

ACT III

SCENE 1

The scene is laid in Moscow. A large room. In it a carpenter's bench; a table with papers on it; a book-cupboard; a looking-glass and pictures on the wall behind, with some planks leaning in front of them. A Carpenter and Nicholas Ivánovich wearing a carpenter's apron are working at the bench, planing.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH [takes a board from the vice] Is that all right?

CARPENTER [setting a plane] Not quite, you must do it more boldly--like this.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. It is easy to say boldly, but I can't manage it.

CARPENTER. But why should your honour trouble to learn to be a carpenter? There are such a lot of us nowadays that we can hardly get a living as it is.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH [at work again] I'm ashamed to lead an idle life.

CARPENTER. Yours is that kind of position. God has given you property.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. That's just where it is. I don't believe that God gave it, but that some of us have taken it, and taken it from our brother men.

CARPENTER [taken aback] That's so! But still you've no need to do this.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. I understand that it must seem strange to you that while living in this house where there is such superfluity, I should wish to earn something.

CARPENTER [laughs] No. Everybody knows that gentlefolk want to master everything. Well, now go over it again with the smoothing plane.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. You won't believe me and will laugh, but still I must tell you that formerly I was not ashamed to live in this way, but now that I believe in Christ's law, which tells us we are all brothers--I am ashamed to live so.

CARPENTER. If you are ashamed of it, give away your property.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. I wanted to, but failed, and gave it to my wife.

CARPENTER. But after all it would not be possible for you to do it--you are too used to comforts.

[Voice outside the door] Papa, may I come in?

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. You may, you always may.

Enter Lyúba.

LYÚBA. Good-day, Jacob!

CARPENTER. Good-day, Miss!

LYÚBA. Borís has gone to his regiment. I am afraid of what he may do or say there. What do you think?

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. What can I think? He will do what is natural to him.

LYÚBA. It is awful. He has such a short time to serve^[33] and may go and ruin his whole life.

[33] The period of compulsory service for a University graduate would be short in any case.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. He did well not to come to see me. He understands that I can't say anything to him but what he knows himself. He told me that he handed in his resignation because he sees that not only is there no more immoral, lawless, cruel and brutal occupation than this one, the object of which is to kill, but also that there is nothing more degrading and mean than to have to submit implicitly to any man of

higher rank who happens to come along. He knows all that.

LYÚBA. That's just why I am afraid. He knows that, and may want to take some action.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. His conscience--the God that dwells within him--will decide that. Had he come to me I should have given him only one piece of advice: not to do anything in which he is guided by his reason alone--nothing is worse than that--but only to act when his whole being demands it. Now I, for instance, wished to act according to Christ's injunction: to leave father, wife and children and to follow Him, and I left home, but how did it end? It ended by my coming back and living with you in luxury in town. Because I was trying to do more than I had strength for, I have landed myself in this degrading and senseless position: I wish to live simply and to work with my hands, but in these surroundings, with lackeys and porters, it seems a kind of affectation. I see that, even now, Jacob Nikonórych is laughing at me.

CARPENTER. Why should I laugh? You pay me, and give me my tea. I am grateful to you.

LYÚBA. I wonder if I had not better go to him.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. My dear, my darling, I know you find it hard and are frightened, though you should not be so. After all, I am a man who understands life. Nothing evil can happen. All that appears evil really

makes one's heart more joyful; only understand that a man who has started on that path will have to choose, and it sometimes happens that God's side and the Devil's weigh so equally that the scales oscillate, and it is then that the great choice has to be made. At that point any interference from outside is terribly dangerous and tormenting. It is as though a man were making such terrible efforts to draw a weight over a ridge that the slightest touch would cause him to break his back.

LYÚBA. Why should he suffer so?

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. That is as though a mother were to ask why she should suffer. There can be no childbirth without suffering, and it is the same in spiritual life. One thing I can tell you. Borís is a true Christian, and consequently is free, and if you cannot as yet be like him, or believe in God as he does, then believe in God through him.

MARY IVÁNOVNA [behind door] May I come in?

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. You may always come in. What a reception I'm having here to-day.

MARY IVÁNOVNA. Our priest, Vasíly Nikonórovich, has come. He is going to the Bishop, and has resigned his living!

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Impossible!

