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TO THE STARS*

(A drama in four acts)

BY LEONID ANDREIEFF

Translated from the Russian by Dr. A. Goudiss

CHARACTERS

SERGIUS NIKOLAIEVITCH TERNOVSKY, a Russian scientist living abroad, director of an observatory, renowned, member of many academies and scientific societies. He is a man of about fifty-six years of age, but looks younger, with easy, quiet, and very precise movements. His gesticulations, too, are reserved and correct — nothing superfluous. He is polite and attentive, but with it all he appears cold.

INNA ALEXANDROVNA, his wife, of about the same age.

ANNA, their daughter, a young lady of about twenty-five, handsome and cold; dresses unbecomingly.

PETIA (Peter), their son, a youth aged eighteen, pale, delicate, graceful, with dark, wavy hair, wears a white turned-down collar.

NIKOLAI (Nicholas), their son. A young man, aged twenty-seven.

VERCHOVTZEFF, VALENTINE ALEXEIEVITCH, Anna's husband. A red-haired man of thirty; self-confident, commanding, sarcastic, and at times coarse. A civil engineer.

MARUSIA (Mary), a handsome young lady of twenty, NIKOLAI's bride.

POLLOCK, a tall, bony man, thirty-two years old, with a large, hairless head. Correct; mechanical. Smokes cigars. TERNOVSKY's assistant.

LUNTZ, YOSIPH ABRAMOVITCH, a young man of Jewish extraction, aged twenty-eight. From handling mathematical instruments he has acquired the habit of being precise and reserved in his movements, but when provoked he forgets himself and gesticulates with all the passion of a Southerner-Semite. TERNOVSKY's assistant.

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ZHITOFF, VASSILY VASSILIEVITCH, a large, hairy, awkward (bearlike) gentleman, of an undetermined age. He is constantly sitting. Good looking in a certain sense. TERNOVSKY's assistant.

TREITCH, a workman, aged thirty, dark, slender, and very handsome. Has deeply arched brows; farsighted. Unassuming, serious, and not communicative.

SCHTOLTZ, young, little, with small but regular features; dresses neatly; speaks with a thin voice. Has an insignificant appearance.

MINNA, a maid-servant.

FRANTZ, a male-servant.

An old woman.

ACT I

An observatory in the mountains, night. Two rooms; the first is a kind of dining-room with thick, white walls; the windows, through which something white is seen tossing about in the darkness, have very wide sills; a huge fireplace with burning blocks; the room is furnished in a simple and strict fashion, lacking soft furniture and curtains; a few engravings on the walls, portraits of astronomers, and the Men of the East appearing before Christ, attracted by the star. A staircase leading into TERNOVSKY's library and studio. The next is a large working studio, resembling the front one but without the fireplace. A few tables; photographs of stars and the surface of the moon on the walls; some simple astronomical instruments. In the front room, seated at the table, TERNOVSKY's assistant, POLLOCK, is seen working; PETIA is reading; LUNTZ nervously paces the room; outside the mountain a snowstorm is heard whistling and wailing; the wood is crackling in the fireplace; the German cook is making coffee. The signal bell is ringing rhythmically and monotonously calling lost ones.

Inna Alexandrovna.— Ringing, ringing, but of no use. Four days have passed and not a soul has shown up. You wait and wait and wonder if the people are alive at all.

Petia (raising his head).— But who should come? And who would come up here?

Inna Alexandrovna.— One can't tell; somebody might come up from below.

Petia.— The people are not disposed to climb mountains.

Zhitoff.— Yes, the situation is rather an embarrassing one, no roads, and we are as if in a besieged city,— neither out nor in.

Inna Alexandrovna.— And in a few days we'll have nothing to eat, either.

Zhitoff.— Then we'll do without.

Inna Alexandrovna.— It is all very well for you to talk that way. Vassily Vassilievitch, you can live on your own fat for days, but what is Sergius Nikolaievitch going to do?

Zhitoff.— Well, put some provisions away for him and the rest will have to do without. I say, Luntz, O Luntz, you'd better sit down! (*LUNTZ does not reply, and keeps on pacing.*)

Inna Alexandrovna.— What a country. Just wait a moment. I think some one is knocking. Just a moment! (*Listens.*) No, I was mistaken. What a storm! You seldom see such storms in your region.

Zhitoff.— Yes, we have them in the Stepps.

Inna Alexandrovna.— I don't know. I never lived in the Stepps. How the windows are shaking!

Petia.— You are waiting in vain, mamma, no one will come.

Inna Alexandrovna.— But perhaps? (*A pause.*) Think I'd better read the old papers again. But I've read them a dozen times. Yosiph Abramovitch, you haven't heard anything, have you?

Luntz (stopping).— Where in the world can I get news from? What strange questions you ask. By God, it is unbearable! Just ask yourself, where could I obtain news.

Inna Alexandrovna.— Come, come, Luntz, don't be angry. My heart bleeds when I think of what is going on there. O God!

Zhitoff.— They're fighting.

Inna Alexandrovna.— They're fighting! It is so easy for you to say that, for none of your own are fighting. But I have children there! And one is shut off from the world as though living in the woods,— worse than that, for in the woods one can at least see a bird flying by, or a rabbit jump about, but here —

Luntz (pacing the floor).— Maybe they have already won a complete victory. Perhaps they have already erected a new structure upon the ruins of the old one.

Zhitoff.— I don't think so. At any rate, it didn't look like it some days ago.

Petia.— Why do you doubt it? Haven't you read in the papers of the resignation of the ministry, and don't you know that the city has been barricaded and the people are already in possession of the Town Hall, and in five days a great many more changes may have taken place?

Zhitoff.— Well, it may be, it is hard to tell. Luntz, you'd better sit down. According to my estimation you've made for the last couple of days at least two hundred miles.

Luntz.— Please let me alone! I don't interfere with your affairs, and let me mind my own, also. How rude it is to force oneself into the soul of another. Why don't I say to you 'Wake up, Zhitoff! Don't be sleeping all the time; you've already slept away a lifetime.' I don't say that.

(*PETIA approaches LUNTZ and addresses him in a subdued voice; they walk alongside each other, exchanging words occasionally.*)

Inna Alexandrovna (whispering to Zhitoff).— How touchy he is! Well, Vassily Vassilievitch, why not have a cup of coffee, and drown our sorrow, as the saying is?

Zhitoff.— I'd rather have tea.

Inna Alexandrovna.— Oh, yes! so would I, but where can you get it? I should certainly enjoy a cup of tea myself, especially with raspberry juice,— it's delicious!

Zhitoff.— Oh, sugar would do for me.

Inna Alexandrovna.— Isn't it strange, Vassily Vassilievitch, how I got used to everything here; the mountains, the society of people,— in a word to everything. But there is one thing that I cannot quite forget, and that is the birch grove. As soon as I recall it, and begin to brood over it, I get so nervous that I must cry for a couple of hours. We had in our estate a mansion, built upon a hill and standing in the midst of a birch grove. Oh, what a grove! After the rain it would give off such a delicious fragrance that — that — (*wipes her eyes*).

Zhitoff.— Why shouldn't you take a trip to Russia for a few months?

Inna Alexandrovna.— Oh, how can I leave him alone? He has tried to persuade me to go many a time, but it is impossible. He may be suddenly taken sick; we are youngsters no more, you know.

Zhitoff.— I'll take care of him.

Inna Alexandrovna.— Oh, no! there it is no use talking: I won't go. As for the birch grove, I'll try to get along without it. I merely mentioned it in passing. It is not so bad here, after all. Spring is coming —

Zhitoff.— And if he were sent away to Siberia, would you follow him?

Inna Alexandrovna.— And why not? I suppose there are people in Siberia, too.

Zhitoff.— You are a darling, Inna Alexandrovna.

Inna Alexandrovna (gently).— And you, stupid boy, mustn't talk that way to an old woman. By the way, why don't you get married? You could live with your wife right here with us.

Zhitoff.— Oh, no, how can I? You know I am a nomadic animal. Can hardly remain in one place.

Inna Alexandrovna (smiling).— Oh, yes! you look it!

Zhitoff.— I am here to-day — may be somewhere else to-morrow. I shall soon give up astronomy, too. I must see Australia yet!

Inna Alexandrovna.— What for?

Zhitoff.— Well, just to see how some people live in this world of ours.

Inna Alexandrovna.— But, Vassily Vassilievitch, you have no money. Only those can afford to travel who have plenty of coin.

Zhitoff.— I am not going to travel. I shall try to get some employment on the railroad or in a factory.

Inna Alexandrovna.— What, an astronomer?

Zhitoff.— Oh, it is not so difficult to accomplish. I am familiar with mechanics and not being spoiled, — I need but very little.

(A pause. The storm is raging harder.)

Petia.— Mamma, where is papa? Is he working?

Inna Alexandrovna.— Yes; he asked not to be disturbed.

Petia (shrugging his shoulders).— I can't understand how he can work in such a time.

Inna Alexandrovna.— Well, you see he can. You think it would be better for him to sit around idle? Here is Pollock working, too!

Petia.— Oh, well, Pollock! Who says anything about him — Pollock!
(PETIA whispering to LUNTZ.)

Zhitoff.— Pollock is a man with talent. I predict he'll become famous in about five years from now. An energetic fellow! *(INNA ALEXANDROVNA is smiling.)*

What are you laughing about? Don't you think I am right?

Inna Alexandrovna.— I am not laughing at your words. But I must say Pollock is very odd looking. I know it is not right to laugh, but one can't control oneself at times. He reminds me of some instrument,— by the way, what instrument do we have that looks like him?

Zhitoff.— I don't know.

Inna Alexandrovna.— An astrolabe, I think.

Zhitoff.— I don't know. I must say it is certainly a mystery to me how you allow yourself to laugh.

Inna Alexandrovna (sighing).— Let me tell you one can't do without laughing at times. A good hearty laugh is very beneficial under certain circumstances. Let me relate to you a very amusing incident of mine. It happened during our journey from Russia. Times were very bad with us. Besides our traveling expenses we had but very little money to spare. And what do you think I did? Lost our tickets. And how it ever happened — I am puzzled to this very day. I had never lost a pin in my life before and now —

Zhitoff.— Where did it happen — in Russia ?

Inna Alexandrovna.— If it only had been in Russia. No, we were already abroad. Here we were, the whole bunch of us, surrounded by all kinds of bundles, waiting in some Austrian station,— and as I was thus sitting brooding over our condition — I accidentally cast my eyes upon one of our bundles — a pillow, I think it was,— and was seized with such a fit of laughter that upon my word I am ashamed of it yet!

Zhitoff.— Tell me, Inna Alexandrovna, I have never been able to find out, why has Sergius Nikolaievitch been banished from Russia ?

Inna Alexandrovna.— No, he wasn't; he left the country of his own accord. He had a misunderstanding with some of the authorities; they wanted him to sign some kind of a disagreeable paper, which, of course, he flatly refused to do. Then he had a few sharp words with the minister himself, telling him what he thought of him. So we left the country. Meanwhile he had been offered this observatory; and here we are, sir, living upon these rocks some twelve years already.

Zhitoff.— Then he can go back, if he wants to ?

Inna Alexandrovna.— But what for ? You know you can't find such an observatory in Russia.

Zhitoff.— But the birch grove ?

Inna Alexandrovna.— Oh, don't talk nonsense. Wait, some one is knocking (*wailing of the storm*).

Zhitoff.— No, no; you are only imagining.

Inna Alexandrovna.— But perhaps — Minna dear, suppose you go down and find out if anybody has arrived. Oh, that infernal bell will drive me crazy, I always imagine that some one is coming or going. Hark! (*The bell is heard ringing, the storm raging.*)

Zhitoff.— Yes, these March storms are very violent, as a rule. Down below the people are enjoying spring, and we are in the midst of winter up here. I reckon the almonds are through blossoming already.

