

where the *four* of us live. He mortgaged it. His wife's taken the money . . . FROM OUR HOUSE—which belongs, not to him alone, but to the *four* of us; and she's taken the money. How . . . how can an honest man . . .

KULYGIN: Shhhh, Masha . . .

MASHA: *What?*

KULYGIN: . . . why . . .

MASHA: Why *what?*

KULYGIN: He's in *debt*. Andriushka's in *debt*. He owes . . .

MASHA: He's in "debt" is he . . .?

KULYGIN: What do you need it for?

MASHA: What do I need it for? *What?*

KULYGIN: The money.

MASHA: It's *mine*. (Pause.) It's mine.

KULYGIN: Are we poor? Eh? I work. I teach. I give *lessons*. We have a good life. An honest life. Your needs . . .

MASHA: I wasn't speaking of our needs.

KULYGIN: What are you speaking of?

MASHA: I'm speaking of injustice. (Pause.) Go, Fyodor.

KULYGIN (kisses her): You're tired.

MASHA: I told you that.

KULYGIN: You rest. Rest a half hour or so. I'll wait for you. I'll wait out there. You rest. Sleep. I am content. I'll wait. (Exiting.) Oh, yes . . .

MASHA: How petty Andrei has become. How small. He is

wrung out by that woman. He was going to be a *professor*. Now he's boasting that he's been accepted as a member of the District Board. A member of the Wondrous Board. Of which board Protopopov is the chairman. And our Andrei's all elated he's a member of the ranks. The whole town's laughing at him. He sees nothing. And *here*: everyone is running to the fire. Where is our Andrei . . .? In his room. Tuning his fiddle. Oh. Oh. I can't bear it any more. No. Please. I can't.

(OLGA enters.)

OLGA: Put me out. Put me out. Put me out of here. I can't bear it.

OLGA: What is it? *Darling*. What is it . . .?

IRINA: Where has it all gone? My *God*, where has it gone? I've lost *everything*. Where has it gone? It's lost in my head. I . . . I keep forgetting . . . I . . . the Italian for "window," for "ceiling" . . . HOW CAN I HAVE LOST IT? And life is passing. Every day. And *everything* we have is going by. And we will never go to Moscow. I see we won't go.

OLGA: . . . my dear . . .

IRINA: Oh! My unhappy life. I can't work anymore. I can't work anymore. I worked at the telegraph. And now I'm in an office. For the town. I hate my useless work. I hate it. I hate it. I'm almost twenty-four. I've been working so long. I've grown old working. I'm so tired. My brain is tired. My memory. I've become thin. And ugly. My mind has grown old. And nothing pleases me. Time passes. I feel myself . . . moving "off" from it. Farther and farther. From a beautiful life. Into some . . . (Pause.)

START
↓

Why am I still alive? Why haven't I ended it? I don't understand, I . . .

OLGA: Shhhh. Darling. Don't cry. Shhhh. You're killing me.

IRINA: I'm not crying. I'm not. Now . . . now . . . No. I'm not crying anymore. I'm done.

OLGA: . . . my darling.

IRINA: . . . I . . .

OLGA: My darling. I tell you. I'm telling you. As a sister—I'm telling you. As your best friend: (*pause*) marry the baron. (*Pause.*) You respect him. You do. You "value" him. And it is *true*: he isn't handsome. But he's good. He's decent. And he's pure . . . as you know. Shhhh. Why . . . yes . . . why do we marry? For "love"? I think not. Finally, no. For *duty*. Yes. I think, in any case, that I would. Without love . . . ? Yes. *Whomever*. If he was decent. If he was *pure* . . . an *old* man, even. Yes. For the *important* thing . . .

IRINA: You know . . . I just keep waiting. I just kept on. Waiting for our move. "In *Moscow*," I thought. "I'd meet my *real* man." My "destined" man. I dreamed of him. I loved him. I waited for him . . . what stupid folly.

