dance then!

TÁNYA [laughing] All right, I'll be in hopes of it. [Silence].

SECOND PEASANT [examines Tánya] That's all very well, but you're not fit for peasant work.

TÁNYA. Who? I? Why, don't you think me strong enough? You should see me lacing up my mistress. There's many a peasant couldn't tug as hard.

SECOND PEASANT. Where do you tug her to?

TÁNYA. Well, there's a thing made with bone, like--something like a stiff jacket, only up to here! Well, and I pull the strings just as when you saddle a horse--when you ... what d'ye call it? You know, when you spit on your hands!

SECOND PEASANT. Tighten the girths, you mean.

TÁNYA. Yes, yes, that's it. And you know I mustn't shove against her with my knee. [Laughs].

SECOND PEASANT. Why do you pull her in?

TÁNYA. For a reason!

SECOND PEASANT. Why, is she doing penance?

TÁNYA. No, it's for beauty's sake!

FIRST PEASANT. That's to say, you pull in her paunch for appearance' sake.

TÁNYA. Sometimes I lace her up so that her eyes are ready to start from her head, and she says, "Tighter," till my hands tingle. And you say I'm not strong! [Peasants laugh and shake their heads].

TÁNYA. But here, I've been jabbering. [Runs away, laughing].

THIRD PEASANT. Ah, the lassie has made us laugh!

FIRST PEASANT. She's a tidy one!

SECOND PEASANT. She's not bad.

Enter Sahát of and Vasíly Leoníditch. Sahát of holds a teaspoon in his hand.

VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH. Not exactly a dinner, but a déjeuner dinatoire. And first-rate it was, I tell you. Ham of sucking-pig, delicious! Roulier feeds one splendidly! I've only just returned. [Sees Peasants] Ah, the peasants are here again!

SAHÁT OF. Yes, yes, that's all very well, but we came here to hide this article. Where shall we hide it?

VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH. Excuse me a moment. [To Servants' Cook] Where are the dogs?

SERVANTS' COOK. In the coachman's quarters. You can't keep dogs in the servants' kitchen!

VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH. Ah, in the coachman's quarters? All right.

SAHÁTOF. I am waiting.

VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH. Excuse me, please. Eh, what? Hide it? I'll tell you what. Let's put it into one of the peasants' pockets. That one. I say, where's your pocket? Eh, what?

THIRD PEASANT. What for d'ye want my pocket? You're a good 'un! My pocket! There's money in my pocket!

VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH. Where's your bag, then?

THIRD PEASANT. What for?

SERVANTS' COOK. What d'you mean? That's the young master!

VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH [laughs. To Sahátof] D'you know why he's so frightened? Shall I tell you? He's got a heap of money. Eh, what?

SAHÁTOF. Yes, yes, I see. Well, you talk to them a bit, and I'll put it into that bag without being observed, so that they should not notice and

could not point it out to him. Talk to them.

VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH. All right! [To Peasants] Well then, old fellows, how about the land? Are you buying it? Eh, what?

FIRST PEASANT. We have made an offering, so to say, with our whole heart. But there,--the business don't come into action nohow.

VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH. You should not be so stingy! Land is an important matter! I told you about planting mint. Or else tobacco would also do.

FIRST PEASANT. That's just it. Every kind of products.

THIRD PEASANT. And you help us, master. Ask your father. Or else how are we to live? There's so little land. A fowl, let's say, there's not enough room for a fowl to run about.

SAHÁTOF [having put the spoon into a bag belonging to the Third Peasant] C'est fait. Ready. Come along. [Exit].

VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH. So don't be stingy! Eh? Well, good-bye. [Exit].

THIRD PEASANT. Didn't I say, come to some lodging-house? Well, supposing we'd had to give three-pence each, then at least we'd have been in peace. As to here, the Lord be merciful! "Give us the money," he says. What's that for?

SECOND PEASANT. He's drunk, I daresay.

Peasants turn their cups upside-down, rise, and cross themselves.