Minna.— No one has come, madame!

Inna Alexandrovna.— Oh, what is happening there ? What is going on there ? I am so anxious for my Kolenka [Nicholas]. I know him so well; he wouldn't stop for anything — a gun, a cannon — he doesn't care. O God! I can hardly think of it! If I could only get a word from him. Four anxious days passed — just like being in a grave.

Zhitoff.— Please stop worrying. You'll soon be able to find out everything. The barometer is rising.

Inna Alexandrovna.— If he were only fighting for his own country's cause. But to fight in a foreign land and for a strange people — what business has he to do it ?

Petia (passionately).— Nicholas is a hero! He is for all the oppressed and the downtrodden, whosoever they may be. All men are equal and it matters not what country they belong to.

Luntz.— Strangers! Country, government — I cannot comprehend. What do you mean by strangers, government? It is these divisions and separations that create so many slaves, for when one house is being pillaged and robbed, the people of the next one look on quietly; and while people of one house are being murdered the people of the next one say, 'That does not concern us.' Our own. Strangers! Here I am — a Jew; have no country of my own — therefore I must be a stranger to all? No, not at all. I am a brother to all! Yes! (*pacing*) yes!

Petia.— Indeed it is absurd to divide this earth of ours into districts.

Luntz (pacing nervously).— Yes, all you hear is our own. Strangers! Niggers! Jews!

Inna Alexandrovna.— Again! again you are singing the same old song! You ought to be ashamed of yourselves! Did I say anything? Do I say that Kolenka is not doing the right thing? Haven't I urged him myself, saying: 'Go, Kolenka dear, make haste, for you'll only torture yourself here.' O God! I blaming my Kolenka, I merely say that I am sick at heart. Don't forget what a miserable and weary week I've passed. You are all resting peacefully, but I am passing sleepless nights, always watching, always listening — but always to the same thing: to the storm and the bell, the bell and the storm — wailing as though burying somebody. No, I fear I shall never behold dear Kolenka! (*The storm and the bell.*)

Petia (tenderly).— Don't worry, mamma dear, please don't! Everything will turn out all right. He is not alone there; and what makes you think that something will necessarily happen to him? Be calm, please.

Zhitoff.— Besides, Marusia and Anna with her husband are there also. They'll take care of him. Then you know how he is beloved by every one, and like a general he is surrounded by a staff that will protect him all right.

Inna Alexandrovna.— I know it, I know it, but I can't help it! But pray, don't bring in Marusia as an example. Anna is prudent, but Marusia — she'll run to the front ahead of others! I know her.

Petia.— What would you want her to do? You surely don't expect Marusia to hide herself?

Inna Alexandrovna.— Again! Go ahead and fight as long as you please, I don't object to it. Only don't try to comfort me as though I were a child. I know what I know — I am no baby. Some years ago I had a fight with wolves myself. There you have it!

Zhitoff.— What, you fighting wolves? I didn't expect you to be such a heroine! How did you come to do it? Tell us.

Inna Alexandrovna.— Oh, nonsense. I was returning home one winter night on horseback, when suddenly I was attacked by a bunch of them. I frightened them off with my gun.

Zhitoff.— What, you can shoot, too?

Inna Alexandrovna.— Vassily Vassilievitch, one living a life like ours must learn everything. I have accompanied Sergius Nikolaievitch on an expedition to Turkestan and rode fifteen hundred miles on horseback, manlike fashion. But that isn't all. I have had some other adventures: Was once drowning, twice burning. . . . Let me tell you, however, Vassily Vassilievitch, there is nothing more terrible in this world than a sick child. Once during an expedition, Kolushka (Nicholas) was taken sick with a sore throat. We thought at first it was diphtheria. You can imagine our anxiety. Without a physician, without medicine, the nearest village being some fifty miles off. I ran out from the tent and threw myself on the ground with such force that it is even awful to think of it now. I had already lost two children, you know, one at the age of seven, Serge was his name; the other when quite a baby.

Anuto [Anna], too, once nearly died; but why recall those days? Hard is the lot of a mother, Vassily Vassilievitch! Thank God for having given me at least good children.

Zhitoff.— Yes, your Nicholas is a wonderful young man!

Inna Alexandrovna.— Nicholas, oh, yes! I have seen a good many people in my life, but have never met such a noble soul. I said a while ago he had no business to fight for other people's cause — one can see at once that I am selfish; but Kolenka, if he saw a lion destroying an anthill — I assure you he would rush at him with bare arms. That's his nature. Oh, what is happening there? What is going on there?

Zhitoff.— If I could only give up the idea of going to Australia.

Pollock (entering).— Perhaps you will have a cup of black coffee, esteemed Inna Alexandrovna.

Inna Alexandrovna.— Why certainly, certainly! Minna! (*appearing*).

Zhitoff.— Well, how are things, colleague?

Pollock.— Quite well. What are you doing? Idle as ever?

Zhitoff.— Look at the weather; how can one work. Besides, the events ———

Pollock.— You'd better say Russian indolence.

Zhitoff.— It might be indolence. Who can tell?

Pollock.— It isn't right, dear comrade. Luntz, have you finished Sergius Nikolaievitch's mathematical tables yet?

Luntz (sharply).— No!

Pollock.— Too bad!

Luntz.— Bad or good — that does not concern you. You are only an assistant like myself and have no right to reprimand me. Yes!

Pollock (turning aside and shrugging his shoulders).— Order the coffee to be brought into my room, will you, Zhitoff?

Zhitoff.— All right. What is Sergius Nikolaievitch working on now?

Pollock.— Oh, he has lots of work on hand. I am a hard worker myself, but I certainly admire his tenacity and power of intellect. He has a wonderful brain, Zhitoff! It seems to be able to withstand the hardest kind of friction, just like some of our instruments. He works with the regularity of a clock, too. I am certain one couldn't find one single error in all his calculations, embracing some thirty years' labor.

Luntz (listening).— He is not only a worker, he is a genius.

Pollock.— Quite true. His figures and calculations are living and marching like soldiers.

Luntz.— With you everything is brought down to a discipline. I can't understand your codet — poesy —

Pollock.— Without discipline — there is no victory, my dear Luntz.

Zhitoff.— True!

Luntz.— I can appreciate Sergius Nikolaievitch much better than you can. I am sure he sees infinity as plain as we see our walls, yes!

Pollock.— I have no objection to that. By the way, is the revolution ended? Have you any information?

Zhitoff.— How can you get any information? Don't you hear what is going on outside?

Pollock.— I never thought of the weather.

Petia.— According to the latest reports —

Pollock.— Never mind the latest reports, you just tell me when it will all end; I don't care to go into details.

Inna Alexandrovna (entering).— No, no one has arrived. I wanted to convince myself. — A regular desert.

Pollock.— You'll be so kind, dear Inna Alexandrovna, as to send the coffee into my room.

Inna Alexandrovna.— Very well, very well. Go on with your work. Work at present is simply a blessing. (*Exit Pollock.*)

Petia.— But I think there are moments in our life when one has to sacrifice his work, it being dishonorable to work —

Inna Alexandrovna.— Petia, Petia!

Petia.— I can stand it no longer! Why don't you let me go there? I shall go insane here — in this hole!

Inna Alexandrovna.— But, Petia dear, you are too young. You are barely eighteen years old.

Petia.— Nikolai had already been in prison at the age of nineteen.

Inna Alexandrovna.— And what good do you see in that ?

Petia.— He worked!

Inna Alexandrovna.— Oh, mercy; well, speak to your father about it; if he consents — very well.

Petia.— He told me to go.

Zhitoff.— Well, why didn't you ?

Petia.— Oh, I don't know, can't do it. There is such a great struggle going on there, but I — I can't do it! (*Exit.*)

Luntz.— Petia is getting nervous again. You ought to take good care of him. (*Follows PETIA.*)

Inna Alexandrovna.— But what can I do with him? Oh, merciful Father!

Zhitoff.— Nonsense, it will blow over.

Inna Alexandrovna. He is so delicate, so frail, just like a girl. How can he go? He has so much changed lately! And here is this Luntz, instead of calming him down, he —

Zhitoff.— Oh, well, Luntz,—he himself looks as if he were going to have a fit of hysterics some of these days.

Inna Alexandrovna.— I see it myself. Thank the Lord that you are at least calm and peaceful,—otherwise there would be but one place for me; rest in the grave.

Zhitoff.— Oh, I am always calm, was probably born that way. Would gladly enjoy an occasional 'nervous spell,' but it won't work.

Inna Alexandrovna.— An excellent temperament.

Zhitoff.— Oh, I don't know, rather a convenient one. What a pity we didn't get the papers. I enjoy reading about the excitement of other people.

Inna Alexandrovna.— Did you know that Luntz lost his parents some four years ago while he was away abroad studying? They were killed during a Jewish massacre.

Zhitoff.— Yes, I have heard.

Inna Alexandrovna.— He never talks about it himself. He can't bear it. What an unfortunate young man; it breaks my heart whenever I look at him. Knocking again?

Zhitoff.— No.

Inna Alexandrovna.— Some three years ago, on just a day like this, a peddler 'dropped in'; he was almost frozen to death, but he soon revived and at once commenced doing business.

Zhitoff.— I may go out peddling myself to Australia.

Inna Alexandrovna.— But how can you? You don't understand the English language.

Zhitoff.— I understand a little,— picked it up in California.

Inna Alexandrovna.— Well, I think I'll read the papers again. Can't think of anything else to do at present, anyhow. You ought to read some, too, Vassily Vassilievitch.

Zhitoff.— I don't feel like it. I'd rather sit at the fireplace.

(INNA ALEXANDROVNA puts on her glasses and looks over the papers. ZHITOFF moves to the fireplace. POLLOCK is seen working. The storm is heard raging, the bell ringing.)

Inna Alexandrovna.— I wonder what my Sergius Nikolaievitch is doing? I haven't seen him for a couple of days already. He eats and drinks in his studio. Doesn't want to see anybody.

Zhitoff.— Y-yes! (*A pause.*)

Inna Alexandrovna (*reading*).— What dreadful things! What is a machine-gun, Vassily Vassilievitch?

Zhitoff.— It is a kind of quick-firing gun (*a pause; MINNA is seen carrying coffee to POLLOCK*).

Inna Alexandrovna.— I should like to use that peculiar machine myself.

Zhitoff.— Y-yes. It is a dangerous article (*a pause*).

Inna Alexandrovna.— How it is storming! It is impossible to read. Oh, don't go to Australia, Vassily Vassilievitch; I shall certainly miss you very much. You won't go, will you?

Zhitoff.— Impossible. I am of a restless nature. I would like to trot all over the globe and see what the earth is made of. From Australia I may go to India. I should like to see some tigers in a wild state.

Inna Alexandrovna.— What do you want tigers for?

Zhitoff.— I don't know myself. I, Inna Alexandrovna, like to see and examine things. There was a small hill in the village where I was born; I used to mount that hill when I was a little boy and sit there for hours watching things. I even took up astronomy with the intention of seeing and looking at things. I don't care much for calculations; it really makes no difference whether it be twenty millions or thirty. I don't like to talk much, either.

Inna Alexandrovna.— All right. I won't bother you. Keep on looking.

(*A pause. The storm and the bell.*)

Zhitoff (*not turning*).— Are you going to Canada with Sergius Nikolaievitch to see the eclipse?

Inna Alexandrovna.— Oh, to Canada! Why certainly! How can he go without me?

Zhitoff.— You will have a hard journey. It is rather far off.

Inna Alexandrovna.— Nonsense. If things should only turn out here satisfactorily. O God! It is awful to think of it. (*Silence. The storm. The bell.*)

Inna Alexandrovna.— Vassily Vassilievitch!

Zhitoff.— Ma'ame.

Inna Alexandrovna.— Did you hear?

Zhitoff.— No!