OLGA (*embraces her*): I know. I know. I know. My darling. My *dear*. I know. (*Pause.*) I know. When the baron resigned and came to us without his uniform . . .

IRINA: . . . yes.

OLGA: I know . . . he looked so *dowdy* . . .

IRINA: . . . yes.

OLGA: . . . so *dowdy*. I started crying. What could I say to

him? "Why are you crying?" he said. But, but . . . wait a moment. Darling . . . "*But.*" If this good man, if this "decent" man should want to *marry* you, I would be happy. I would be so happy. Because, you see, this is *different* . . . you see . . . because . . .

(NATALYA, *carrying a candle, enters and walks across the stage.*)

MASHA: I think she set the fire.

OLGA: Oh *Masha* . . .

MASHA: . . . Mmm.

OLGA: You're the family clown.

MASHA: Mmm. My sisters? My Clown Soul. My Jolly Soul is heavy, do you want to know? It is. Hear my confession. For I am in torment and my Guilty Knowledge sears my Heart. My sinful Mystery. My secret which screams to be told. I am in love and I love someone. I love a man. You have just seen him. The man that I love. Vershinin.

OLGA: Stop it.

MASHA: I . . .

OLGA: Stop it. I don't want to hear it.

MASHA: What am I to do? You tell me. He was *strange* to me. At first. I *thought* about him. Often. I felt sorry for him. I . . . I "grew to love him." I did. I grew to love him. His *voice* . . . his *ways* . . . his *misfortunes* . . . his two little girls . . .

OLGA: No no *no!* I can't hear. I Cannot Hear What You Are Saying. *NO.* It's *shameful*. It's *foolishness*. I won't hear it.

MASHA: You won't hear it? Olga? You won't hear it? Why? I love him. He loves me. It's my Fate, do you see? This love. It's as simple as that. Yes. Yes, it's frightening. Yes. But it's *mine*. It's what I *am*. Yes. My darling. Yes. It's *life* s'what it is. We *live* it, and look what it does to us. We read a novel, and it's clear. It's so *spelled out*. This *isn't* clear. *Nothing* is clear. And *no* one has a final *true* idea of anything. It's "life." We have to *decide*. Each of us. We. Have. To *DECIDE*: what *is*, what it *means*, what we *want*. My darling sisters. (*Pause.*) That's what the thing is. And now I've confessed. And I'll be silent. (*Pause.*) As the grave. (*Pause.*) Silence.

(*Enter ANDREI, followed by FERAPONT.*)

ANDREI: *What?* I don't understand you. ✓

FERAPONT: Andrei Sergeevich. I have explained it to you. Ten times. I . . .

ANDREI: One moment. *Firstly*: you may call me "Your Honor."

FERAPONT: Andrei Ser . . .

ANDREI: *Not* Andrei Sergeevich . . .

FERAPONT: . . . I . . .

ANDREI: "Your Honor."

FERAPONT: I . . .

ANDREI: "Your Honor." (*Pause.*)

FERAPONT: Your Honor . . . Your Honor. The firemen. Asking permission to get down to the river through the garden. (*Pause.*) They want to cut across the garden, else they'll have to go around—the . . . uh . . . "long way."

ANDREI: Alright. Tell them yes. (*Pause.* FERAPONT *does not leave.*) *Alright!* (*FERAPONT exits.*) *God*, am I sick of the . . . Where's Olga? (*OLGA comes out from behind a screen.*) I need you. Where is your key to the cupboard? That little key . . . ? (*She hands him the key.* IRINA *goes behind the screen.*) *Vast.* *Vast* fire. Overwhelming. Burning down now. Burning itself out. (*Pause.*) Ferapont. Fine, now I've gotten myself, made a fool of myself, n'front of him. "Your Honor." What is it? Olga? What is it? Let's have it out. It's enough, now. All of this, all of this "sulking," any moment . . . What is it? What have I done to you?

