

ACT IV

SCENE 1

In Moscow a year later. A drawing-room in the Sarýntsov's town house is prepared for a dance. Footmen are arranging plants round the grand piano. Enter Mary Ivánovna in an elegant silk dress, with Alexándra Ivánovna.

MARY IVÁNOVNA. A ball? No, Only a dance! A "Juvenile Party" as they once used to say. My children took part in the Theatricals at the Mákofs, and have been asked to dances everywhere, so I must return the invitations.

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. I am afraid Nicholas does not like it.

MARY IVÁNOVNA. I can't help it. [To Footmen] Put it here! [To Alexándra Ivánovna] God knows how glad I should be not to cause him unpleasantness. But I think he has become much less exacting.

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. No, no! Only he does not show it so much. I saw how upset he was when he went off to his own room after dinner.

MARY IVÁNOVNA. What can I do? After all, people must live. We have seven children, and if they find no amusement at home, heaven knows what they may be up to. Anyhow I am quite happy about Lyúba now.

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. Has he proposed, then?

MARY IVÁNOVNA. As good as proposed. He has spoken to her, and she has said, Yes!

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. That again will be a terrible blow to Nicholas.

MARY IVÁNOVNA. Oh, he knows. He can't help knowing.

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. He does not like him.

MARY IVÁNOVNA [to the Footmen] Put the fruit on the side-board. Like whom? Alexander Mikáylovich? Of course not; because he is a living negation of all Nicholas's pet theories. A nice pleasant kindly man of the world. But oh! That terrible night-mare--that affair of Borís Cheremshánov's. What has happened to him?

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. Lisa has been to see him. He is still there. She says he has grown terribly thin, and the Doctors fear for his life or his reason.

MARY IVÁNOVNA. Yes, he is one of the terrible sacrifices caused by Nicholas's ideas. Why need he have been ruined? I never wished it.

Enter Pianist.

MARY IVÁNOVNA [to Pianist] Have you come to play?

PIANIST. Yes, I am the pianist.

MARY IVÁNOVNA. Please take a seat and wait a little. Won't you have a cup of tea?

PIANIST [goes to piano] No, thank you!

MARY IVÁNOVNA. I never wished it. I liked Bórya, but still he was not a suitable match for Lyûba--especially after he let himself be carried away by Nicholas Ivánovich's ideas.

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. But still, the strength of his convictions is astonishing. See what he endures! They tell him that as long as he persists in refusing to serve, he will either remain where he is or be sent to the fortress; but his reply is always the same. And yet Lisa says he is full of joy and even merry!

MARY IVÁNOVNA. Fanatic! But here comes Alexander Mikáylovich!

Enter Alexander Mikáylovich Starkóvsky,[35] an elegant man in evening dress.

[35] Alexander in his Christian name, Mikáylovich (= son of Michael)

is his patronymic, and Starkóvsky in his surname which is seldom used in ordinary social life.

STARKÓVSKY. I am afraid I have come too soon. [Kisses the hands of both ladies].

MARY IVÁNOVNA. So much the better.

STARKÓVSKY. And Lyúbov Nikolájevna?[36] She proposed to dance a great deal so as to make up for the time she has lost, and I have undertaken to help her.

[36] Lyúbov Nikolájevna (= Love daughter of Nicholas) is the courteous way of naming Lyúba. The latter is a pet name.

MARY IVÁNOVNA. She is sorting favours for the cotillion.

STARKÓVSKY. I will go and help her, if I may?

MARY IVÁNOVNA. Certainly.

As Starkóvsky is going out he meets Lyúba in evening, but not low-necked, dress carrying a cushion with stars and ribbons.

LYÚBA. Ah! here you are. Good! Now you can help me. There are three more cushions in the drawing-room. Go and fetch them all.

STARKÓVSKY. I fly to do so!

MARY IVÁNOVNA. Now, Lyúba; friends are coming, and they will be sure to hint and ask questions. May we announce it?

LYÚBA. No, Mamma, no. Why? Let them ask! Papa will not like it.

MARY IVÁNOVNA. But he knows or guesses; and he will have to be told sooner or later. I think it would be better to announce it to-day. Why, C'est le secret de la comédie.[37]

[37] It is only a comedy secret.