Inna Alexandrovna.— I must have been mistaken again (*a pause*). Vassily Vassilievitch, don't you hear?

Zhitoff.— What?

Inna Alexandrovna.— A shot, I think.

Zhitoff.— Who is going to fire guns here? It is simply an hallucination.

Inna Alexandrovna.— But I heard it so distinctly. (*A pause. A distant shot is heard.*)

Zhitoff.— Oh, oh! shooting, indeed!

Inna Alexandrovna (running and shouting).— Minna, Minna! Frantz. (*ZHITOFF rises slowly; PETIA and LUNTZ hurriedly pass through the room. Another shot not far off.*)

Petia.— Well, what is it?

Luntz.— Don't know. Come!

(*ZHITOFF stands at the window listening. POLLOCK turns around his head, looks into the vacant room and resumes his work again. Slamming of the door and barking of dogs are heard.*)

Inna Alexandrovna (entering).— I sent out the men with Vulcan [a dog]; somebody must have been lost.

Zhitoff.— Yes, but the bell?

Inna Alexandrovna.— The wind blows in our direction. You heard how distinct the gunshots were.

Pollock.— May I be of any service to you? Not yet. Let us prepare something hot anyhow. (*Slamming of the door. A murmuring is heard. Accompanied by all, enter, wrapped up and covered with snow, ANNA and TREITCH carrying VERCHOVTZEFF.*)

Inna Alexandrovna (on the threshold).— What is it, Anna?

Anna (taking off her shawl).— Mamma, hurry up, please; get ready something hot. We are nearly dead. I am afraid Valentine is frostbitten. Quick. (*Falls on the chair fainting.*)

Inna Alexandrovna (hurrying towards VERCHOVTZEFF).— Valentine, what's the matter?

Verchovtzeff (*weakly*).— Don't — worry, mother; it's a trifle — my feet —

Inna Alexandrovna.— Who is this gentleman ?

Treitch.— A friend.

Inna Alexandrovna (*looking around terrorstricken*).— Where is Kolia [Nicholas] ? (*A pause*. *PETIA with tears in his eyes throws himself on INNA ALEXANDROVNA.*)

Petia.— Mamma, dearest mamma! Don't be frightened. Nothing has happened, nothing!

Inna Alexandrovna (*pushing him off gently; rather calmed*).— But where is he ?

Anna (*having recovered and now busying herself with her wounded husband*).— O mamma, there is nothing serious. He is in prison.

Luntz.— What does it mean ? Wait, just wait! I can't understand it; it means then ?

Inna Alexandrovna.— In prison! In what prison ?

Anna.— My God! Can't you understand ? We have escaped and that's all! We have come here for shelter.

Pollock.— Is the revolution ended ?

Luntz.— I can't understand it. Is it possible ?

Treitch.— Yes, we are defeated (*a pause*).

Anna.— Mamma, why don't you see to it that we get something stimulating. Have you any hot water, brandy ? Have you some wadding in the house ?

Inna Alexandrovna.— You shall have everything in a moment. (*Calling.*) Minna! (*The latter appearing.*) In prison!

Zhitoff.— Why don't you let Sergius Nikolaievitch know ?

Inna Alexandrovna.— I shall send for him in a minute.

Pollock.— Pray tell us how it all happened — Mr. — Mr. —

Treitch.— Treitch is my name.

Verchovtzeff (*feebly*).— If it hadn't been for Treitch I should have perished. Anna, don't be so busy. I am feeling excellent.

Anna.— I fail to understand how we ever reached the place. It was something awful! We have been struggling in the mountains ever since eight o'clock in the morning; the whole day. We had a miraculous escape on the frontier.

Luntz.— I can't believe —

Petia.— Valentine, what is the matter with you ? Have you any pain ?

Verchovtzeff.— My feet are 'peeled off' a little — with a piece of shell — also my head — Nonsense!

Luntz.— Have they been using shells on you ?

Verchovtzeff.— The bourgeois — defended themselves — pretty fair.

Anna.— Valentine, you mustn't talk! Oh, what a horrible, what a ghastly sight it was. Shells were bursting all around, killing and wounding thousands of people. I saw myself heaps of dead at the town hall.

Inna Alexandrovna (approaching).— What about Nicholas ? Tell me where he is ?

Anna.— Actually speaking, no one knows where he is.

Inna Alexandrovna.— What ? didn't you say —

Petia.— And Marusia is absent too! You are concealing something from us. And didn't you say, Luntz ?

Luntz.— Petia, Petia! But I did not think — I can't believe it —

Anna.— But there is no necessity to conceal things.

Treitch.— Calm yourself, Madame Ternovsky. I am sure Nikolai is alive.

Anna.— Treitch will tell us all about it. He fought with Nicholas side by side.

Treitch.— He was wounded at the last moment, when the barricade was almost in the hands of the soldiers. He stood alongside of me and I saw him fall.

Inna Alexandrovna.— My God! Dangerously wounded ? Perhaps he was killed. Oh, speak!

Treitch.— I don't think he was wounded dangerously.

Frantz.— The professor told me to tell you that he'll be here directly.

Anna.— Of course, what's the use of hurrying!

Inna Alexandrovna.— Please go on.

Treitch.— He was wounded in the back, either with a bullet or a piece of shell. At first he was conscious, but soon fainted away. I picked him up and carried him to a little street, but here I encountered a detachment of dragoons; seeing that my resistance would be useless, and that it would only expose Nikolai to their bullets, I left them the body and went back to ours. He is probably now in prison.

Inna Alexandrovna (crying).— Kolushka, Kolushka! and here we didn't know anything about it. Oh, my heart was telling me all the time — you don't think he is dangerously wounded ? Tell me, do you ?

Treitch.— I don't think so.

Petia.— How about Marusia ? You don't mention her at all. Is she killed ?

Anna.— Oh, no! Valentine, do you want some water with brandy ?

Treitch.— We saw her many times. She remained there in order to find out comrade Nikolai's whereabouts.

Inna Alexandrovna.— Oh, Marusia dear, you are a darling, upon my word. That's the way to do, that's the way to act. Just think of it. That's a girl for you! Treitch, don't you want a little brandy? Why, you look like a ghost. Take some, my dear, I would fain kiss you, but I know you folk don't like these sentimentalities.

Treitch.— I should consider it a great honor (*kissing each other*). You.

Inna Alexandrovna.— O Marusia, Marusia! And that one, too — Minna! (*Exit.*)

Luntz (almost crazed).— Then all was in vain?

Pollock.— It looks that way.

Luntz.— In vain then all the blood shed, all the thousands of useless sacrifices, the glorious and matchless struggle, the — the — oh, curse! why didn't I lay down my head together with my fallen brothers?

Verchovtzeff.— Why, you — expect the — bourgeois — to give up at once — his hold upon the earth? The bourgeois -- is not so foolish — you'll have a chance yet to die.

Treitch.— The struggle isn't over yet.

Pollock.— Are you a workman, Mr. Treitch?

Treitch.— Yes, sir. By the way, I haven't informed Madame Ternovsky, not wishing to worry her, that Nikolai might be shot to death.

Petia.— Shot to death!

Treitch.— Already on my way here a rumor reached my ears that they are executing all the prisoners without even a trial. They don't even spare the wounded.

Petia (shudders and covers his face with his hands).— What a horrible thing.

Luntz.— Beasts! They are ever thirsty for human blood. They have their belly full now.

Verchovtzeff.— Yes — they never were — vegetarians, you know.

Luntz.— How can you jest?

Anna.— You mustn't talk, Valia [*Valentine*].

Verchovtzeff.— It is these skinned feet — of mine — that make me — so merry. I'll shut up now, Anna, I am tired. I am very — anxious to see — the face of the — star-gazer.

Treitch.— Hush! (*INNA ALEXANDROVNA enters*). They are quarreling and we, of course, cannot dictate terms to them.

Zhitoff.— Here is Sergius Nikolaievitch. (*SERGIUS NIKOLAIEVITCH appears at the top of the staircase and speaks while descending.*)

Sergius.— What is the matter? Where is Nicholas?

Inna Alexandrovna.— Don't be alarmed, papa; he is in prison, wounded.

Sergius (stopping for a moment).— Do they kill each other yet? Do they still have prisons?

Verchovtzeff (maliciously).— He fell -- down -- from heaven!

ACT II

A spring morning in the mountains; the sky is fair and clear; the sun is shining brightly. In the center — a courtyard with paved walks. The yard is uneven and slanting, fenced off in the back by a low stone wall with a gate in it.

A range of mountains is seen at a distance, but not higher than the one upon which is situated the observatory. To the right, a corner of the observatory structure, tapering off into a high tower. To the left, a corner of the house with a stone porch.

A total absence of vegetation. From the time of the first act three weeks have elapsed. VERCHOVTZEFF is sitting in a rolling-chair; ANNA is wheeling him to and fro. ZHITOFF is sitting near the wall, warming himself in the sun. All are dressed in springlike fashion, save ZHITOFF, who has a coat on.

Zhitoff (sitting).— Let me wheel him a little, Anna Sergeievna.

Anna.— No, keep still. I don't like to bother anybody. Are you comfortable, Valia?

Verchovtzeff.— Yes, but what is the use of 'turning about' like rats in a trap? Place me alongside of Zhitoff: I also want to derive some benefit from the sun. That's right; thank you!

Anna.— Why are you not working, Zhitoff?

Zhitoff.— It is the fault of the weather; as soon as spring comes I can't remain in the house to save my soul. I warm myself and warm myself and —

Verchovtzeff.— Aren't you a Turk, Zhitoff?

Zhitoff.— No, sir.

Verchovtzeff.— But it would certainly become you to sit thus and meditate — as they do in Turkey.

Zhitoff.— No, I am no Turk.

Verchovtzeff.— I understand you; it is so nice to sit in the sun. What a pity Nicholas can't have that pleasure. Oh, I know that Sternburg prison; it is never visited by a ray of sunlight, nor can one see the sky. I have spent in that prison but one month, but when I came out I looked like a wet sponge from the dampness. Horrible!

Anna.— I am glad that he is at least alive. I thought surely he had been shot to death.

Verchovtzeff.— Just take your time; they are not through with him yet. Let's wake Marusia, I am anxious to find out what has taken place there.

Zhitoff.— She arrived very late last night.

Verchovtzeff.— I heard her. She woke up the whole house with her singing. I was wondering who could have sung in that mausoleum. I thought it was Pollock, having discovered a new star.

Zhitoff.— Her singing must be taken as a good sign.

Anna.— I can't understand how any one can allow himself to sing when others are asleep.

Inna Alexandrovna (appearing on the veranda).— Hasn't Luntz come back yet?

Anna.— No.

Inna Alexandrovna.— But, heavens! what can that mean? Sergius Nikolaievitch needs him. What shall I say to him? Scattered like sheep,— only one, Pollock, is working. Marusia dear was singing last night. When I heard her — my breath almost failed me. Well, I think —

Verchovtzeff.— Suppose you wake her up, mother.

Inna Alexandrovna.— Oh, no. Not for anything! Let her sleep all day.

Verchovtzeff.— Well, wake up Scholtz, then.

Inna Alexandrovna.— I am not going to disturb him, either. The man is tired, has brought us such good news, and it would be a sin on my part to bother him. You'd better send me in Luntz as soon as he shows up (*starts to go, then stops at the door*). How are you, Vassily Vassilievitch? Warming yourself in the sun? I filled the box this morning with fresh earth and planted some radishes. Let them grow,— perhaps somebody will enjoy them. (*Exit.*)

Verchovtzeff.— What an energetic old woman. She even thinks of radishes (*a pause*).

Anna.— Are you thinking of anything when you sit and look that way?

Zhitoff.— No. What is the use of thinking? I just look and that's all.

Verchovtzeff.— You are not telling the truth, how can one help thinking? If you are not thinking — then you must be recollecting something.