VERSHININ (*offstage, singing*): Tra traaa tra traaa . . .

MASHA (*getting up*): Tra traaa tra traaa. Olga: *goodbye.* And God be with you. (*Kisses IRINA, goes behind the screen.*) All Restful Slumbers. Andrei: *Goodbye.* *Goodbye.* Leave us now. Everyone's so tired. You, you "have it out" tomorrow. (*Exits.*)

OLGA: *Andriushka.* Yes. Leave it til tomorrow. (*Goes behind the screen.*) Sleep now. Time to sleep.

ANDREI: No. I'll go. But I'm going to say it first. One moment. Please. Please. *Firstly*: my wife. You . . . please . . . there's something which you bear against her. *Natalya.* *I've* seen it. Since our wedding. *Now: now: now: my wife, Natalya is, in my opinion, a fine human being.* Can I say that plainer? A fine, honest, and straightforward, noble Human Being. I *respect* her, I respect those things in her, and I demand, I *demand* that others do the same. Do you see? She, my wife, is a "good woman," and all of your, your, your "grievances" against her, are, what can I call them? "whims." *Now: suddenly, what? You seem to be "hurt."* You're "grieved" at *my* life. That I have not, that I am not a

"professor," that I do not occupy my life among the "sciences" . . . this angers you. My choices. My . . . as you perceive it, "degradation" in my choice of work. And this reflects upon you. Is that it? That . . . yes. Well, I've said it. But I *do* work. I *do* work. Don't I? I work on the District Council. As a member of the Board. And I am proud of that work, if you want to know. And don't require your . . . "endorsement" of that work to be proud of it. And, as it seems, you must *withhold* that, be it so. *Thirdly*, I have mortgaged the house. And I have done so, yes, without resort to your opinion. In this I am at fault, and I ask your pardon. (Pause.) I was compelled to it. By debt. (Pause.) I . . . uh . . . I . . . a debt, a debt of thirty-five thousand roubles. (Pause.) I no longer play at cards—you may have remarked. That I quit that some time since. (Pause.) If I, and if I may suggest something. To justify myself. Perhaps. That it was in my thoughts, as it is, that you girls, you are the guaranteed recipients of *income*, in the form of your *annuity*. While I, as you know, as you know, have nothing. No . . . "income" . . . no . . .

(entering): Is Masha here? No . . . ? Where is she . . . ? (Exits.)

. . . and Natalya, as I have said, is an excellent being. She has a good soul. She . . . (Pause.) She . . . (Pause.) My darlings. (Pause.) My darling sisters. I thought that we'd be happy. (Pause.) I didn't marry her to be unhappy. I swear to you . . . I thought . . . my darlings . . . I . . . (He weeps. Exits.)

LYGIN (reentering): No? She's not here? Where is she . . . ? Where the devil . . . ? (Exits.)

(The stage is empty. Sound of an alarm. Sound of knocking.)

IRINA (*behind the screen*): Olga . . . What is that?

OLGA: It's Doctor Ivan Romanych.

IRINA: *What?*

OLGA: It's Doctor Ivan Romanych. Knocking on the floor.

IRINA: Why is he doing that?

OLGA: He's drunk.

IRINA: . . . what a night. (Pause.)

OLGA: *What?*

IRINA (*looks out from behind the screen*): Olga . . .

OLGA: *What?*

IRINA: Did you hear?

OLGA: . . . did I . . . ?

IRINA: . . . that the brigade is being transferred.

OLGA: I heard it. Yes. It's only gossip.

IRINA: . . . because we'd be all alone. (Pause.) Olga.

OLGA: Yes.

IRINA: We'd be all alone. (Pause.) Olga.

OLGA: Yes.

IRINA: Olga . . . (Pause.) The baron . . .

OLGA: Yes. The baron?

IRINA: He is a good man?

OLGA: Yes.

IRINA: He's a good man. (Pause.) I can marry him.

STOP