

ACT IV

SCENE 1

A private room in a restaurant. A waiter shows in Fédya and Iván Petróvich Alexándrov.

WAITER. Here, please. No one will disturb you here. I'll bring some paper directly.

IVÁN PETRÓVICH. Protásov, I'll come in too.

FÉDYA [seriously] If you like, but I'm busy and ... All right, come in.

IVÁN PETRÓVICH. You wish to reply to their demands? I'll tell you what to say. I should not do it that way--always speak straight out, and act with decision.

FÉDYA [to waiter] A bottle of champagne!

Exit waiter.

FÉDYA [taking out a revolver and putting it on the table] Wait a bit!

IVÁN PETRÓVICH. What's that? Do you want to shoot yourself? You can if

you like. I understand you! They wish to humiliate you, and you will show them the sort of man you are! You will kill yourself with a revolver, and them with magnanimity. I understand you. I understand everything, because I am a genius.

FÉDYA. Of course--of course. Only ... [Enter waiter with paper and ink].

FÉDYA [covers the revolver with a napkin] Uncork it--let's have a drink.
[They drink. Fédyá writes] Wait a bit!

IVÁN PETRÓVICH. Here's to your ... great journey! You know I'm above all this. I'm not going to restrain you! Life and death are alike to Genius. I die in life, and live in death. You will kill yourself that two people should pity you; and I--I shall kill myself that the whole world may understand what it has lost. I won't hesitate, or think about it! I seize it [snatches revolver]--now! And all is over. But it is too soon yet. [Lays down revolver] Nor shall I write anything; they must understand it themselves.... Oh, you ...

FÉDYA [writing] Wait a bit.

IVÁN PETRÓVICH. Pitiful people! They fuss, they bustle, and don't understand--don't understand anything at all.... I'm not talking to you, I am only expressing my thoughts. And, after all, what does humanity need? Very little--only to value its geniuses. But they always are executed, persecuted, tortured.... No! I'm not going to be your toy! I

will drag you out into the open! No-o-o! Hypocrites!

FÉDYA [having finished writing, drinks and reads over his letter] Go away, please!

IVÁN PETRÓVICH. Go away? Well, good-bye then! I am not going to restrain you. I shall do the same. But not yet. I only want to tell you ...

FÉDYA. All right! You'll tell me afterwards. And now, dear chap, just one thing: give this to the manager [gives him money] and ask if a parcel and a letter have come for me.... Please do!

IVÁN PETRÓVICH. All right--then you'll wait for me? I have still something important to tell you--something that you will not hear in this world nor in the next, at any rate not till I come there.... Am I to let him have all of this?

FÉDYA. As much as is necessary. [Exit Iván Petróvich.]

Fédya sighs with relief; locks the door behind Iván Petróvich; takes up the revolver, cocks it, puts it to his temple; shudders, and carefully lowers it again. Groans.

FÉDYA. No; I can't! I can't! I can't! [Knock at the door] Who's there?

[Másha's voice from outside] It's me!

FÉDYA. Who's "me"? Oh, Másha ... [opens door].

MÁSHA. I've been to your place, to Popóv's, to Afrémov's, and guessed that you must be here. [Sees revolver] That's a nice thing! There's a fool! A regular fool! Is it possible you really meant to?

FÉDYA. No, I couldn't.

MÁSHA. Do I count for nothing at all? You heathen! You had no pity for me? Oh, Theodore Vasílyevich, it's a sin, a sin! In return for my love ...

FÉDYA. I wished to release them. I promised to, and I can't lie.

MÁSHA. And what about me?

FÉDYA. What about you? It would have set you free too. Is it better for you to be tormented by me?

MÁSHA. Seems it's better. I can't live without you.

FÉDYA. What sort of life could you have with me? You'd have cried a bit, and then gone on living your own life.

MÁSHA. I shouldn't have cried at all! Go to the devil, if you don't pity

me! [Cries].

FÉDYA. Másha, dearest! I meant to do it for the best.

MÁSHA. Best for yourself!

FÉDYA [smiles] How's that, when I meant to kill myself?

MÁSHA. Of course, best for yourself! But what is it you want? Tell me.

FÉDYA. What I want? I want a great deal.

MÁSHA. Well, what? What?

FÉDYA. First of all, to keep my promise. That is the first thing, and quite sufficient. To lie, and do all the dirty work necessary to get a divorce ... I can't!

MÁSHA. Granted that it's horrid--I myself ...

FÉDYA. Next, they must really be free--my wife and he. After all, they are good people; and why should they suffer? That's the second thing.

MÁSHA. Well, there isn't much good in her, if she's thrown you over.

FÉDYA. She didn't--I threw her over.

MÁSHA. All right, all right! It's always you. She is an angel! What else!