Zhitoff.— I have no recollections whatsoever. Oh, yes, I once had a nice time in New York. I was stopping in a hotel in one of the liveliest streets. I even had a balcony.

Verchovtzeff.— Well, what of it?

Zhitoff.— Well, I say I had a nice time; I was sitting on the balcony, watching the people: how they walk, how they ride. And the elevated railroad! In a word, very interesting.

Anna.— Have the Americans a high degree of culture ?

Zhitoff.— I don't mean that. It is simply very interesting (*a pause*).
Indeed, where is Luntz ?

Anna.— He went into the mountains with Treitch last night.

Verchovtzeff.— For investigations.

Zhitoff.— What investigations ?

Verchovtzeff.— Treitch is always investigating something. He has probably already explored your temple of Uranus and found it to be a first-class armory. Now he is investigating the mountains; he is probably looking for a place to establish a firearm works.

Anna.— Treitch is a dreamer.

Verchovtzeff.— Well, not altogether. His dreams have a kind of strangeness about them, but with all their apparent absurdity they somehow become realized. At any rate, he is an interesting fellow. Talks little, but is a most excellent propagandist. He can inflame the moon herself — to use an astronomical expression. Where did Nicholas get him from ?

Petia (entering).— Good morning.

Verchovtzeff.— Why are you so gloomy, young rooster ?

Petia.— Don't know.

Anna.— Are you aware that Nicholas is in prison ?

Petia.— Yes, mamma told me.

Anna.— I can't understand why you are so sour. One would suppose that you are full of vinegar. I hate to look at you.

Petia.— You needn't to.

Zhitoff.— Petia, come, let's go to Australia.

Petia.— What for ?

Anna.— You are asking questions just like a child. 'What for ? What for ?' He was invited yesterday into the mountains, but the first question he asked was 'What for ?' Well, what are you eating for ?

Petia.— I don't know. Let me alone, Anna !

Verchovtzeff.— I can't say that you are very polite, my friend. (*Pointing to LUNTZ and TREITCH, who appear covered with dust.*) Ah, there they are. Luntz, the star-gazer, is looking for you. Look out, you'll get it !

Luntz.— Oh, to the — with him. Pardon me, Anna Sergevna.

Anna.— Never mind. I am not a very exemplary daughter, and am willing to share your wishes.

Petia.— How vulgar.

Verchovtzeff.— Well, Treitch, have you had a nice walk ? Have you found anything ?

Treitch.— A very nice place, indeed.

Anna.— And do you know that Marusia arrived last night ?

Treitch (excitedly).— You don't say so. How is Nicholas, how is he ?

Verchovtzeff.— Oh, he is shot, he is hanged; he's been tortured to death.

Anna.— Oh, don't mind him; he is alive, he is living (*near the window* MARUSIA is heard singing and playing).

' In prison dark behind iron bars there sits a young eagle born free.'

Treitch.— He is in prison ? Saved ?

Marusia.— ' My comrade is sad, he is waving his wings, his bloody food near the window he picks.'

Verchovtzeff.— ' He is picking and stopping and through the window he looks, as though trying my thought to catch; with his voice and his looks he urges me on, as though wanting to say — let us fly away, away!'

Marusia (appearing — passionately).— ' Free birds are we! and the time has come, comrade, to fly far away beyond the clouds where the mountain peers white; away where we can behold the blue sea, away, where, alone, the wind and I rejoice together.'

Treitch.— Marusia!

Anna.— What an out of place concert!

Inna Alexandrovna (following MARUSIA, wiping her eyes).— You dear eaglets of mine!

Verchovtzeff.— You, mother, are pronouncing these words just in the same manner as you would ' You dear chicks of mine.'

Inna Alexandrovna.— Yes, chicks, if you please; especially you who have been plucked as though ready for the soup.

Marusia.— Anna, how do you do? (*To TREITCH.*) A kiss for you.

Treitch (rapidly covering his eyes with his hand and immediately removing it.)— I am the happiest mortal.

Marusia.— Kisses to all, to all — and you, too, invalid!

Verchovtzeff.— Have you seen him ?

Marusia.— Let us fly away!

Luntz.— That's not right. We are all anxious to know —

Marusia.— Yes, I have seen him and all. This gentleman here is Mr. Schtoltz; allow me to introduce him to you. He is a wonderful man. At present he is employed in some bank, but in time he'll be of great service to the revolution. He looks very much like a spy and has therefore rendered me great service. Come, Schtoltz, make a bow to them.

Schtoltz.— It gives me great pleasure. Good morning.


Marusia.— Petia, dear boy, why are you so sad ?

Verchovtzeff.— This, Marusia, speaking modestly, is very mean of you.

Marusia.— Come, come, cripple, don't get excited. How can one get angry to-day? Well, he is in the Sternburg prison.

All.— We know, we know!

Marusia.— Further, they are going to shoot him.

 *Inna Alexandrovna.*— God! Whom, Kolia [Nicholas]?

Marusia.— Don't worry, mamma dear. It will never come to that. I am the Countess Morritz, don't you know, of 'awfully' high birth? My patrimonial estates, of course, being there (*raising and waving her hand in the air*). And they are very malicious, but awfully stupid.

Verchovtzeff.— Yes, so they are.

Marusia.— The most difficult thing was to find out his whereabouts. They hide the names of the prisoners so that they may have an opportunity to dispose of them quietly without a trial. But here Schtoltz gave me a hand. Schtoltz, bow to them.

(*Enter SERGIUS NIKOLAIEVITCH. He has an old overcoat on with a small fur cap; all meet him cordially but coldly.*)

Inna Alexandrovna.— Papa, listen to what Marusia is telling us; they were going to shoot him.

Marusia.— No, it is too long a story to tell. In a word: I have threatened, I have pleaded, pointed out to them European public opinion; also his father's importance in the scientific world — and at last the execution has been postponed. I was in prison, too.

Verchovtzeff.— Well, how is he?

Marusia (confusedly).— He is — rather sad, but that will pass away.

Inna Alexandrovna.— And the wound?

Marusia.— Oh, that's nonsense, already healing; he is a strong fellow, — you know. But the cell — well, — it is a kind of dirty hole, for which it is difficult to find an adequate name.

Verchovtzeff.— I know it. I have been there before.

Marusia.— And I have raised such a storm that they had to promise me to transfer him to a better room. To you, Sergius Nikolaievitch, he sends his best regards, wishing you success in your researches, and is very interested to know how things are in general.

Anna.— To be in such a position, and yet to think of trifles.

Sergius Nikolaievitch.— Dear boy! I am ever so thankful to you.

Anna.— How grateful!

Luntz.— How about yourself? How did you manage to escape?

Marusia.— I did not escape; the soldiers caught me that same day, but I cried and sobbed so much about my sick grandmother, who was expecting me from the store, that they finally let me go; one soldier, however, struck me slightly with the butt of his gun.

Luntz.— How abominable!

Marusia.— And I had under my dress the flag — our flag.

Verchovtzeff.— Is it all right?

Marusia.— I have pinned it with English pins, but it is so heavy I have brought it here. This time it has served Schtoltz as a kind of jacket. If Schtoltz were only not so small —

Verchovtzeff.— Then he would be big. Why did not you fetch the flag here? I should like to look at it — our flag! Oh, the deuce!

Marusia.— No, I am going to unfold it when we fight another battle. Treitch, do you know who betrayed us?

Treitch.— Yes.

Schtoltz.— Betrayers and traitors ought to be punished by death. (MARUSIA is laughing. TREITCH is smiling.)

Verchovtzeff.— How bloodthirsty you are, Mr. Schtoltz.

Schtoltz.— One can kill with electricity, then there will be no blood.

Inna Alexandrovna.— What about Kolushka?

Marusia.— Nicholas? Well, listen. Is there no one here? How about your servants? Well, all right. Listen — he must escape.

Treitch.— I am going with you.

Marusia.— No, Treitch. Kolia ordered you to remain here. You know how you are being searched for.

Treitch.— That doesn't matter.

Marusia.— But you are not needed. I have already arranged everything. As for you, you'll find something to do here, on the frontier, Treitch. All we want is money — and plenty of it. Nicholas takes with him a soldier and a keeper. Of course he'll come here — that's understood. I must be departing to-day — we can't afford to lose a minute.

Verchovtzeff.— Bravo, Marusia!

Marusia.— Dear friend, I am so happy!

Inna Alexandrovna (looking at SERGIUS NIKOLAIEVITCH).— Money?

Sergius Nikolaievitch (gazing at INNA ALEXANDROVNA).— Inna, you are the cashier — have we any money?

Inna Alexandrovna (embarrassed).— Only those three thousand —

Marusia.— But five are needed.

Inna Alexandrovna.— And even these — (gazes at SERGIUS NIKOLAIEVITCH, who is silently nodding his head, joyfully).— Well, we have three thousand roubles already, thank God!

Zhitoff (confused).— We'll make a collection. I have three hundred roubles myself.

Luntz.— Pollock is a rich fellow; very rich.

Anna.— I don't feel like appealing to him; he is so peculiar.

Verchovtzeff.— Nonsense. Those are the very people that ought to be 'skinned.' Petia, go and fetch Pollock. Tell him very important business, otherwise he wouldn't come.

Marusia.— Well, the main thing is done; we have got the money! (*Sings.*) 'With his voice and his look he is urging me on, as though wishing to say let us fly away.'

Treitch, I want to speak a word to you. How dirty you are! where were you? (*Exit.*)

Luntz.— Oh, what a girl! she is a sun. She is a whirlwind of igneous powers. She is a Judith!

Anna.— Yes, rather too much fire. A revolution is not in need of your whirlwinds, explosions,— a revolution is a profession, if you please, requiring lots of patience, perseverance, and calmness.

Luntz.— A revolution requires talent.

Anna.— It may be; but some people are very much abusing this word 'talent,' nowadays. One performing tricks on a rope is talented. One gazing all his life at the stars —

Verchovtzeff.— Yes, and how are the affairs in heaven, esteemed Sergius Nikolaievitch?

Sergius.— All right. And how are the affairs on earth?

Verchovtzeff.— Very bad, as you see. Things are always nasty on this earth of ours, esteemed star-gazer. There is always somebody here who is after another fellow's throat. One is crying, another betraying. My feet hurt me. Oh, we are very far from the harmony of the heavenly spheres.

Sergius.— We don't always have harmony; there, too, catastrophes are inevitable.

Verchovtzeff.— Very sad; it means we can have no hope for heaven, either. What are you thinking of Mr. — Mr. — Schtoltz?

Schtoltz.— I am thinking that every man should be strong.

Verchovtzeff.— Well, well; are you strong?

Schtoltz.— Unfortunately nature deprived me at birth of certain qualities that go to make up strength. For example, I am afraid of blood —

Verchovtzeff.— And spiders? By the way, do you buy your clothes ready made, or do you have them made to order?

Pollock (entering).— Good morning, gentlemen, what can I do for you?

Verchovtzeff.— Listen, Pollock; we need two thousand roubles — it is not a loan, because I don't believe anybody will ever pay it back to you —

Pollock.— May I ask you for what purpose?

Verchovtzeff.— To effect Nikoli's escap efrom prison. Are you willing to advance ?

Pollock.— With pleasure.

Verchovtzeff.— He ——

Pollock.— No, no; without details, please. Esteemed Sergius Nikolaievitch, may I use your refractor to-day ?

Sergius.— Help yourself. I have a holiday to-day. (*POLLOCK goes out bowing.*)

Verchovtzeff.— That's a learned man for you. Isn't he, Sergius Nikolaievitch ?

Sergius.— He is a very capable fellow.

Anna.— Of what use is astronomy ?

Verchovtzeff.— To know how to compose almanacs, I suppose. (*MARUSIA and TREITCH approaching.*)

Marusia.— I hope you'll do it, Treitch. Sergius Nikolaievitch, they are criticising you. Anna hates astronomy as much as though that science were her personal enemy.