FIRST PEASANT. And d'you mind what a saying he threw out? Sowing mint!
One must know how to understand them, that one must!

SECOND PEASANT. Sow mint indeed! He'd better bend his own back at that
work, and then it's not mint he'll hanker after, no fear! Well, many
thanks!... And now, good woman, would you tell us where we could lie
down to sleep?

SERVANTS' COOK. One of you can lie on the oven, and the others on these
benches.

THIRD PEASANT. Christ save you! [Prays, crossing himself].

FIRST PEASANT. If only by God's help we get our business settled! [Lies
down] Then to-morrow, after dinner, we'd be off by the train, and on
Tuesday we'd be home again.

SECOND PEASANT. Are you going to put out the light?

SERVANTS' COOK. Put it out? Oh no! They'll keep running down here, first
for one thing then another.... You lie down, I'll lower it.

SECOND PEASANT. How is one to live, having so little land? Why, this year, I have had to buy corn since Christmas. And the oat-straw is all used up. I'd like to get hold of ten acres, and then I could take Simon back.

THIRD PEASANT. You're a man with a family. You'd get the land cultivated without trouble. If only the business comes off.

SECOND PEASANT. We must pray to the Holy Virgin, maybe she'll help us out. [Silence, broken by sighs. Then footsteps and voices are heard outside. The door opens. Enter Grossman hurriedly, with his eyes bandaged, holding Sahátov's hand, and followed by the Professor and the Doctor, the Fat Lady and Leoníd Fyódoritch, Betsy and Petrístchef, Vasíly Leoníditch and Márya Konstantínovna, Anna Pávlovna and the Baroness, Theodore Ivánitch and Tányá].

Peasants jump up. Grossman comes forward stepping quickly, then stops.

FAT LADY. You need not trouble yourselves; I have undertaken the task of observing, and am strictly fulfilling my duty! Mr. Sahátov, are you not leading him?

SAHÁTOF. Of course not!

FAT LADY. You must not lead him, but neither must you resist! [To Leoníd Fyódoritch] I know these experiments. I have tried them myself. Sometimes I used to feel a certain effluence, and as soon as I felt it ...

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. May I beg of you to keep perfect silence?

FAT LADY. Oh, I understand so well! I have experienced it myself. As soon as my attention was diverted I could no longer ...

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Sh ...!

Grossman goes about, searches near the First and Second Peasants, then approaches the Third, and stumbles over a bench.

BARONESS. Mais dites-moi, on le paye?[6]

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. Je ne saurais vous dire.

[6] BARONESS. But tell me, please, is he paid for this?

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. I really do not know.

BARONESS. Mais c'est un monsieur?[7]

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. Oh, oui!

BARONESS. Ça tient du miraculeux. N'est ce pas? Comment est-ce qu'il trouve?

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. Je ne saurais vous dire. Mon mari vous l'expliquera.
[Noticing Peasants, turns round, and sees the Servants' Cook] Pardon
... what is this?

[7] BARONESS. But he is a gentleman?

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. Oh yes!

BARONESS. It is almost miraculous. Isn't it? How does he manage to find things?

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. I really can't tell you. My husband will explain it to you.... Excuse me....

Baroness goes up to the group.

ANNA PÁVLOVNA [to Servants' Cook] Who let the peasants in?

SERVANTS' COOK. Jacob brought them in.

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. Who gave Jacob the order?

SERVANTS' COOK. I can't say. Theodore Ivánitch has seen them.

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. Leoníd!

Leoníd Fyódoritch does not hear, being absorbed in the search, and says, Sh ...

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. Theodore Ivánitch! What is the meaning of this? Did you not see me disinfecting the whole hall, and now the whole kitchen is infected, all the rye bread, the milk ...

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. I thought there would not be any danger if they came here. The men have come on business. They have far to go, and are from our village.

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. That's the worst of it! They are from the Kursk village, where people are dying of diphtheria like flies! But the chief thing is, I ordered them out of the house!... Did I, or did I not? [Approaches the others that have gathered round the Peasants] Be careful! Don't touch them--they are all infected with diphtheria! [No one heeds her, and she steps aside in a dignified manner and stands quietly waiting].