MARY IVÁNOVNÁ. He is here! Lyúba, go and call him! He wants to see you.
[Exit Lyúba]. I had another reason for coming. I want to speak to you
about Ványa. He behaves abominably, and does his lesson so badly that he
can't possibly pass; and when I speak to him he is rude.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Mary, you know I am out of sympathy with the whole
manner of life you are all leading, and with the education you are
giving to the children. It is a terrible question for me, whether I have
a right to see them perishing before my very eyes ...

MARY IVÁNOVNÁ. Then you should suggest something else, something
definite. But what do you offer?

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. I cannot say what. But can only say that first we
should get rid of all this depraving luxury.

MARY IVÁNOVNÁ. So that they should become peasants! I cannot agree to
that.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Then don't consult me. The things that grieve you
are natural and inevitable.

Enter Priest and Lyúba. The Priest and Nicholas Ivánovich kiss[34]
one another.

[34] It is not unusual among Russians for men-friends to kiss one

another; but it is quite unusual for a man of position to kiss a village priest who calls as a visitor--and it indicates great intimacy or great emotion.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Is it possible that you have thrown it all up?

PRIEST. I could stand it no longer.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. I did not expect it so soon.

PRIEST. But it was really impossible. In our calling we cannot be indifferent. We have to hear confessions, and to administer the Sacrament, and when once one has become convinced that it is all not true ...

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Well, and what now?

PRIEST. Now I am going to the Bishop to be questioned. I am afraid he will exile me to the Solovétsk Monastery. At one time I thought of asking you to help me to escape abroad, but then I considered that it would seem cowardly. Only, there is my wife!

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Where is she?

PRIEST. She has gone to her father's. My mother-in-law came and took our boy away. That hurt me very much. I should much like ... [pauses,

restraining his tears].

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Well, may God help you! Are you staying with us?

PRINCESS [running into the room] There now, it has happened. He has refused to serve, and has been put under arrest. I have just been there but was not admitted. Nicholas Ivánovich, you must go.

LYÚBA. Has he refused? How do you know?

PRINCESS. I was there myself! Vasíly Andréevich, who is a Member of the Council, told me all about it. Borís just walked in and told them he would serve no longer, would take no oath, and in fact said everything Nicholas Ivánovich has taught him.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Princess! Can such things be taught?

PRINCESS. I don't know. Only this is not Christianity! What is your opinion, Father?

PRIEST. I am no longer "Father."

PRINCESS. Well, all the same. However, you are also one of them! No, I cannot leave things in this state. And what cursed Christianity it is that makes people suffer and perish. I hate this Christianity of yours. It's all right for you, who know you won't be touched; but I have only

one son, and you have ruined him!

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Do be calm, Princess.

PRINCESS. Yes you, you have ruined him! And having ruined him, you must save him. Go and persuade him to abandon all this nonsense. It's all very well for rich people, but not for us.

LYÚBA [crying] Papa, what can be done?

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. I will go. Perhaps I can be of some use. [Takes off his apron].

PRINCESS [helping him on with his coat] They would not let me in, but now we will go together and I shall get my way. [Exeunt].

Curtain.

SCENE 2

A Government office. A Clerk is seated at a table, and a Sentinel is pacing up and down. Enter a General with his Adjutant. The Clerk jumps up, the Sentinel presents arms.

GENERAL. Where is the Colonel?

CLERK. Gone to see that new conscript, Your Excellency.

GENERAL. Ah, very well. Ask him to come here to me.

CLERK. Yes, Your Excellency.

GENERAL. And what are you copying out? Isn't it the conscript's evidence?

CLERK. Yes, sir, it is.

GENERAL. Give it here.

The Clerk hands General the paper and exit. The General hands it to his Adjutant.

GENERAL. Please read it.

ADJUTANT [reading] "These are my answers to the questions put to me, namely: (1) Why I do not take my oath. (2) Why I refuse to fulfil the demands of the Government. (3) What induced me to use words offensive not only to the army but also to the Highest Authorities. In reply to the first question: I cannot take the oath because I accept Christ's teaching, which directly and clearly forbids taking oaths, as in St. Matthew's Gospel, ch. 5 vv. 33-37, and in the Epistle of St. James, ch. 5 v. 12."