Sergius.— I am used to that, Marusia.

Anna.— I have no personal enemies — you know that very well. And the reason I don't like astronomy is because I can't understand how people can devote so much time to the study of heaven, when this earth of ours needs so much attention.

Zhitoff.— Astronomy is the triumph of reason.

Anna.— But reason in my opinion would be more triumphant if there were less hungry people on this earth.

Marusia.— Oh, what beautiful mountains! Look at the beautiful sun. How can you argue, how can you quarrel when the sun is shining so magnificently! You are evidently against science, Anna Sergeievna ?

Anna.— Not against science am I, but against the scientists who use science as a pretext to evade public duty.

Schtoltz.— A man must say 'I will'; duty is but slavery.

Inna Alexandrovna.— I don't like these 'smart' discussions. What pleasure is there in arousing each other's temper. Vassily Vassilievitch,— will you ever get up? Here (*takes him aside*); don't you give any of your money. We have enough. Pollock is a generous young man and if need be — (*Laughs*). But he looks like an astrolabe all the same.

Zhitoff.— How about your Canadian expedition now? No money —

Inna Alexandrovna.— Oh, we'll get some. We have a whole year yet. I have a talent for getting money. They will probably again attack my old man,— they are glad he is silent,— let me therefore ask you as a friend, Vassily Vassilievitch, to stand up for him.

Zhitoff.— I will.

Inna Alexandrovna.— I must go, I have so much work to do. *Ko-lushka* needs some underwear. (*Exit.*)

Sergius (continuing).— I am fond of listening to good conversation. In every speech I can discern sparkles of light,— and these are very beautiful — just like the milky way. What a pity that people for the most part talk nonsense.

Anna.— Very often eloquent words are used by some people as an argument for not working.

Verchovtzeff.— What a peaceful individual you are, *Sergius Nikolaievitch*. I wonder if you ever get insulted. Have you ever cried? I don't mean, of course, during that happy age when you were running around in your little shirt,— I mean at the present time?

Sergius.— Oh, yes, I am very emotional.

Verchovtzeff.— Indeed.

Sergius.— When I first discerned the comet *Bela*, foretold by *Galileo*,— I cried.

Verchovtzeff.— A worthy cause for crying, undoubtedly, although beyond my comprehension. What is your opinion, gentlemen?

Luntz.— Well, certainly, but *Galileo* could have made a mistake.

Verchovtzeff.— Well, in that case, one would have to tear out his hair in despair, I suppose.

Marusia.— You are exaggerating, *Valentine*.

Anna.— And when his son was nearly shot he remained tranquil.

Sergius.— Every second some human being perishes in the world, and probably every second a whole world is destroyed in the universe. How, then, can one cry and despair over the loss of one human being?

Verchovtzeff.— Good! Don't you think, *Schtoltz*, it is a very powerful argument? So then, in case *Nicholas* does not succeed in escaping from prison and they —

Sergius.— Of course, that will be very painful, but —

Marusia.— Please don't joke that way, *Sergius Nikolaievitch*, it hurts me to hear such jests.

Sergius.— But I wasn't jesting. I was never able to crack jokes, although I sometimes enjoy other's joking, *Valentine's* for example.

Verchovtzeff.— Thank you.

Zhitoff.— It is true, *Sergius Nikolaievitch* never jokes.

Marusia.— So much the worse.

Verchovtzeff.— How convenient it must be to stop one's ears with astronomical cotton! Everything would be nice and quiet. Let the whole world howl like a dog —

Luntz.— When young Buddha once beheld a hungry tigress he offered himself to her. Yes. He did not say: I am God, I am occupied with very important matters, and you are but a hungry beast; nay, he offered himself to her!

Sergius.— Do you see the inscription (*pointing to the front of the Observatory.*) *Haec domus Uraniae est. Curae procul este profanae. Tenentur hic humilis tellus! Hinc itur ad astra!* That means: This is the temple of Uranus. Away, ye earthly cares! Low earth is being trampled upon here. Hence to the stars.

Verchovtzeff.— Very well, but what do you understand by earthly cares, esteemed star-gazer? Here I am with injured feet, the flesh being destroyed with a piece of shell almost to the bone; is this in your opinion also an earthly care or an earthly vanity?

Anna.— Of course.

Sergius.— Yes, death, injustice, misfortune,— all the dark shadows of the earth are but earthly cares.

Verchovtzeff.— If a new Napoleon should appear to-morrow, a new despot who was to crush the whole world with his iron feet — would that, too, be an earthly vanity?

Sergius.— I think so; yes.

Verchovtzeff.— (*Looks around inquiringly and utters a harsh laugh.*) Oh, that's what it is!

Anna.— This is outrageous. These are the kinds of gods who don't care how much people suffer so long as they themselves —

Marusia.— Treitch. Why don't you make some reply?

Treitch.— I am listening.

Verchovtzeff.— Only those can entertain such ideas who receive a fat salary from the government and perch safely on their roof.

Sergius (blushing).— Not always safely, Valentine. Galileo died in prison. Giordano Bruno perished at the stake. The road to the stars has always been sprinkled with blood.

Verchovtzeff.— Oh, that doesn't matter. The Christians too were once persecuted, but that, however, did not stop them in turn from 'frying' some of the astronomers alive.

Anna.— Papa even has some relics which he keeps under lock.

Sergius.— Anna! that isn't right.

Verchovtzeff.— What nonsense is that?

Anna.— A piece of brick from some old observatory and scraps of some original manuscript.

Marusia.— Anna! how can you? Nicholas would never allow himself to be so rude —

Anna.— Nicholas is too kind and gentle; that's his weakness. (*PETIA approaches unobserved and silently places himself by the wall.*)

Verchovtzeff (*irritably*).— Therefore they beat us at every step —

Marusia.— Never mind! never mind! Treitch, what do you say?

Treitch (*reservedly*).— We must go forward. Some one here mentioned defeats, but I fail to see them. I only know of victories. The earth is but a piece of wax in man's hands. We must knead it, squeeze it — create new forms. But we must go forward. If we encounter a wall, it must be destroyed. If we encounter a mountain it must be removed. Should we encounter an abyss,— we must fly across it. If we have no wings — we must make them.

Verchovtzeff.— Good, Treitch, we must construct wings!

Marusia.— Oh, I feel as though I had wings already.

Treitch (*reservedly*).— We must go forward. If the earth splits under our feet,— we must fasten her together with irons. If she begins to fall to pieces, we must solder her with fire. If heaven begins to press on our heads, — we must raise our arms and toss it off,— thus! (*Tosses it off. Others involuntarily imitate the attitude of TREITCH, that of Atlas supporting the world.*) But we must go forward so long as the sun is shining.

Luntz.— But the sun will be extinguished.

Treitch.— Then we must kindle a new one.

Verchovtzeff.— All right; go on.

Treitch.— And so long as it keeps on burning, for ever and everlastingly,— we must go forward. Comrades, the sun too is but a proletariat!

Verchovtzeff.— This is what I call astronomy. Oh, the deuce!

Luntz.— Forward, forever and everlastingly.

Verchovtzeff.— Forward! oh, the devil! (*All form themselves into groups in their excitement.*)

Luntz (*nervously*).— Gentlemen, I beg of you — we have no right to abandon the cause. And the killed! No, gentlemen, not only those who have heroically fought and perished for liberty, but the — victims. There are billions of them, and they are not guilty. And they were killed. (*Silence.*)

Marusia (*crying out*).— I swear before thee,— ye mountains! I swear before thee,— ye sun: I shall set free Nicholas! Have these mountains an echo?

Luntz.— No. If they had they would say 'Amen!'

Anna (*to ZHITOFF*).— How sentimental. I can't understand Valentine.

Zhitoff.— That's nothing. You know I have postponed my trip to Australia. I am anxious to see Nicholas Sergievitch myself.

Marusia (*looking up*).— Oh, I should like to fly!

Verchovtzeff.— This is what I call astronomy! Well, star-gazer, do you like such astronomers?

Sergius.— Yes; I like them. His name is Treitch, if I am not mistaken?

Verchovtzeff.— Yes, he is as much Treitch as I am Bismarck. The devil himself doesn't know his real name.

Luntz (running from one group to another).— I am so happy. I am so happy. You know, my parents,— they were killed. And my sister, too. I did not care — I have never cared to talk about it. Why talk? thought I. Let it remain deeply buried in my soul, and I alone know it. And now — Do you know how they were killed? Treitch, do you understand me? I never cared.

Petia (to ZHITOFF).— What is the use of all that?

Zhitoff.— No, it's not pleasant.

Petia.— What's the use, when all will perish,— you and I and the mountains. (*All remain standing in groups, except SERGIUS NIKOLAIEVITCH, who is standing alone.*)

Verchovtzeff (to MARUSIA, joyfully).— Treitch deserves to hang. Capital fellow! Where did Nicholas fish him out? Well, Marusia, but he'll escape, won't he?

Marusia (musing).— I am afraid of another thing —

Verchovtzeff.— What else?

Marusia.— No, it isn't worth while talking about — a trifle.

Verchovtzeff.— But what is the matter? What are you meditating over?

Marusia (doesn't reply; then suddenly starts to laugh and sing).— 'Come, away let us fly.'

Inna Alexandrovna (looking through the window).— My eaglets! dinner is ready.

Verchovtzeff.— Chick — Chick — Chick!

Marusia.— We'll drink champagne! Have you any, mamma dear?

All.— Yes, yes, champagne!

Sergius.— There isn't any champagne, but we have cherry wine. (*Laughter; exclamations.*)

Sergius (taking Marusia aside).— Well, Marusia, I am going to leave you. I don't care to be in your way, folks.

Marusia.— Oh, no, stay with us; we are so merry to-day.

Sergius.— Yes; I was going to take a little holiday off for your sake; but I have changed my mind.

Marusia.— Won't you dine with us?

Luntz (shouting).— Fetch Pollock. He is an honorable man, and a very nice fellow. I am going after him.

Voices.— Pollock! Pollock!

Sergius.— I am not going to stay.

Marusia.— I am very sorry. Inna Alexandrovna will be very much disappointed.

Sergius.— Tell her I am busy. Stop in to see me, Marusia, before you leave. (*Leaves without being noticed.*)

Marusia.— Schtoltz, where are you? You will be my partner. I have to talk some matters over with you. Doesn't he look like a spy, gentlemen?

Anna.— Marusia is getting to be impolite.

Marusia.— You know I was once going to stay over night in his house but he flatly refused it, saying, 'I am living with a respectable German family, and have promised them not to bring in women nor dogs.'

Schtoltz.— They don't want anybody. I have in my room a brand new sofa, and what do you think they do? Almost every night they come to find out if there is anybody lying on it. Awful people!

Verchovtzeff.— Why don't you leave them? What the devil!

Schtoltz.— Can't do it; I have to pay them in advance.

Anna.— You oughtn't to do it.

Schtoltz.— Impossible. They ——

Luntz (is leading POLLOCK — shouting).— He is he! I could hardly tear him away from the refractor; he stuck to it like a leach!

Pollock.— Gentlemen, it is an outrage! I have some work to finish ——

Marusia.— Dear Pollock! We are so merry to-day. And you are such a dear good fellow, and are so much liked by everybody.

Pollock.— I am very glad to hear that, but I can't understand why you are so merry. The revolution turned out to be a failure.

Verchovtzeff.— But we have a new scheme; we ——

Pollock (ironically).— Oh, yes, certainly, I believe you, I believe you.

Marusia.— Here is to Astronomy (*drinking*). Long live the orbit!

Pollock.— I am very sorry I can't drink any alcoholic beverages. It makes me sick at the stomach and gives me the headache.

Verchovtzeff.— The best drink for Pollock would be machine oil. Pollock, will you drink it?

Marusia.— No, we are going to drink cherry wine, good wine, too.