PETRÍSTCHEF [sniffs loudly] I don't know if it is diphtheria, but there is some kind of infection in the air. Don't you notice it?

BETSY. Stop your nonsense! Vovo, which bag is it in?

VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH. That one, that one. He is getting near, very near!

PETRÍSTCHEF. Is it spirits divine, or spirits of wine?

BETSY. Now your cigarette comes in handy for once. Smoke closer, closer to me.

Petrístchef leans over her and smokes at her.

VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH. He's getting near, I tell you. Eh, what?

GROSSMAN [searches excitedly round the Third Peasant] It is here; I feel it is!

FAT LADY. Do you feel an effluence? [Grossman stoops and finds the spoon in the bag].

ALL. Bravo! [General enthusiasm].

VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH. Ah! So that's where our spoon was. [To Peasants] Then that's the sort you are!

THIRD PEASANT. What sort? I didn't take your spoon! What are you making out? I didn't take it, and my soul knows nothing about it. I didn't take it--there! Let him do what he likes. I knew he came here for no good.

"Where's your bag?" says he. I didn't take it, the Lord is my witness!

[Crosses himself] I didn't take it!

The young people group round the Peasant, laughing.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH [angrily to his son] Always playing the fool! [To the Third Peasant] Never mind, friend! We know you did not take it; it was only an experiment.

GROSSMAN [removes bandage from his eyes, and pretends to be coming to] Can I have a little water? [All fuss round him].

VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH. Let's go straight from here into the coachman's room. I've got a bitch there--épâtante![8] Eh, what?

[8] Stunning!

BETSY. What a horrid word. Couldn't you say dog?

VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH. No. I can't say--Betsy is a man, épâtant. I should have to say young woman; it's a parallel case. Eh, what? Márya Konstantínovna, isn't it true? Good, eh? [Laughs loudly].

MÁRYA KONSTANTÍNOVNA. Well, let us go. [Exeunt Márya Konstantínovna, Betsy, Petristchef, and Vasíly Leoníditch].

FAT LADY [to Grossman] Well? how are you? Have you rested? [Grossman does not answer. To Sahátov] And you, Mr. Sahátov, did you feel the effluence?

SAHÁTÓF. I felt nothing. Yes, it was very fine--very fine. Quite a success!

BARONESS. Admirable! Ça ne le fait pas souffrir?[9]

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Pas le moins du monde.

[9] BARONESS. Capital! Does it not cause him any pain?

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Not the slightest.

PROFESSOR [to Grossman] May I trouble you? [Hands him a thermometer] At the beginning of the experiment it was 37 decimal 2, degrees.[10] [To Doctor] That's right, I think? Would you mind feeling his pulse? Some loss is inevitable.

[10] He uses a Centigrade thermometer.

DOCTOR [to Grossman] Now then, sir, let's have your hand; we'll see, we'll see. [Takes out his watch, and feels Grossman's pulse].

FAT LADY [to Grossman] One moment! The condition you were in could not

be called sleep?

GROSSMAN [wearily] It was hypnosis.

SAHÁTOF. In that case, are we to understand that you hypnotised yourself?

GROSSMAN. And why not? An hypnotic state may ensue not only in consequence of association--the sound of the tom-tom, for instance, in Charcot's method--but by merely entering an hypnogenetic zone.

SAHÁTOF. Granting that, it would still be desirable to define what hypnotism is, more exactly?

PROFESSOR. Hypnotism is a phenomenon resulting from the transmutation of one energy into another.

GROSSMAN. Charcot does not so define it.

SAHÁTOF. A moment, just a moment! That is your definition, but Liébault told me himself ...

DOCTOR [lets go of Grossman's pulse] Ah, that's all right; well now, the temperature?

FAT LADY [interrupting] No, allow me! I agree with the Professor. And

here's the very best proof. After my illness, when I lay insensible, a desire to speak came over me. In general I am of a silent disposition, but then I was overcome by this desire to speak, and I spoke and spoke, and I was told that I spoke in such a way that every one was astonished!
[To Sahátó] But I think I interrupted you?