LYÚBA. No, no, Mamma, please don't. It would spoil our whole evening. No, no, you must not.

MARY IVÁNOVNA. Well, as you please.

LYÚBA. All right then: after the dance, just before supper.

Enter Starkóvsky.

LYÚBA. Well, have you got them?

MARY IVÁNOVNA. I'll go and have a look at the little ones. [Exit with

Alexáandra Ivánovna].

STARKÓVSKY [carrying three cushions, which he steadies with his chin, and dropping things on the way] Don't trouble, Lyúbov Nikoláyeвна, I'll pick them up. Well, you have prepared a lot of favours. If only I can manage to lead the dance properly! Ványa, come along.

VÁNYA [bringing more favours] This is the whole lot. Lyúba, Alexander Mikáylovich and I have a bet on, which of us will win the most favours.

STARKÓVSKY. It will be easy for you, for you know everybody here, and will gain them easily, while I shall have to charm the young ladies first before winning anything. It means that I am giving you a start of forty points.

VÁNYA. But then you are a fiancé, and I am a boy.

STARKÓVSKY. Well no, I am not a fiancé yet, and I am worse than a boy.

LYÚBA. Ványa, please go to my room and fetch the gum and the pin-cushion from the what-not. Only for goodness' sake don't break anything.

VÁNYA. I'll break everything! [Runs off].

STARKÓVSKY [takes Lyúba's hand] Lyúba, may I? I am so happy. [Kisses her hand] The mazurka is mine, but that is not enough. One can't say much in

a mazurka, and I must speak. May I wire to my people that I have been accepted and am happy?

LYÚBA. Yes, to-night.

STARKÓVSKY. One word more: how will Nicholas Ivánovich take it? Have you told him? Yes?

LYÚBA. No, I haven't; but I will. He will take it as he now takes everything that concerns the family. He will say, "Do as you think best." But he will be grieved at heart.

STARKÓVSKY. Because I am not Cheremshánov? Because I am a Maréchal de la Noblesse?

LYÚBA. Yes. But I have struggled with myself and deceived myself for his sake; and it is not because I love him less that I am now doing not what he wants, but it is because I can't lie. He himself says so. I do so want to live!

STARKÓVSKY. And life is the only truth! Well, and what of Cheremshánov?

LYÚBA [excitedly] Don't speak of him to me! I wish to blame him, to blame him whilst he is suffering; and I know it is because I feel guilty towards him. All I know is that I feel there is a kind of love--and I think a more real love than I ever felt for him.

STARKÓVSKY. Lyúba, is that true?

LYÚBA. You wish me to say that I love you with that real love--but I won't say it. I do love you with a different kind of love; but it is not the real thing either! Neither the one nor the other is the real thing--if only they could be mixed together!

STARKÓVSKY. No, no, I am satisfied with mine. [Kisses her hand] Lyúba!

LYÚBA [pushes him away] No, let us sort these things. They are beginning to arrive.

Enter Princess with Tónya and a little girl.

LYÚBA. Mamma will be here in a moment.

PRINCESS. Are we the first?

STARKÓVSKY. Some one must be! I have suggested making a gutta-percha dummy to be the first arrival!

Enter Styópa, also Ványa carrying the gum and pin-cushion.

STYÓPA. I expected to see you at the Italian opera last night.

TÓNYA. We were at my Aunt's, sewing for the charity-bazaar.

Enter Students, Ladies, Mary Ivánovna and a Countess.

COUNTESS. Shan't we see Nicholas Ivánovich?

MARY IVÁNOVNA. No, he never leaves his study to come to our gathering.

STARKÓVSKY. Quadrille, please! [Claps his hands. The dancers take their places and dance].

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA [approaches Mary Ivánovna] He is terribly agitated. He has been to see Borís, and he came back and saw there was a ball, and now he wants to go away! I went up to his door and overheard him talking to Alexander Petróvich.

MARY IVÁNOVNA. Well?

STARKÓVSKY. Rond des dames. Les cavaliers en avant![38]

[38] Starkóvsky, directing the dance, says: "Ladies form a circle. Gentlemen advance!"

ALEXÁNDRA IVÁNOVNA. He has made up his mind that it is impossible for him to live so, and he is going away.