Luntz.— Come along, comrade, you are a good, honest fellow.

Inna Alexandrovna (looking out through the window).— Why don't you get a move on you? I am tired calling you.

Marusia.— Right away. Mamma, dear, right away. Pollock refuses to come. Well, gentlemen, we mustn't be so solemn. Zhitoff, can you sing?

Zhitoff.— Not much.

Luntz.— The Marseillaise!

Marusia.— No, no; the Marseillaise and the flag must be reserved for the new battle.

Treitch.— I second the motion. There are certain songs that should only be sung in a temple.

Verchovtzeff.— Oh, do sing something cheerful. Oh, how the sun is warming up.

Anna.— Valentine, don't uncover your feet.

Marusia (singing).— 'The sky is so clear, the sun is so dear,— the sun is inviting' (*all join in, save Petia*).

'When we work with pleasure, we no more think of care,— forward, comrades.

'Glory to the Merry Sun!
For he is the worker of the Earth.
Glory to the Merry Sun!
For he is the worker of the Earth!'

Verchovtzeff.— Move on, Anna. You are wheeling me as though I were dead.

All singing. (*POLLOCK leads the chorus seriously and reservedly.*)

'Storms and tempests the serene sky cannot vanquish;
Beneath the cover of the tempest, within its dark heart,
Lightning is flashing!
Glory to the mighty sun,
The ruler of the Earth!'

(*The last words of the song are repeated behind the corner of the house.*
PETIA remains alone and is gloomily looking about him.)

All.— (*Behind the curtain.*)

'Glory to the Mighty Sun,
The ruler of the Earth!'

ACT III

A large, dark sitting-room, scantily furnished; absence of soft furniture; two book cases. A piano; in the back wall, a door and two large windows leading to the porch. The door and the windows are open, through which is visible the dark, almost black sky, studded with unusually bright glimmering stars; on a table in the corner, near the wall,— a lamp with a dark shade.

INNA ALEXANDROVNA *is sitting at the table reading the papers, ANNA is sewing; LUNTZ nervously paces the room; VERCHOVTZEFF on crutches is standing at one of the bookcases trying to get a book out; deep silence; the silence keeps up for a few moments after the curtain rises.*

Verchovtzeff (muttering to himself).— Oh, the deuce!

Inna Alexandrovna.— Are you aware that the President has refused to pardon Kassowsky?

Verchovtzeff.— Yes.

Inna Alexandrovna.— What does that mean?

Verchovtzeff.— Death!

Inna Alexandrovna.— Oh, merciful God! How long will these things last? Haven't there been enough victims already?

Verchovtzeff (carrying a book under the arm; drops it).— Oh, the deuce with you! Anna, pick it up!

Anna (rising slowly).— Right away. (*LUNTZ picks up the book silently, puts it on the table and keeps on pacing.*)

Verchovtzeff (sitting down awkwardly).— Will you ever cease pricking at that?

Anna.— Well, one must be doing something.

Verchovtzeff.— Can't you read? (*ANNA makes no reply. Silence.*) No, I can't stand it any longer. What a devilish silence there is here — like a grave! Another week like this and I shall throw myself overboard, get drunk, or lick Pollock.

Luntz (nervously).— An awful silence. As though Byron's dream had been realized: the sun is extinguished, everything on earth is dead, and we are the last creatures.

Verchovtzeff.— Zhitoff, what are you doing up there?

Zhitoff (from the porch).— I am looking.

Verchovtzeff (with contempt).— I am looking! (*Silence*) I can't be idle!

Anna.— Be patient, it can't be helped.

Verchovtzeff.— You can have all the patience you want, but I — the deuce (*reading*).

Inna Alexandrovna (is sitting meditating).— Serge would have been twenty-one years old now. He was a pretty child, looked like Nicholas. Do you remember him, Anna?

Anna.— No.

Inna Alexandrovna.— But I remember him well. You used to beat him, Anna. You were a mischievous little girl. Death certainly snatched him away suddenly; he was only sick about three days. Appendicitis in such a little child! When they started to cut his abdomen open, will you believe me, Josiph Abramovitch —

Verchovtzeff.— Mother, will you ever stop that? The idea of spending a whole evening discussing dead people! He is gone — well, let him go; so much the better for him! Come over here, Zhitoff.

Zhitoff.— Right away.

Luntz.— What anguish!

Verchovtzeff.— What is Marusia writing, Inna Alexandrovna?

Inna Alexandrovna (*sighing*).— A whole lot, but I can't make anything out of it. First she promises to come in about a week, then something keeps her back, then again in about a week. Yesterday's letter is the same.

Verchovtzeff.— I know that; thought perhaps you had something new.

Inna Alexandrovna.— I am afraid Kolushka is not well.

Verchovtzeff.— What next? Why, don't you think he is dead?

Luntz.— Then Marusia would steal his corpse and bring it here.

Inna Alexandrovna.— Oh, what dreadful things you are saying!

Zhitoff (*entering*).— Well, what do you want me to say?

Verchovtzeff.— Take a seat. What have you been doing there?

Zhitoff.— Gazed at the stars. How beautiful and restless they look to-day. (*PETIA entering; he is seen passing through the scene several times during the act.*)

Luntz.— Somehow I can't bear the stars to-night; I don't know where to run away from them. I would hide myself in a cellar, but they'll haunt me there, too. Do you understand — I feel as though there were no empty space; as though all these monsters, the living and dead, have crowded above the earth, and are pushing towards her, and there is something in them — I don't know — (*paces nervously, continuing gesticulating*).

Zhitoff.— The atmosphere here is very clear, but in California —

Verchovtzeff.— Have you been in California?

Zhitoff.— Yes. At the Lick Observatory, in California, one feels a little shaky, — looking. Indeed!

Petia.— Mamma, who is the old woman in the kitchen?

Inna Alexandrovna.— Which one? Oh, that one. She just came in and I told them to take care of her. She belongs down below, — in the valley. I reckon she is a beggar. Can't understand her, she is deaf.

Petia.— How did she ascend the mountain? How could she do it?

Verchovtzeff.— Mother, you ought to establish a poorhouse up here.

Inna Alexandrovna.— Well, I may do it yet, if only Sergius Nikolaievitch gives his consent. You ought to read.

Petia (*insistingly*).— But how did she get up here, mamma?

Inna Alexandrovna.— Oh, I don't know, dear. You should read what Marusia is writing about the hungry little ones. 'Mamma dear, give us a

piece of bread,' they would cry. Mamma goes out to hunt for some bread — how she gets it is not worth while telling — but when she got back the poor child was dead.

Petia.— Let them die. Joseph, you seem very sad to-day.

Luntz.— Yes, Petia, I am feeling bad. Oh, it is such a strange night; can't understand what is the matter with it. A night full of visions. Have you looked at the stars to-night?

Petia.— And I, on the contrary, feel perfectly happy! (*Plays some gay tune on the piano.*)

Verchovtzeff (to Petia).— Stop that!

Petia (singing and playing).— I am so merry!

Inna Alexandrovna.— Petia dear, stop it, please.

(*PETIA noisily closes the piano and rushes out on the porch.*)

Luntz.— Will Treitch soon return?

Verchovtzeff.— They did not succeed; therefore he may come at any time. Zhitoff, why are you so silent?

Zhitoff.— Don't know; don't feel like talking to-day.

Luntz.— Oh, I have such unpleasant thoughts! such unpleasant thoughts! One feels like committing suicide!

Verchovtzeff.— Nonsense. Astronomers never commit suicide.

Luntz.— I am a poor astronomer, very, very poor, indeed.

Anna.— So much the better; then you may occupy yourself with something more useful.

Luntz.— I fear the stars to-night. I sit and think; how huge and indifferent they are, and they don't seem to care a bit for us,— and I feel so small, so insignificant — just like a chick that hid himself in a corner during the Jewish massacre; there it sits, not understanding what is going on (*PETIA entering*).

Verchovtzeff.— The stars — and the Jewish massacre — what a peculiar combination!

Inna Alexandrovna (warningly motioning her head to Verchovtzeff).— We have all undergone a severe nervous strain lately — and it is no wonder you are moody. Just think of it; already a month and a half have passed since Marusia went — and no result whatsoever. I am beginning to 'shake' myself, although I am used to all kinds of weather —

Luntz.— The feathers are spreading all around, the window panes are crackling, but he remains sitting, and what is he thinking about?

Verchovtzeff.— He is thinking of nothing. He thinks it is snowing.

Luntz.— I fear infinity. What endless space. Why infinity? Here I am looking at the stars; one, ten, a million — there is no end. My God! To whom shall I complain?

Verchovtzeff.— Why complain?

Luntz.— Here I am a little Jew. (*Paces the room, nervously gesticulating.*)

Pollock (entering).— Good morning, gentlemen! May I join your company? Hope I am not intruding —

Inna Alexandrovna.— Why certainly! make yourself comfortable.

Pollock.— The magnetic arrow is oscillating very much, Luntz. We must make some observation of the sun to-morrow [*LUNTZ is muttering something*]. You, Zhitoff, have probably given up the idea of working altogether, so there is no use in talking to you about it. Are you going to leave us?

Zhitoff.— Yes, in a couple of days.

Inna Alexandrovna.— But you don't mean that? Didn't you say, Vassily Vassilievitch, that you were going to wait until Nicholas got back? And why have you changed your mind so suddenly?

Zhitoff.— Oh, I must go. Have been hanging around here too long!

Verchovtzeff.— The place will get more lonesome after you go. Why don't you send your Zealand to the devil?

Zhitoff.— No, I must go.

Anna.— How is it that you are not working, Mr. Pollock?

Pollock.— I am in a dreamy mood to-day, esteemed Anna Sergeievna. I am just thirty-two years old to-day — this very minute. I was born in the evening, 10.37 P. M. Making some allowance for time (*looks at his watch*) I get exactly 10.16 — ten hours sixteen minutes.

Verchovtzeff.— Congratulate you!

Pollock.— At my age of thirty-two I think I have done a great deal for science; have also a name. However, I don't care to go into details. In a word, I already have a right to think of myself.

Verchovtzeff.— What? are you really going to get married? That's the boy!

Pollack.— Yes, you are right. I'll soon be married.

Inna Alexandrovna.— That's right; you are doing the right thing, dear boy. I only hope you'll get a good wife.

Pollock.— My bride is graduating from the university this year, and pretty soon, esteemed Inna Alexandrovna, your comfortable house is going to miss me.

Inna Alexandrovna.— How secretive! The rascal never dropped a word!

Petia (harshly).— I'll soon be married, too. I have already a bride — she is a beauty!

Pollock.— Indeed? You are joking?

Inna Alexandrovna.— Petia! (*PETIA giggles and goes out on the porch.*)

Anna.— What is the matter with him? I can't understand his conduct lately.

Inna Alexandrovna.— I don't know what to think of it myself. He has changed ever since you arrived here. Josiph Abramovitch, you are always with him. Can you tell us what is the matter with him? I am really getting anxious about him.

Luntz.— Petia,— why he is a good boy, he is an honest boy. He, too, is haunted by some disagreeable thoughts.

Pollock.— Go on, gentlemen, don't you see I am in a peculiar mood to-day and will gladly listen to your discussions?

Luntz (muttering).— The stars, the stars!

Pollock.— What can you tell us about the stars, dear Luntz?

Luntz.— Then too they were shining way above the clouds; while we were sitting, waiting and thinking that ours have gained a complete victory,— and they are shining now. One is likely to go mad.

Verchovtzeff.— Work! we must work; and here in this devilish hole one is chained like a dog. The deuce! (*Limps about the room, making for the window, looks through the window for a few minutes and goes back.*) I think Treitch is coming.

Pollock.— I like Treitch very much. He seems to be a very nice gentleman.

Inna Alexandrovna.— That means failure again!

Verchovtzeff (roughly).— What else did you expect? Didn't they write you it wasn't a success?