GENERAL. Of course he must be arguing! Putting his own interpretations!

ADJUTANT [goes on reading] "The Gospel says: 'Swear not at all, but let your yea be yea, and your nay, nay; and what is more than these is of the evil one!' St. James's Epistle says: 'Before all things, brethren, swear not by the heavens nor by the earth, nor by any other oath; but let your yea be yea, and your nay, nay, that ye fall not into temptation!' But apart from the fact that the Bible gives us such clear injunctions not to swear--or even if it contained no such injunctions--I should still be unable to swear to obey the will of men, because as a Christian I must always obey the will of God, which does not always coincide with the will of men."

GENERAL. He must be arguing! If I had my way, there would be none of this.

ADJUTANT [reading] "I refuse to fulfil the demands of men calling

themselves the Government, because ..."

GENERAL. What insolence!

ADJUTANT. "Because those demands are criminal and wicked. They demand of me that I should enter the army, and learn and prepare to commit murder, though this is forbidden both in the Old and the New Testaments, and above all by my conscience. To the third question ..."

Enter Colonel followed by Clerk. The General shakes hands with Colonel.

COLONEL. You are reading the evidence?

GENERAL. Yes. Unpardonably insolent language. Well, go on.

ADJUTANT. "To the third question: What induced me to use offensive words before the Court, my answer is: that I was induced to do so by the wish to serve God, and in order to expose the fraud carried on in His name. This desire, I hope to retain till I die, and therefore ..."

GENERAL. Come; that's enough; one can't listen to all this balderdash. The fact is all this sort of thing must be eradicated, and action taken to prevent the people being perverted. [To Colonel] Have you spoken to him?

COLONEL. I have been doing so all the time. I tried to shame him, and also to convince him that it would only be worse for himself, and that he would gain nothing by it. Besides that, I spoke of his relations. He was very excited, but holds to his opinions.

GENERAL. A pity you talked to him so much. We are in the army not to reason, but to act. Call him here!

Exit Adjutant with Clerk.

GENERAL [sits down] No, Colonel, that's not the way. Fellows of this kind must be dealt with in a different manner. Decisive measures are needed to cut off the diseased limb. One maggoty sheep infects the whole flock. In these cases one must not be too squeamish. His being a Prince, and having a mother and a fiancée, is none of our business. We have a soldier before us and we must obey the Tsar's will.

COLONEL. I only thought that we could move him more easily by persuasion.

GENERAL. Not at all--by firmness; only by firmness! I have dealt with men of that sort before. He must be made to feel that he is a nonentity--a grain of dust beneath a chariot wheel, and that he cannot stop it.

COLONEL. Well, we can try!

GENERAL [getting irritable] No need to try! I don't need to try! I have served the Tsar for forty-four years, I have given and am giving my life to the service, and now this fellow wants to teach me and wants to read me theological lectures! Let him take that to the Priest, but to me--he is either a soldier or a prisoner. That's all!

Enter Borís guarded by two Soldiers and followed by Adjutant and Clerk.

GENERAL [pointing with a finger] Place him there.

BORÍS. I need no placing. I shall stand or sit where I like, for I do not recognise your authority.

GENERAL. Silence! You don't recognise authority? I will make you recognise it.

BORÍS [sits down on a stool] How wrong it is of you to shout so!

GENERAL. Lift him, and make him stand!

Soldiers raise him.

BORÍS. That you can do, and you can kill me; but you cannot make me submit ...

GENERAL. Silence, I tell you. Hear what I have to say to you.

BORÍS. I don't in the least want to hear what you have to say.

GENERAL. He is mad! He must be taken to the hospital to be examined.
That is the only thing to do.

COLONEL. The order was to send him to be examined at the Gendarmes' office.

GENERAL. Well, then, send him there. Only put him into uniform.

COLONEL. He resists.

GENERAL. Bind him. [To Borís] Please hear what I have to say to you. I don't care what happens to you, but for your own sake I advise you, bethink yourself. You will rot in a fortress, and not do any good to anyone. Give it up. Well, you flared up a bit and I flared up. [Slaps him on the shoulder] Go, take the oath and give up all that nonsense. [To Adjutant] Is the Priest here? [To Borís] Well? [Borís is silent] Why don't you answer? Really you had better do as I say. You can't break a club with a whip. You can keep your opinions, but serve your time! We will not use force with you. Well?