MARY IVÁNOVNA. What a torment the man is! [Exit].

Curtain.

SCENE 2

Nicholas Ivánovich's room. The dance music is heard in the distance.

Nicholas Ivánovich has an overcoat on. He puts a letter on the table. Alexander Petróvich, dressed in ragged clothes, is with him.

ALEXANDER PETRÓVICH. Don't worry, we can reach the Caucasus without spending a penny, and there you can settle down.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. We will go by rail as far as Túla, and from thence on foot. Well, I'm ready. [Puts letter in the middle of the table, and goes to the door, where he meets Mary Ivánovna] Oh! Why have you come here?

MARY IVÁNOVNA. Why indeed? To prevent your doing a cruel thing. What's all this for? Why d'you do it?

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Why? Because I cannot continue living like this. I cannot endure this terrible, depraved life.

MARY IVÁNOVNA. It is awful. My life--which I give wholly to you and the children--has all of a sudden become "depraved." [Sees Alexander Petróvich] Renvoyez au moins cet homme. Je ne veux pas qu'il soit témoin de cette conversation.[39]

[39] At least send that man away. I don't wish him to be a witness of

our conversation.

ALEXANDER PETRÓVICH. Comprenez. Toujours moi partez.[40]

[40] Alexander Petróvich replies in very bad French: "I understand! I am always to go away!"

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Wait for me out there, Alexander Petróvich, I'll come in a minute.

Exit Alexander Petróvich.

MARY IVÁNOVNA. And what can you have in common with such a man as that? Why is he nearer to you than your own wife? It is incomprehensible! And where are you going?

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. I have left a letter for you. I did not want to speak; it is too hard; but if you wish it, I will try to say it quietly.

MARY IVÁNOVNA. No, I don't understand. Why do you hate and torture your wife, who has given up everything for you? Tell me, have I been going to balls, or gone in for dress, or flirted? My whole life has been devoted to the family. I nursed them all myself; I brought them up, and this last year the whole weight of their education, and the managing our affairs, has fallen on me....

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH [interrupting] But all this weight falls on you, because you do not wish to live as I proposed.

MARY IVÁNOVNÁ. But that was impossible! Ask anyone! It was impossible to let the children grow up illiterate, as you wished them to do, and for me to do the washing and cooking.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. I never wanted that!

MARY IVÁNOVNÁ. Well, anyhow it was something of that kind! No, you are a Christian, you wish to do good, and you say you love men; then why do you torture the woman who has devoted her whole life to you?

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. How do I torture you? I love you, but ...

MARY IVÁNOVNÁ. But is it not torturing me to leave me and to go away? What will everybody say? One of two things, either that I am a bad woman, or that you are mad.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Well, let us say I am mad; but I can't live like this.

MARY IVÁNOVNÁ. But what is there so terrible in it, even if once in a winter (and only once, because I feared you would not like it) I do give a party--and even then a very simple one, only ask Mánya and Barbara Vasílyevna! Everybody said I could not do less--and that it was

absolutely necessary. And now it seems even a crime, for which I shall have to suffer disgrace. And not only disgrace. The worst of all is that you no longer love me! You love everyone else--the whole world, including that drunken Alexander Petróvich--but I still love you and cannot live without you. Why do you do it? Why? [Weeps].

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. But you don't even wish to understand my life; my spiritual life.

MARY IVÁNOVNA. I do wish to understand it, but I can't. I see that your Christianity has made you hate your family and hate me; but I don't understand why!

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. You see the others do understand!

MARY IVÁNOVNA. Who? Alexander Petróvich, who gets money out of you?

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. He and others: Tónya and Vasíly Nikonórovich. But even if nobody understood it, that would make no difference.

MARY IVÁNOVNA. Vasíly Nikonórovich has repented, and has got his living back, and Tónya is at this very moment dancing and flirting with Styópa.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. I am sorry to hear it, but it does not turn black into white, and it cannot change my life. Mary! You do not need me. Let me go! I have tried to share your life and to bring into it what for me

constitutes the whole of life; but it is impossible. It only results in torturing myself and you. I not only torment myself, but spoil the work I try to accomplish. Everybody, including that very Alexander Petróvich, has the right to tell me that I am a hypocrite; that I talk but do not act! That I preach the Gospel of poverty while I live in luxury, pretending that I have given up everything to my wife!