Inna Alexandrovna.— Oh, merciful Father! Kolushka, dear! Kolushka, my own! I don't think I'll ever see you again. . . . My heart tells me that . . . (*weeping*).

Treitch (entering, greeting all and seating himself).— Good evening, folks.

Inna Alexandrovna.— You are probably tired, my dear boy; are you hungry?

Treitch.— No, thank you. I had some lunch on my way here.

Verchovtzeff.— Anything new?

Treitch.— Numerous arrests. You of course all know that. Zanko was hanged.

All.— Is that possible? Zanko? No. When was that?

Verchovtzeff.— Poor fellow! How is he? . . .

Inna Alexandrovna.— He was so young! . . . Wasn't he here with Kolushka last year? Dark complexioned with small mustaches.

Anna.— Yes, he was.

Inna Alexandrovna.— He kissed my hand. . . . He was so young. Has he a mother?

Anna.— Oh, mamma!— Do you know, Treitch, if he disclosed any of the secrets?

Treitch.— He met his fate like a hero, but they acted disgracefully mean towards him. He asked them to give his lawyer permission to be present at the execution. They granted the request, but never kept their promise. And all he saw at the last were the face of the hangman and a few stars . . . (*silence*).

Luntz.— Stars! Stars!

Treitch.— In Ternach the soldiers killed some two hundred workmen, also many women and children. In the Sternburg district famine is raging. There is a rumor abroad that some have eaten human corpses.

Verchovtzeff.— You are the black messenger, Treitch.

Treitch.— In Poland Jewish massacres have broken out.

Luntz.— What, again?

Pollock.— What barbarism! what foolish people!

Inna Alexandrovna.— Oh, it may only be a rumor. A good many stories are circulating —

Verchovtzeff.— But what about ours?

Treitch (*shrugging his shoulders*).— Well, I am going there to-morrow.

Anna.— They'll hang you, too. That's what you'll get. We must wait.

Verchovtzeff.— I am going with you! The deuce take it all.

Anna.— But how can you go with these feet of yours? Bethink yourself, Valentine; you are not a child.

Verchovtzeff.— Oh!—

Treitch.— How are your feet, anyhow?

Anna.— Bad!

Inna Alexandrovna.— Anything concerning Kolushka?

Treitch.— No one showed up at the appointed hour and of course I understood that the affair had been postponed. I don't know what to make of it myself. I am going there to-morrow.

Inna Alexandrovna.— May God help you, my dear boy. Let me bless you as I would my own son. (*TREITCH kisses her hand.*)

Pollock (*to ZHITOFF*).— Just think of it, a common workman and how well bred. I am certainly surprised.

Zhitoff.— Y-yes.

Pollock.— And what I like about him is the way he relates things; he is so clear and concise.

Luntz (shouting).— Have you heard?

Anna.— What is the matter with you? What are you screaming about? You scared me.

Luntz.— Again! Again they are killing fathers and mothers; again they are tearing children to pieces. Oh, I felt it . . . I knew it to-day, when I looked at the cursed stars!

Pollock.— Dear Luntz, calm yourself.

Inna Alexandrovna.— Why did you say that, Treitch?

Treitch.— Oh, that's nothing.

Luntz.— I don't want to be calm, and I am not going to be! I have been calm long enough. I was quiet when they killed my father, my mother, and my sister! I was quiet when they were slaughtering my brothers at the barricades! Oh, I have been quiet too long. But I am quiet now, too. Am I not, Treitch? — Everything then is in vain?

Treitch.— No, we are going to win.

Luntz.— Treitch, I loved science. Pollock, I loved science. When I was small, so small that all the boys on the street abused me — then already I loved science. When they were beating me I used to think, Never mind, when I grow up I shall become a famous scientist and will be a credit to my family. My dear father, who spent the last farthing on me, my dear mother, who wept over me — Oh, how I loved science!

Pollock.— I am very sorry for you, Luntz. I esteem you very much.

Luntz.— When hungry, when thirsty, when running around in the street like a dog, hunting for a crust,—I was thinking of science. And when I was bitterly crying, tearing my hair from my head, after they had killed my father, my mother, and my sister,—I was thinking of science! But now (*whispering*) I hate science (*shouts*). No more science! Down with science!

Pollock.— Luntz, Luntz! I am very sorry —

Anna.— Why don't you try to control yourself? You can't go on in that way. You are getting hysterical.

Luntz.— Aha! Hyterics! Well, what of it? But I am quiet, and you only imagine that I am not quiet. I don't care for science any more. I am going to quit this place. I am going to quit it. Do you hear?

Treitch.— Come with me.

Luntz.— Yes, I'll go with you. I don't want any more science. Cursed stars. Again, again! I can hear them shout up there! you don't hear that,

but I do! And I can also see all those that were burnt, that were murdered, that were torn to pieces. Murdered — because they gave birth to a Christ, to the prophets, and to a Mary. I see them. They gaze at me through the window—these cold, mutilated corpses; they are standing above my head while I am asleep and they ask me, 'Are you going to follow science, Luntz?' No! No!

Inna Alexandrovna.— My dear boy, may God help you!

Luntz.— Yes, God. I am a Jew and therefore I appeal to the God of the Jews; God of Vengeance, Lord God of Vengeance, reveal yourself! Rise, O Judge of the Earth, and render vengeance to the proud and the wicked. God of Vengeance! Lord God of Vengeance! Reveal yourself!

Verchovtzeff.— Vengeance to the hangmen!

(LUNTZ shakes his fist silently and departs.)

Treitch.— What do you think of him?

Pollock.— What an unfortunate young man. It is so painful when one likes science and is unable to follow it. I was so happy, but when he began to talk on this subject I couldn't keep from crying, esteemed Inna Alexandrovna.

Inna Alexandrovna.— Don't talk about it. My heart is breaking. Will this misery ever end? I don't think I'll ever see a bright day in all my life. What life!

Zhitoff.— Painful, indeed.

(TREITCH takes VERCHOVTZEFF aside and cautiously pointing to INNA ALEXANDROVNA whispers something to him; VERCHOVTZEFF draws his head back and utters loudly).

Verchovtzeff.— I don't believe it. Nicholas!

Treitch.— t-ss (whispering).

Pollock.— Let us have hope in God, esteemed Inna Alexandrovna. Not the God, however, of Vengeance, whom the unfortunate Luntz has mentioned, but the God of Love and Mercy.

Zhitoff.— Yes, there are different gods and they are used for different purposes.

Inna Alexandrovna.— Oh, children! A great misfortune has befallen us! (SERGIUS NIKOLAIEVITCH enters, greeting).

Sergius.— You are here, too, Pollock?

Pollock.— To-day is my birthday, esteemed Sergius Nikolaievitch.

Sergius.— I congratulate you (shakes his hand).

Pollock.— I have also had the honor to-day to inform my friends of my engagement to Miss Fanny Herstrem.

Sergius.— I didn't know you were such a lucky fellow.

Pollock.— I am going to have a companion, now, esteemed Sergius Nikolaievitch (*laughs*).

Sergius.— Once more let me congratulate you. By the way, is there anything new concerning Nicholas ?

Pollock.— It appears that the escape has been postponed.

Verchovtzeff.— If you only knew what was going on upon the earth, esteemed star-gazer!

Sergius.— Well ? Again some misfortune ?

Verchovtzeff.— Yes — Earthly vanity. (*Bends his head on one side.*) When I look at you thus, I can't help asking you: Have you any friends, or are you alone in this world ?

Sergius (*pointing to INNA ALEXANDROVNA*).— There is my friend.

Inna Alexandrovna.— Don't make me blush, Sergius Nikolaievitch — you know you need a different friend.

Verchovtzeff.— That's all right. Who else ?

Sergius.— I have others, too, but, just imagine! I have never seen them. One lives in South Africa, he has an observatory; another — in Brazil; and a third — I don't know where.

Verchovtzeff.— Why ? Did he vanish ?

Sergius.— He died a hundred and fifty years ago. I have still another one, but this one I don't know at all, although I like him very much. He isn't born yet. He will be born approximately seven hundred and fifty years hence, and I have already authorized him to examine some of my observations.

Verchovtzeff.— And are you sure he'll do it ?

Sergius.— Yes.

Verchovtzeff.— What a strange collection. You ought to donate it to some museum! Don't you think so, Treitch ?

Treitch.— I like Mr. Ternovsky's friends.

(*PETIA enters hurriedly, looks around.*)

Petia.— Where is Luntz ? Are all here ? Good! Where is Luntz ?

Inna Alexandrovna.— He must be in his room, Petia; go in and entertain him; he is so nervous and excited to-day.

Petia.— Gentlemen, kindly remain where you are; I am going to arrange some little entertainment; it is not out of place to-day.

Pollock.— Probably fireworks ? Eh ? Oh, you shrewd boy! But it is rather out of place even to-day.

Petia.— I'll be back directly (*exit PETIA*).

Sergius (*pacing slowly*).— How is the barometer to-day, Pollock ?

Pollock.— Very low, esteemed Sergius Nikolaievitch.

Sergius.— Yes, one feels it.

Pollock.— Judging from the oscillation of the arrow there must be a cyclone in southern latitudes.

Sergius.— Yes. It is not quiet.

Anna (to INNA ALEXANDROVNA).— Petia must be up to some mischief again, mamma, you ought not to encourage these things.

Inna Alexandrovna.— But what can I do with him? You see yourself that he ——

Verchovtzeff (*going with TREITCH to the table*).— Oh, how devilish quiet it is here — like the grave.

Sergius.— You think so? It seems to me it is rather noisy down here.

Treitch (to VERCHOVTZEFF).— Remember if I don't return, you'll tell her that ——

Verchovtzeff.— I understand. Oh, how close it is!

Anna.— And I think it is rather cool.

Verchovtzeff.— Close, cool — the same devil. If I am to stay here another week ——

Pollock.— Gentlemen, let us select for our discussion some topic in which all could participate. Our chairman is going to be ——

Luntz (*entering*).— Who was calling me? You, Sergius Nikolaievitch?

Sergius.— No.

Luntz.— Why did Petia tell me so, then? (*Starts to go out.*)

Pollock.— Remain here, dear Luntz. Now, since you have calmed yourself down a little, let me tell you that I don't agree with your views concerning science.

Luntz.— Oh, let me alone! Sergius Nikolaievitch, let me tell you that I am going to quit the observatory (*PETIA'S voice is heard outside the room: "Pages fling the door widely open for the duchess!"*)

Pollock (*laughing*).— Oh, that's Petia. What a mischievous boy! Listen, Listen!

(*The door is flung open; PETIA enters with the old woman. She is almost doubled up and can hardly walk.—An awful spectacle of poverty, old age, and wretchedness. PETIA, arm in arm with her, steps forward solemnly. At the door stand MINNA, FRANTZ, and other servants, smiling.*)

Petia.— Gentlemen, allow me to introduce to you my pretty bride. Helen.

Verchovtzeff (*laughing roughly*).—What a fool!

Anna.— Didn't I tell you?

Pollock (*getting up*).— This is an insult! I will not allow him to insult my bride!

Petia (*loud*).— Pretty Helen, bow to the audience (*the old woman makes a bow*).

Pollock.— I protest! It is an insult.

Inna Alexandrovna.— He is only joking. Petia dear, you must not poke fun at old people; it is not nice.

Luntz.— Oh, no, it isn't a joke! I understand! Oh, oh, I understand!

Petia.— There. Now, let's have a talk, pretty Helen. How old are you? (*The old woman does not reply, only shakes her head.*) Did you say seventeen? You are seventeen years old, pretty maiden. Do your parents — the Duke and the Duchess consent to your marriage? (*The old woman does not reply — only shakes her head.*)

Pollock.— Esteemed Sergius Nikolaievitch, I am being insulted in your own house——

Luntz (almost crazed).— What do you want? Who cares for your idiotic bride?