FÉDYA. This--that you are a good, dear girlie--and that I love you, and if I live I shall ruin you.

MÁSHA. That's not your business. I know quite well what will ruin me.

FÉDYA [sighs] But above all, above all ... What use is my life? Don't I know that I am a lost good-for-nothing? I am a burden to myself and to everybody--as your father said. I'm worthless....

MÁSHA. What rubbish! I shall stick to you. I've stuck to you already, and there's an end of it! As to your leading a bad life, drinking and going on the spree--well, you're a living soul! Give it up, and have done with it!

FÉDYA. That's easily said.

MÁSHA. Well, then, do it.

FÉDYA. Yes, when I look at you I feel as if I could really do anything.

MÁSHA. And so you shall! Yes, you'll do it! [Sees the letter] What's that? You've written to them? What have you written?

FÉDYA. What have I written?... [Takes the letter and is about to tear it up] It's no longer wanted now.

MÁSHA [snatches the letter] You've said you would kill yourself? Yes? You did not mention the revolver--only said that you'd kill yourself?

FÉDYA. Yes, that I should be no more.

MÁSHA. Give it me--give it, give it!... Have you read What to Do?

FÉDYA. I think I have.

MÁSHA. It's a tiresome novel, but there's one very, very good thing in it. That what's his name?--Rakhmánov--goes and pretends he has drowned himself. And you--can you swim?

FÉDYA. No.

MÁSHA. That's all right. Let me have your clothes--everything, and your pocket-book too.

FÉDYA. How can I?

MÁSHA. Wait a bit, wait, wait! Let's go home; then you'll change your clothes.

FÉDYA. But it will be a fraud.

MÁSHA. All right! You go to bathe, your clothes remain on the bank, in the pocket is your pocket-book and this letter.

FÉDYA. Yes, and then?

MÁSHA. And then? Why, then we'll go off together and live gloriously.

Enter Iván Petróvich.

IVÁN PETRÓVICH. There now! And the revolver? I'll take it.

MÁSHA. Take it; take it! We're off.

Curtain.

SCENE 2

The Protásovs' drawing-room.

KARÉNIN. He promised so definitely, that I am sure he will keep his word.

LISA. I am ashamed to say it, but I must confess that what I heard about that gipsy girl makes me feel quite free. Don't think it is jealousy; it isn't, but you know--it sets me free. I hardly know how to tell you....

KARÉNIN. You don't know how to tell me ... Why?

LISA [smiling] Never mind! Only let me explain what I feel. The chief thing that tormented me was, that I felt I loved two men; and that meant that I was an immoral woman.

KARÉNIN. You immoral?

LISA. But since I knew that he had got someone else, and that he therefore did not need me, I felt free, and felt that I might truthfully say that I love you. Now things are clear within me, and only my position torments me. This divorce! It is such torture--and then this waiting!

KARÉNIN. It will soon, very soon, be settled. Besides his promise, I

sent my secretary to him with the petition ready for signature, and told him not to leave till it is signed. If I did not know him so well, I should think he was purposely behaving as he does.

LISA. He? No, it is the result both of his weakness and his honesty. He doesn't want to say what is not true. Only you were wrong to send him money.

KARÉNIN. I had to. The want of it might be the cause of the delay.

LISA. No, there is something bad about money.

KARÉNIN. Well, anyhow, he need not have been so punctilious ...

LISA. How selfish we are becoming!

KARÉNIN. Yes, I confess it. It's your own fault. After all that waiting, that hopelessness, I am now so happy! And happiness makes one selfish. It's your fault!

LISA. Do you think it's you only? I too--I feel full of happiness, bathed in bliss! I have everything--Misha has recovered, your mother likes me, and you--and above all, I, I love!

KARÉNIN. Yes? And no repenting? No turning back?

LISA. Since that day everything has changed in me.

KARÉNIN. And will not change again?

LISA. Never! I only wish you to have done with it all as completely as I have.

Enter nurse, with baby. Lisa takes the baby on her lap.

KARÉNIN. What wretched people we are!

LISA [kissing baby] Why?

KARÉNIN. When you married, and I heard of it on my return from abroad, and was wretched because I felt that I had lost you, it was a relief to me to find that you still remembered me. I was content even with that. Then when our friendship was established and I felt your kindness to me, and even a little gleam of something in our friendship that was more than friendship, I was almost happy. I was only tormented by a fear that I was not being honest towards Fédyà. But no! I was always so firmly conscious that any other relation than one of purest friendship with my friend's wife was impossible--besides which, I knew you--that I was not really troubled about that. Afterwards, when Fédyà began to cause you anxiety, and I felt that I was of some use to you, and that my friendship was beginning to alarm you--I was quite happy, and a sort of vague hope awoke in me. Still later, when he became altogether

impossible and you decided to leave him, and I spoke to you plainly for the first time, and you did not say "No," but went away in tears--then I was perfectly happy; and had I then been asked what more I wanted, I should have answered "Nothing"! But later on, when there came the possibility of uniting our lives: when my mother grew fond of you and the possibility began to be realised; when you told me that you loved and had loved me, and then (as you did just now) that he no longer existed for you and that you love only me--what more, one would think, could I wish for? But no! Now the past torments me! I wish that past had not existed, and that there were nothing to remind me of it.