BORÍS. I have nothing more to say, I have said all I had to.

GENERAL. There, you see, you wrote that there are such and such texts in the Gospels. Well, the Priest knows all about that. Have a talk with the Priest, and then think things over. That will be best. Good-bye, and I hope "au revoir," when I shall be able to congratulate you on having entered the Tsar's service. Send the Priest here. [Exit, followed by Colonel and Adjutant].

BORÍS [To Clerk and Convoy Soldiers] There you see how they deceive you. They know that they are deceiving you. Don't submit to them. Lay down your rifles and go away. Let them put you into the Disciplinary Battalions and flog you; it will not be as bad as it is to serve such impostors.

CLERK. But how could one get on without an army? It's impossible.

BORÍS. That is not for us to consider. We have to consider what God demands of us; and God wants us.

ONE OF THE SOLDIERS. But how is it that they speak of "the Christian army"?

BORÍS. That is not said anywhere in the Bible. It's these impostors who invented it.

Enter a Gendarme Officer with Clerk.

GENDARME OFFICER. Is it here that the conscript, Prince Cheremshánov, is being kept?

CLERK. Yes, sir. Here he is.

GENDARME OFFICER. Come here, please. Are you Prince Borís Siménovich Cheremshánov, who refuses to take the oath?

BORÍS. I am.

GENDARME OFFICER [sits down and points to a seat opposite] Please sit down.

BORÍS. I think our conversation will be quite useless.

GENDARME OFFICER. I don't think so. At any rate not useless to you. You see it's like this. I am informed that you refuse military service and the oath, and are therefore suspected of belonging to the Revolutionary Party, and that is what I have to investigate. If it is true, we shall have to withdraw you from the service and imprison you or banish you according to the share you have taken in the revolution. If it is not true, we shall leave you to the military authorities. You see I express myself quite frankly to you, and I hope you will treat us in the same way.

BORÍS. In the first place I cannot trust men who wear this sort of thing [pointing to the Gendarme Officer's uniform]. Secondly, your very occupation is one I cannot respect, and for which I have the greatest aversion. But I do not refuse to answer your questions. What do you wish to know?

GENDARME OFFICER. In the first place, tell me your name, your calling, and your religion?

BORÍS. You know all that and I will not reply. Only one of the questions is of great importance to me. I am not what is called an Orthodox Christian.

GENDARME OFFICER. What then is your religion?

BORÍS. I do not label it.

GENDARME OFFICER. But still?...

BORÍS. Well then, the Christian religion, according to the Sermon on the Mount.

GENDARME OFFICER. Write it down [Clerk writes. To Borís] Still you recognise yourself as belonging to some nationality or rank.

BORÍS. No, I don't. I recognise myself as a man, and a servant of God.

GENDARME OFFICER. Why don't you consider yourself a member of the Russian Empire?

BORÍS. Because I do not recognise any empires.

GENDARME OFFICER. What do you mean by not recognising? Do you wish to overthrow them?

BORÍS. Certainly I wish it, and work for it.

GENDARME OFFICER [To Clerk] Put that down. [To Borís] How do you work for it?

BORÍS. By exposing fraud and lies, and by spreading the truth. When you entered I was telling these soldiers not to believe in the fraud into which they have been drawn.

GENDARME OFFICER. But beside this method of exposing and persuading, do you approve of any others?

BORÍS. No, I not only disapprove, but I consider all violence to be a great sin; and not only violence, but all concealment and craftiness ...

GENDARME OFFICER. Write that down. Very well. Now kindly let me know whom you are acquainted with. Do you know Ivashénko?

BORÍS. No.

GENDARME OFFICER. Klein?

BORÍS. I have heard of him, but never met him.

Enter Priest (an old man wearing a cross and carrying a Bible). The Clerk goes up to him and receives his blessing.

GENDARME OFFICER. Well, I think I may stop. I consider that you are not dangerous, and not within our jurisdiction. I wish you a speedy release. Good-day. [Presses Borís's hand].

BORÍS. One thing I should like to say to you. Forgive me, but I can't help saying it. Why have you chosen this wicked, cruel profession? I should advise you to give it up.