SAHÁTÓF [with dignity] Not at all. Pray continue.

DOCTOR. Pulse 82, and the temperature has risen three-tenths of a degree.

PROFESSOR. There you are! That's a proof! That's just as it should be.
[Takes out pocket-book and writes] 82, yes? And 37 and 5. When the hypnotic state is induced, it invariably produces a heightened action of the heart.

DOCTOR. I can, as a medical man, bear witness that your prognosis was justified by the event.

PROFESSOR [to Sahátó] You were saying?...

SAHÁTÓF. I wished to say that Liébault told me himself that the hypnotic is only one particular psychological state, increasing susceptibility to suggestion.

PROFESSOR. That is so, but still the law of equivalents is the chief

thing.

GROSSMAN. Moreover, Liébault is far from being an authority, while Charcot has studied the subject from all sides, and has proved that hypnotism produced by a blow, a trauma ...

All talking together.

{ SAHÁTOF. Yes, but I don't reject Charcot's labour. I know him also,
{ I am only repeating what Liébault told me ...

{

{ GROSSMAN [excitedly] There are 3000 patients in the Salpêtrière, and
{ I have gone through the whole course.

{

{ PROFESSOR. Excuse me, gentlemen, but that is not the point.

FAT LADY [interrupting] One moment, I will explain it to you in two words? When my husband was ill, all the doctors gave him up ...

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. However, we had better go upstairs again. Baroness, this way!

Exeunt Grossman, Sahátóf, Professor, Doctor, the Fat Lady, and Baroness, talking loudly and interrupting each other.

ANNA PÁVLOVNA [catching hold of Leoníd Fyódoritch's arm] How often have

I asked you not to interfere in household matters! You think of nothing but your nonsense, and the whole house is on my shoulders. You will infect us all!

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. What? How? I don't understand what you mean.

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. How? Why, people ill of diphtheria sleep in the kitchen, which is in constant communication with the whole house.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Yes, but I ...

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. What, I?

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. I know nothing about it.

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. It's your duty to know, if you are the head of the family. Such things must not be done.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. But I never thought ... I thought ...

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. It is sickening to listen to you! [Leoníd Fyódoritch remains silent].

ANNA PÁVLOVNA [to Theodore Ivánitch] Turn them out at once! They are to leave my kitchen immediately! It is terrible! No one listens to me; they do it out of spite.... I turn them out from there, and they bring them

in here! And with my illness ... [Gets more and more excited, and at last begins to cry] Doctor! Doctor! Peter Petróvitch!... He's gone too!... [Exit, sobbing, followed by Leoníd Fyódoritch].

All stand silent for a long time.

THIRD PEASANT. Botheration take them all! If one don't mind, the police will be after one here. And I have never been to law in all my born days. Let's go to some lodging-house, lads!

THEODORE IVÁNITCH [to Tánya] What are we to do?

TÁNYA. Never mind, Theodore Ivánitch, let them sleep with the coachman.

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. How can we do that? The coachman was complaining as it is, that his place is full of dogs.

TÁNYA. Well then, the porter's lodge.

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. And supposing it's found out?

TÁNYA. It won't be found out! Don't trouble about that, Theodore Ivánitch. How can one turn them out now, at night? They'll not find anywhere to go to.

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. Well, do as you please. Only they must go away from

here. [Exit].

Peasants take their bags.

DISCHARGED COOK. Oh those damned fiends! It's all their fat! Fiends!

SERVANTS' COOK. You be quiet there. Thank goodness they didn't see you!

TÁNYA. Well then, daddy, come along to the porter's lodge.

FIRST PEASANT. Well, but how about our business? How, for example, about the applience of his hand to the signature? May we be in hopes?

TÁNYA. We'll see in an hour's time.

SECOND PEASANT. You'll do the trick?

TÁNYA [laughs] Yes, God willing!

Curtain.