LISA [reproachfully] Victor!

KARÉNIN. Lisa, forgive me! If I tell you this, it is only because I don't want a single thought of mine about you to be hidden from you. I have purposely told you, to show how bad I am, and how well I know that I must struggle with and conquer myself... And now I've done it! I love him.

LISA. That's as it should be. I did all I could, but it was not I that did what you desired: it happened in my heart, from which everything but you has vanished.

KARÉNIN. Everything?

LISA. Everything, everything--or I would not say so.

Enter footman.

FOOTMAN. Mr. Voznesénsky.

KARÉNIN. He's come with Fédya's answer.

LISA [to Karénin] Ask him in here.

KARÉNIN [rising and going to the door] Well, here is the answer!

LISA [gives baby to nurse; exit nurse] Is it possible, Victor, that everything will now be decided? [Kisses Karénin].

Enter Voznesénsky.

KARÉNIN. Well?

VOZNESEÉNSKY. He has gone.

KARÉNIN. Gone! And without signing the petition?

VOZNESEÉNSKY. The petition is not signed, but a letter was left for you and Elisabeth Andréyevna [Takes letter out of his pocket and gives it to Karénin] I went to his lodgings, and was told he was at the restaurant. I went there, and Mr. Protásov told me to return in an hour and I should

then have his answer. I went back, and then ...

KARÉNIN. Is it possible that this means another delay? More excuses! No, that would be downright wicked. How he has fallen!

LISA. But do read the letter! [Karénin opens letter].

VOZNESÉNSKY. You do not require me any longer?

KARÉNIN. Well, no. Good-bye! Thank you ... [Pauses in astonishment as he reads].

Exit Voznesénsky.

LISA. What--what is it?

KARÉNIN. This is awful!

LISA [takes hold of letter] Read!

KARÉNIN [reads] "Lisa and Victor, I address myself to you both. I won't lie and call you 'dear' or anything else. I cannot master the feeling of bitterness and reproach (I reproach myself, but all the same it is painful) when I think of you and of your love and happiness. I know everything. I know that though I was the husband, I have--by a series of accidents--been in your way. C'est moi qui suis l'intrus.[22] But all

the same, I cannot restrain a feeling of bitterness and coldness towards you. I love you both in theory, especially Lisa, Lisette! But actually I am more than cold towards you. I know I am wrong, but cannot change."

[22] It is I who am the intruder.

LISA. How can he ...

KARÉNIN [continues reading] "But to business! This very feeling of discord within me forces me to fulfil your desire not in the way you wish. Lying, acting so disgusting a comedy, bribing the Consistorium, and all those horrors, are intolerably repulsive to me. Vile as I may be, I am vile in a different way, and cannot take part in those abominations--simply cannot! The solution at which I have arrived is the simplest: to be happy, you must marry. I am in the way; consequently I must destroy myself...."

LISA [seizes Victor's hand] Victor!

KARÉNIN [reads] "... must destroy myself. And I will do it. When you get this letter, I shall be no more.

"P.S. What a pity you sent me money to pay for the divorce proceedings! It is unpleasant, and unlike you! But it can't be helped. I have so often made mistakes, why shouldn't you make one? I return the money. My way of escape is shorter, cheaper, and surer. All I ask is, don't be

angry with me, and think kindly of me. And, one thing more--there is a clockmaker, Evgényev, here. Can't you help him, and set him on his feet? He's a good man, though weak.--Good-bye,

"FÉDYA."

LISA. He has taken his life! Yes ...

KARÉNIN [rings, and runs out to the hall] Call Mr. Voznesénsky back!

LISA. I knew it! I knew it! Fédyá, dear Fédyá!

KARÉNIN. Lisa!

LISA. It's not true, not true that I didn't love him and don't love him!

I love only him! I love him! And I've killed him. Leave me!

Enter Voznesénsky.

KARÉNIN. Where is Mr. Protásov? What did they tell you?

VOZNESÉNSKY. They told me he went out this morning, left this letter, and had not returned.

KARÉNIN. We shall have to find out about it, Lisa. I must leave you.

LISA. Forgive me, but I too can't lie! Go now--go, and find out ...

Curtain.