GENDARME OFFICER [smiles] Thank you for your advice, but I have my reasons. My respects to you. [To Priest] Father, I relinquish my place to you [Exit with Clerk].

PRIEST. How can you so grieve the authorities by refusing to fulfil the duty of a Christian, to serve the Tsar and your Fatherland?

BORÍS [smiling] Just because I want to fulfil my duty as a Christian, I

do not wish to be a soldier.

PRIEST. Why don't you wish it? It is said that, "To lay down one's life for a friend" is to be a true Christian....

BORÍS. Yes, to "lay down one's life," but not to take another man's. That is just what I want to do, to "lay down my life."

PRIEST. You do not reason rightly, young man. John the Baptist said to the soldiers ...

BORÍS [smiling] That only goes to prove that even in those days the soldiers used to rob, and he told them not to!

PRIEST. Well, but why don't you wish to take your oath?

BORÍS. You know that the Gospels forbid it!

PRIEST. Not at all. You know that when Pilate said: "I adjure thee by the living God, art thou the Christ?" the Lord Jesus Christ answered "I am." That proves that oaths are not forbidden.

BORÍS. Are not you ashamed to talk so? You--an old man.

PRIEST. Take my advice and don't be obstinate. You and I cannot change the world. Just take your oath and you'll be at ease. Leave it to the

Church to know what is a sin and what is not.

BORÍS. Leave it to you? Are you not afraid to take so much sin upon yourself?

PRIEST. What sin? Having been brought up firmly in the faith, and having worked as a priest for thirty years, I can have no sins on my shoulders.

BORÍS. Whose then is the sin, when you deceive such numbers of people? What have these poor fellows got in their heads? [Points to Sentinel].

PRIEST. You and I, young man, will never settle that. It is for us to obey those placed above us.

BORÍS. Leave me alone! I am sorry for you and--I confess--it disgusts me to listen to you. Now if you were like that General--but you come here with a cross and the Testament to persuade me in the name of Christ, to deny Christ! Go [excitedly]. Leave me--Go. Let me be taken back to the cell that I may not see anyone. I am tired, dreadfully tired!

PRIEST. Well, if that is so, good-bye.

Enter Adjutant.

ADJUTANT. Well?

PRIEST. Great obstinacy, great insubordination.

ADJUTANT. So he has refused to take the oath and to serve?

PRIEST. On no account will he.

ADJUTANT. Then he must be taken to the hospital.

PRIEST. And reported as ill? That no doubt would be better, or his example may lead others astray.

ADJUTANT. To be put under observation in the ward for the mentally diseased. Those are my orders.

PRIEST. Certainly. My respects to you. [Exit].

ADJUTANT [approaches Borís] Come, please. My orders are to conduct you----

BORÍS. Where to?

ADJUTANT. First of all to the hospital, where it will be quieter for you, and where you will have time to think things over.

BORÍS. I've thought them over long ago. But let us go! [Exeunt].

Curtain.

SCENE 3

Room in Hospital. Head Doctor, Assistant Doctor, an Officer-Patient in a dressing-gown, and two Warders wearing blouses.

PATIENT. I tell you that you are only leading me to perdition. I have already several times felt quite well.

HEAD DOCTOR. You must not get excited. I should be glad to sign an order for you to leave the hospital, but you know yourself that liberty is dangerous for you. If I were sure that you would be looked after ...

PATIENT. You think I should take to drink again? No, I have had my lesson, but every extra day I spend here only does me harm. You are doing [gets excited] the opposite of what you ought to do. You are cruel. It's all very well for you!

HEAD DOCTOR. Don't get excited. [Makes a sign to Warders; who come up from behind].

PATIENT. It's easy for you to argue, being at liberty; but how about us who are kept among madmen! [To Warders] What are you after? Be off!

HEAD DOCTOR. I beg of you to be calm.

PATIENT. But I beg and I demand that you set me free. [Yells, and rushes

at the Doctor, but the Warders seize him. A struggle; after which he is taken out].

ASSISTANT DOCTOR. There! Now it has begun again. He nearly got at you that time.

HEAD DOCTOR. Alcoholic ... nothing can be done. But there is some improvement.

Enter Adjutant.

ADJUTANT. How d'you do.