MARY IVÁNOVNÁ. So you are ashamed of what people say? Really, can't you rise above that?

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. It's not that I am ashamed (though I am ashamed), but that I am spoiling God's work.

MARY IVÁNOVNÁ. You yourself often say that it fulfils itself despite man's opposition; but that's not the point. Tell me, what do you want of me?

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Haven't I told you?

MARY IVÁNOVNÁ. But, Nicholas, you know that that is impossible. Only think, Lyúba is now getting married; Ványa is entering the university; Missy and Kátya are studying. How can I break all that off?

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Then what am I to do?

MARY IVÁNOVNÁ. Do as you say one should do: have patience, love. Is it

too hard for you? Only bear with us and do not take yourself from us!
Come, what is it that torments you?

Enter Ványa running.

VÁNYA. Mamma, they are calling you!

MARY IVÁNOVNA. Tell them I can't come. Go, go!

VÁNYA. Do come! [He runs off].

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. You don't wish to see eye to eye--nor to understand me.

MARY IVÁNOVNA. It is not that I don't wish to, but that I can't.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. No, you don't wish to, and we drift further and further apart. Only enter into my feelings; put yourself for a moment in my place, and you will understand. First, the whole life here is thoroughly depraved. You are vexed with the expression, but I can give no other name to a life built wholly on robbery; for the money you live on is taken from the land you have stolen from the peasants. Moreover, I see that this life is demoralising the children: "Whoso shall cause one of these little ones to stumble," and I see how they are perishing and becoming depraved before my very eyes. I cannot bear it when grown-up men dressed up in swallow-tail coats serve us as if they were slaves.

Every dinner we have is a torture to me.

MARY IVÁNOVNA. But all this was so before. Is it not done by everyone--both here and abroad?

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. But I can't do it. Since I realised that we are all brothers, I cannot see it without suffering.

MARY IVÁNOVNA. That is as you please. One can invent anything.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH [hotly] It's just this want of understanding that is so terrible. Take for instance to-day! I spent this morning at Rzhánov's lodging-house, among the outcasts there; and I saw an infant literally die of hunger; a boy suffering from alcoholism; and a consumptive charwoman rinsing clothes outside in the cold. Then I returned home, and a footman with a white tie opens the door for me. I see my son--a mere lad--ordering that footman to fetch him some water; and I see the army of servants who work for us. Then I go to visit Boris--a man who is sacrificing his life for truth's sake. I see how he, a pure, strong, resolute man, is deliberately being goaded to lunacy and to destruction, that the Government may be rid of him! I know, and they know, that his heart is weak, and so they provoke him, and drag him to a ward for raving lunatics. It is too dreadful, too dreadful. And when I come home, I hear that the one member of our family who understood--not me but the truth--has thrown over both her betrothed to whom she had promised her love, and the truth, and is going to marry a lackey, a

liar ...

MARY IVÁNOVNA. How very Christian!

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Yes, it is wrong of me, and I am to blame, but I only want you to put yourself in my place. I mean to say that she has turned from the truth ...

MARY IVÁNOVNA. You say, "from the truth"; but other people--the majority--say from "an error." You see Vasíly Nikonórovich once thought he was in error, but now has come back to the Church.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. That's impossible ----

MARY IVÁNOVNA. He has written to Lisa! She will show you the letter. That sort of conversion is very unstable. So also in Tónya's case; I won't even speak of that fellow Alexander Petróvich, who simply considers it profitable!

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH [getting angry] Well, no matter. I only ask you to understand me. I still consider that truth is truth! All this hurts me very much. And here at home I see a Christmas-tree, a ball, and hundreds of roubles being spent while men are dying of hunger. I cannot live so. Have pity on me, I am worried to death. Let me go! Good-bye.

MARY IVÁNOVNA. If you go, I will go with you. Or if not with you, I will

throw myself under the train you leave by; and let them all go to perdition--and Missy and Kátya too. Oh my God, my God. What torture! Why? What for? [Weeps].

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH [at the door] Alexander Petróvich, go home! I am not going. [To his wife] Very well, I will stay. [Takes off his overcoat].