HEAD DOCTOR. Good morning!

ADJUTANT. I have brought you an interesting fellow, a certain Prince Cheremshánov, who has been conscripted, but on religious grounds refuses to serve. He was sent to the Gendarmes, but they say he does not come within their jurisdiction, not being a political conspirator. The Priest exhorted him, but also without effect.

HEAD DOCTOR [laughing] And then as usual you bring him to us, as the highest Court of Appeal. Well, let's have him.

Exit Assistant Doctor.

ADJUTANT. He is said to be a highly educated young man, and he is engaged to a rich girl. It's extraordinary! I really consider this is the right place for him!

HEAD DOCTOR. Yes, it's a mania.

Borís is brought in.

HEAD DOCTOR. Glad to see you. Please take a seat and let's have a chat.
[To Adjutant] Please leave us. [Exit Adjutant].

BORÍS. I should like to ask you, if possible, if you mean to lock me up somewhere, to be so good as to do it quickly and let me rest.

HEAD DOCTOR. Excuse me, we must keep the rules. Only a few questions. What do you feel? What are you suffering from?

BORÍS. Nothing. I am perfectly well.

HEAD DOCTOR. Yes, but you are not behaving like other people.

BORÍS. I am behaving as my conscience demands.

HEAD DOCTOR. Well, you see you have refused to perform your military service. On what grounds do you do so?

BORÍS. I am a Christian, and therefore cannot commit murder.

HEAD DOCTOR. But one must defend one's country from her foes, and keep those who want to destroy the social order from evil-doing.

BORÍS. No one is attacking our country; and there are more among the governors who destroy social order, than there are among those whom they oppress.

HEAD DOCTOR. Yes? But what do you mean by that?

BORÍS. I mean this: the chief cause of evil--vódka--is sold by the Government; false and fraudulent religion is also fostered by the Government; and this military service which they demand of me--and which is the chief means of demoralising the people--is also demanded by the Government.

HEAD DOCTOR. Then, in your opinion, Government and the State are unnecessary.

BORÍS. That I don't know; but I know for certain that I must take no part in evil-doing.

HEAD DOCTOR. But what is to become of the world? Is not our reason given in order to enable us to look ahead.

BORÍS. It is also given in order to enable us to see that social order should not be maintained by violence, but by goodness; and that one man's refusal to participate in evil cannot be at all dangerous.

HEAD DOCTOR. Well now, allow me to examine you a bit. Will you have the goodness to lie down? [Begins touching him] You feel no pain here?

BORÍS. No.

HEAD DOCTOR. Nor here?

BORÍS. No.

HEAD DOCTOR. Take a deep breath, please. Now don't breathe. Now allow me [takes out a measure and measures forehead and nose]. Now be so good as to shut your eyes and walk.

BORÍS. Are you not ashamed to do all this?

HEAD DOCTOR. What do you mean?

BORÍS. All this nonsense? You know that I am quite well and that I am sent here because I refuse to take part in their evil deeds, and because they have no answer to give to the truth I told them; and that is why they pretend to think me mad. And you co-operate with them. It is horrid and it is shameful. Don't do it!

HEAD DOCTOR. Then you don't wish to walk?

BORÍS. No, I don't. You may torture me, but you must do it yourself; I won't help you. [Hotly] Let me alone! [The Doctor presses button of bell. Enter two Warders].

HEAD DOCTOR. Don't get excited. I quite understand that your nerves are strained. Will you please go to your ward?

Enter Assistant Doctor.

ASSISTANT DOCTOR. Some visitors have just come to see Cheremshánov.

BORÍS. Who are they?

ASSISTANT DOCTOR. Sarýntsov and his daughter.

BORÍS. I should like to see them.

HEAD DOCTOR. There is no reason why you shouldn't. Ask them in. You may see them here. [Exit, followed by Assistant and Warders].

Enter Nicholas Ivánovich and Lyúba. The Princess looks in at the door and says, "Go in, I'll come later."

LYÚBA [goes straight to Borís, takes his head in her hands and kisses him] Poor Borís.

BORÍS. No, don't pity me. I feel so well, so joyful, so light. How d'you do. [Kisses Nicholas Ivánovich].