MARY IVÁNOVNA [embracing him] We have not much longer to live. Don't let us spoil everything after twenty-eight years of life together. Well, I'll give no more parties; but do not punish me so.

Enter Ványa and Kátya running.

VÁNYA and KATYA. Mamma, be quick--come.

MARY IVÁNOVNA. Coming, coming. So let us forgive one another! [Exit with Kátya and Ványa].

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. A child, a regular child; or a cunning woman? No, a cunning child. Yes, yes. It seems Thou dost not wish me to be Thy servant in this Thy work. Thou wishest me to be humiliated, so that everyone may point his finger at me and say, "He preaches, but he does not perform." Well, let them! Thou knowest best what Thou requirest: submission, humility! Ah, if I could but rise to that height!

Enter Lisa.

LISA. Excuse me. I have brought you a letter from Vasily Nikonórovich. It is addressed to me, but he asks me to tell you.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Can it be really true?

LISA. Yes. Shall I read it?

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Please do.

LISA [reading] "I write to beg you to communicate this to Nicholas Ivánovich. I greatly regret the error which led me openly to stray from the Holy Orthodox Church, to which I rejoice to have now returned. I hope you and Nicholas Ivánovich will follow the same path. Please forgive me!"

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. They have tortured him into this, poor fellow. But still it is terrible.

LISA. I also came to tell you that the Princess is here. She came upstairs to me in a dreadfully excited state and is determined to see you. She has just been to see Borís. I think you had better not see her. What good can it do for her to see you?

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. No. Call her in. Evidently this is fated to be a day of dreadful torture.

LISA. Then I'll go and call her. [Exit].

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH [alone] Yes--could I but remember that life consists only in serving Thee; and that if Thou sendest a trial, it is because Thou holdest me capable of enduring it, and knowest that my strength is equal to it: else it would not be a trial.... Father, help me--help me to do Thy will.

Enter Princess.

PRINCESS. You receive me? You do me that honour? My respects to you. I don't give you my hand, for I hate you and despise you.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. What has happened?

PRINCESS. Just this, that they are moving him to the Disciplinary Battalion; and it is you who are the cause of it.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Princess, if you want anything, tell me what it is; but if you have come here merely to abuse me, you only injure yourself. You cannot offend me, for with my whole heart I sympathise with you and pity you!

PRINCESS. What charity! What exalted Christianity! No, Mr. Sarýntsov, you cannot deceive me! We know you now. You have ruined my son, but you

don't care; and you go giving balls; and your daughter--my son's betrothed--is to be married and make a good match, that you approve of; while you pretend to lead a simple life, and go carpentering. How repulsive you are to me, with your new-fangled Pharisaism.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Don't excite yourself so, Princess. Tell me what you have come for--surely it was not simply to scold me?

PRINCESS. Yes, that too! I must find vent for all this accumulated pain. But what I want is this: He is being removed to the Disciplinary Battalion, and I cannot bear it. It is you who have done it. You! You! You!

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Not I, but God. And God knows how sorry I am for you. Do not resist this will. He wants to test you. Bear the trial meekly.

PRINCESS. I cannot bear it meekly. My whole life was wrapped up in my son; and you have taken him from me and ruined him. I cannot be calm. I have come to you--it is my last attempt to tell you that you have ruined him and that it is for you to save him. Go and prevail on them to set him free. Go and see the Governor-General, the Emperor, or whom you please. It is your duty to do it. If you don't do it, I know what I shall do. You will have to answer to me for it!

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Teach me what to do. I am ready to do anything.

PRINCESS. I again repeat it--you must save him! If you do not--beware!
Good-bye. [Exit].

Nicholas Ivánovich (alone). Lies down on sofa. Silence. The door
opens and the dance music sounds louder. Enter Styópa.

STYÓPA. Papa is not here, come in!

Enter the adults and the children, dancing in couples.

LYÚBA [noticing Nicholas Ivánovich] Ah, you are here. Excuse us.

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH [rising] Never mind. [Exit dancing couples].

NICHOLAS IVÁNOVICH. Vasíly Nikonórovich has recanted. I have ruined
Borís. Lyúba is getting married. Can it be that I have been mistaken?
Mistaken in believing in Thee? No! Father help me!

Curtain.

Tolstoy left the following notes for a fifth act which was never written.