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. I have come to say chiefly one thing to you. First of all, in such affairs it is worse to overdo it than not to do enough. And in this matter you should do as is said in the Gospels, and not think beforehand, "I shall say this, or do that": "When they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaketh in you." That is to say, do not act because you have reasoned out beforehand that you should do so and so, but act only when your whole being feels that you cannot act otherwise.

BORÍS. I have done so. I did not think I should refuse to serve; but when I saw all this fraud, those Mirrors of Justice, those Documents, the Police and Officers smoking, I could not help saying what I did. I was frightened, but only till I had begun, after that it was all so simple and joyful.

Lyúba sits down and cries.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Above all, do nothing for the sake of being praised, or to gain the approval of those whose opinion you value. For myself I

can say definitely, that if you take the oath at once, and enter the service, I shall love and esteem you not less but more than before; because not the things that take place in the external world are valuable, but that which goes on within the soul.

BORÍS. Of course, for what happens within the soul must make a change in the outside world.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Well, I have said my say. Your mother is here. She is terribly upset. If you can do what she asks, do it--that is what I wished to say to you.

From the corridor outside hysterical weeping is heard. A Lunatic rushes in, followed by Warders who drag him out again.

LYÚBA. How terrible! And you will be kept here? [Weeps].

BORÍS. I am not afraid of it, I'm afraid of nothing now! I feel so happy, the only thing I fear is what you feel about it. Do help me; I am sure you will!

LYÚBA. Can I be glad about it?

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Not glad, that is impossible. I myself am not glad. I suffer on his account and would gladly take his place, but though I suffer I yet know that it is well.

LYÚBA. It may be well; but when will they set him free?

BORÍS. No one knows. I do not think of the future. The present is so good, and you can make it still better.

Enter the Princess, his mother.

PRINCESS. I can wait no longer! [To Nicholas Ivánovich] Well, have you persuaded him? Does he agree? Bórya, my darling, you understand, don't you, what I suffer? For thirty years I have lived but for you; rearing you, rejoicing in you. And now when everything has been done and is complete--you suddenly renounce everything. Prison and disgrace! Oh no! Bórya!

BORÍS. Mamma! Listen to me.

PRINCESS [to Nicholas Ivánovich] Why do you say nothing? You have ruined him, it is for you to persuade him. It's all very well for you! Lyúba, do speak to him!

LYÚBA. I cannot!

BORÍS. Mamma, do understand that there are things that are as impossible as flying; and I cannot serve in the army.

PRINCESS. You think that you can't! Nonsense. Everybody has served and does serve. You and Nicholas Ivánovich have invented some new sort of Christianity which is not Christianity, but a devilish doctrine to make everybody suffer!

BORÍS. As is said in the Gospels!

PRINCESS. Nothing of the kind, or if it is, then all the same it is stupid. Darling, Bórya, have pity on me. [Throws herself on his neck, weeps] My whole life has been nothing but sorrow. There was but one ray of joy, and you are turning it into torture. Bórya--have pity on me!

BORÍS. Mamma, this is terribly hard on me. But I cannot explain it to you.

PRINCESS. Come now, don't refuse--say you will serve!

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Say you will think it over--and do think it over.

BORÍS. Very well then. But you too, Mamma, should have pity on me. It is hard on me too. [Cries are again heard from the corridor]. You know I'm in a lunatic asylum, and might really go mad.

Enter Head Doctor.

HEAD DOCTOR. Madam, this may have very bad consequences. Your son is in

a highly excited condition. I think we must put an end to this interview. You may call on visiting days--Thursdays and Sundays. Please come to see him before twelve o'clock.

PRINCESS. Very well, very well, I will go. Bórya, good-bye! Think it over. Have pity on me and meet me next Thursday with good news!

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH [shaking hands with Borís] Think it over with God's help, and as if you knew you were to die to-morrow. Only so will you decide rightly. Good-bye.

BORÍS [approaching Lyúba] And what do you say to me?

LYÚBA. I cannot lie; and I do not understand why you should torment yourself and everybody. I do not understand--and can say nothing. [Goes out weeping. Exeunt all except Borís].

BORÍS [alone] Oh how hard it is! Oh, how hard, Lord help me! [Prays].

Enter Warders with dressing-gown.

WARDER. Please change.

Borís puts on dressing-gown.

Curtain.