Pollock.— Mr. Luntz, I'll hold you responsible for these words!

Luntz.— The stars, the stars!

Petia.— How happy am I, pretty Helen! Can you smell the odor of roses? Do you hear the music of the nightingale in the garden? He is eulogizing our love, pretty Helen.

Luntz.— Cursed stars.

Petia.— Your fragrant little mouth, pretty Helen——

Luntz.— Yes, yes!

Petia.— Your pearly teeth ——

Luntz.— Yes, yes! ——

Petia.— Your dainty face — I am desperately in love with you, pretty Helen! Why have you cast down your enchanted eyes so modestly?

Luntz.— Shame! And aren't you ashamed of yourself, Pollock? Science! And do you see that? That's my mother, that's my mother!

Pollock.— I don't understand.

Petia.— Raise your beautiful head and proudly proclaim yourself my bride, enchanting Helen. In your embrace, my restless soul will find everlasting peace! (*The old woman's head is shaking.*)

Anna.— They are all fit for an insane asylum.

Verchovtzeff (frightened).— Anna, keep still!

Pollock.— This is a kind of——

Luntz.— Hold your tongue, bourgeois! — or I'll — She is my mother. (*to the old woman.*) Old woman! (*pushes away PETIA.*) Listen to me. Here I am on my knees before you. You are my mother, and let me — let me kiss your hand ——

Petia (shouting).— She is my bride!

Luntz.— She is my mother! Let her alone!

Anna.— Water!

Luntz.— Old woman! Forgive me! I loved science, foolish Jew! *Verchovtzeff* (to *TREITCH*).— Something must be done!

Treitch.— Never mind.

Luntz.— I love only you now, dear old woman. Take my head and my heart. Oh, cursed stars! Damned stars!

Treitch.— Are you going with me, Luntz?

Petia (shouting).— She is my bride.

Inna Alexandrovna.— Merciful God! Petia dear! He is fainting.

Anna.— Water!

Luntz.— I am going with you. And I swear by God —

Verchovtzeff.— Will you ever shut up?

(*PETIA* is writhing with convulsions. *All, save TREITCH, rush up to him.* *SERGIUS NIKOLAIEVITCH* makes a few steps but stops and looks at *Luntz.*)

Luntz (on his knees).— Old woman, you see! I am crying, old woman; I am a little Jew who loved science. You are my mother, and I swear by God to devote all my time to you, my dear old woman, I am crying — cursed stars!

ACT IV

On the right the observatory dome, the larger part of which is visible from the stage; the dome is surrounded by a gallery with an iron railing; the lower part of the stage — some portion of a roof joined to the main structure of the observatory, and a faint view of the mountains; the rest — a vast portion of the night sky; constellations; inside the dome — complete darkness; to the left are faintly visible the outlines of a huge refracting telescope; two tables upon which stand two lamps with dark, non-transparent globes.

The shutter of the dome is open, through which is visible the starry sky; a staircase leading to the dome; silence; the monotonous tick of the metronome.
SERGIUS NIKOLAIEVITCH, POLLOCK, and PETIA.

Pollock.— And so, esteemed *Sergius Nikolaievitch*, you'll kindly watch the camera. I must go and finish my tables.

Sergius.— Go on, keep on working. Good by.

Pollock (addressing *PETIA*).— Well, how are we feeling to-day, young priest of the Goddess *Uranus*?

Petia.— All right, thanks.

Pollock.— And we are not going to poke any more fun at poor *Pollock* for being anxious to get married?

Petia.— Upon my word, I didn't wish ——

Pollock.— I understand, I understand ——

Sergius.— He was already indisposed then ——

Pollock.— I am only joking, esteemed Sergius Nikolaievitch. Strangely enough, I have discovered a great deal of humor in myself lately. When Frantz spilled some milk the other day I said to him, 'Frantz, you are leaving behind you a milky way,' and he laughed very much (*laughing*). But I don't care to go into details. Good by. (*Exit.*)

Petia.— What a funny fellow Pollock is. Papa, shall I disturb you if I remain up here ?

Sergius.— No, my boy.

Petia.— I don't feel like going downstairs. It is so lonesome down there now. You know we have received a telegram from Zhitoff; it came from Cairo. He wrote: 'I am sitting gazing at the pyramids.' Have you ever seen the pyramids ?

Sergius.— I am afraid mamma will miss you, Petia.

Petia.— She is sleeping now. But I spend a great deal of time with her throughout the day. She worries a great deal about Nicholas, papa.

Sergius.— But nothing is known yet. Has Anna written anything ?

Petia.— No. She does not like to write letters. Of course nothing is known yet, and I keep on telling that to mother, but you know how difficult it is to argue with women — I don't want to disturb you. Are you, too, going to do some calculations now ?

Sergius.— Yes, some. I am rather tired.

Petia.— And I am going to read awhile. By the way, papa, I was reading in some journal yesterday that you have made some very important discovery in relation to the nebulæ, and that that places you on a level with ——

Sergius.— The discovery, my boy, was made by me some ten years ago. Astronomical fame comes rather late. Very few are interested in astronomy and astronomers.

Petia.— And I did not know it!

Sergius.— We still remain isolated, like the Egyptian priests, although against our will.

Petia.— How foolish! Papa, why did you order me brought up here when I was ill? I certainly must have disturbed you ?

Sergius.— No. But if anything becomes precious to me — I always like to lift it up here. I have a very funny notion, Petia: I think that here, among the stars, there can be no suffering, no disease.

Petia.— Once, one night I woke up and saw you looking at the stars.

Silence reigned all around and you were looking at the stars. And then I comprehended something — nay, I felt it. I don't know what, I am unable to explain. I felt as though we were alone in this world: you, the stars, and I, as if we were already dead. But I did not have any apprehension; on the contrary, I felt good, tranquil, and pure. I have such a desire to live now — but why! I don't understand the meaning of life, old age, and death any more than I did before. However, go on with your work, papa; I am not going into details, as Pollock would put it.

Sergius.— Yes, man thinks only of his life and his death — hence he is so apprehensive toward life, and weary and lonesome,— like a lost flea in a vault. In order to fill out this awful emptiness he invents much that is beautiful and is powerful, but in his creations he only thinks of his death and of his life. And he resembles a keeper of a museum of wax figures,— yes, a keeper of a museum of wax figures. During the day he chats with his visitors and collects money from them, and when night comes he wanders lonely, full of fright, amid death, among the soulless and the lifeless. If he only knew that life is everywhere!

Petia.— Do you know what frightened me once? Why, only a simple chair. I saw once a chair in an empty room, and suddenly I got so frightened that I screamed!

Sergius.— Man's thought is an eagle — the mighty and powerful king of space, but he has tied its wings and put it in a poultry yard with wire and shamelessly lying walls. And the sky peeping through the wire netting is only teasing and irritating it, and it quarrels with the other birds, thus getting dull and stupid, instead of soaring to the skies.

Petia.— Poor bird!

Sergius.— Yes, all is endowed with life. And when man comprehends that,— he'll grow to be happy like the Greek, like the heathen. Once more the nymphs will appear upon the earth, again will the elves dance in the moonlight. Man will walk through the woods conversing with the trees, with the flowers. He will never be alone, for all is endowed with life; metals, the stones, the trees.

Petia (laughing).— You are very funny, papa!

Sergius.— But why?

Petia.— You are so polite with the chairs, yes, it's true; and you are polite with all objects. When you take some object into your hand — you do it so carefully,—I don't know how to explain myself. You are very absent minded, but you walk so cleverly that you never stumble over things; you never run into or drop anything. When the chairs, the cupboard, and the tumblers gather together in the night, as in Andersen's fairy tale, to have a talk with each other — they probably praise you very much.

Sergius.— You think so? Then I am very glad the chairs do talk.

Petia.— And here when you leave, what takes place? Most likely everything sings.

Sergius.— Everything sings in my presence, too.

Petia.— The chimney in a basso voice? Yes?

Sergius.— Do you know, my boy, that the stars sing?

Petia.— No.

Sergius.— Yes, they sing, and their melody is as mysterious as eternity itself. Whosoever has but once heard that melody, issuing from the depth of unfathomed regions, becomes the son of eternity! The son of eternity! — yes, Petia, thus will man be called in the future.

Petia (laughing).— Papa dear, don't get angry; do you mean to say that Pollock, too, is the son of eternity?

Sergius.— Maybe.

Petia.— But he is such a fool, so narrow minded. No, no! I won't say anything else. I am going to sit down. There is a peculiar air in here. The air of our rooms is different. You are still meditating, papa?

Sergius.— Yes, my boy.

Petia.— Well, go on meditating. And I am reading (*silence*). To-day it is exactly three weeks since Luntz left us.

Sergius.— Is it?

(*Silence; PETIA is reading. SERGIUS NIKOLAIEVITCH awakens from his reverie and starts working.*)

Petia.— During the first nights, while I was having that fever, I used to fear the refractor very much. It would move along the circle tracing some star. Once when I opened my eyes and looked at it, it appeared to me like a huge, dark eye — with a long coat on —

(*Silence. SERGIUS NIKOLAIEVITCH stops working and supporting his chin on his hand is musing again. Down below a few plaintive strains of music are heard: 'I am sitting behind iron walls in the prison dark.'*)

Petia (leaping up).— What is that music? Who can it be? There is no one down there but mamma.

Sergius (turning around).— Yes, maybe it is Marusia.

Petia (shouting).— Marusia has come! I'll be back in a minute! (*Runs down.*)

(*PETIA and MARUSIA appear on the staircase leading to the dome.*)

Marusia.— Stop crying. What is the use? You'd better go to mamma (*PETIA is weeping, restraining himself from sobbing*). Go, Petia, go! She is alone. You must comfort her — you are a man!

Petia.— And you?

Marusia.— Never mind. Go! (*Kisses him on the head. They go off in different directions.*)

Sergius.— Marusia dear, how glad I am to see you again. You don't believe—I know—that I can feel too. I have been thinking of your coming all day to-day.

Marusia.— How do you do, Sergius Nikolaievitch? Are you working?

Sergius.— How is Nicholas? Has he escaped from prison?

Marusia.— Yes. He has left the prison.

Sergius.— Is he here?

Marusia.— No.

Sergius.— But he is out of danger, Marusia!

Marusia.— Yes.

Sergius.— Poor Marusia! You are probably so tired. I have been thinking of you all day long—of you and of him—I don't dare to talk about you—you are like music. Marusia! I am so glad! Allow me to kiss your hands—your gentle and delicate hands that had to handle so many iron locks and rusty gratings (*kisses her hands ceremoniously*).

Marusia (*pointing to the gallery of the dome*).— Let's go there.

Sergius.— I am so glad—I'll fetch a chair for you—you are so tired, Marusia (*both go out on the gallery*). There, sit down. Isn't it nice out here?

Marusia.— Yes, very nice, indeed!

Sergius.— I have been sitting here with Petia; he is such a nice boy. He is reminding me of Nicholas lately—

Marusia.— Yes.

Sergius.— Petia is so feminine, so frail, and I am very anxious about him at times. But Nicholas—he is so daring and full of energy! How harmonious and well shaped everything is in him; how tender and how strong! He is an excellent specimen of manliness, a rare beautiful form which nature shatters, in order not to have any repetitions.

Marusia.— Yes, shatters. I was going to say—

Sergius.— He is as captivating as a young god, he has a charm which no one can withstand. He is beloved by everybody, Marusia—even by Anna—even by Anna. And he is so handsome. It may seem ridiculous to you, Marusia; he reminds me of the starry heaven—the starry heaven at dawn.

Marusia.— Yes, the starry heaven at dawn.

Sergius.— He couldn't help escaping. Of that I was quite sure. Prison! What is a prison—these rusty locks and stupid rotten gratings! I wonder how they could have kept him thus long. They should have smiled and cleared the way for him—as to a young happy prince!

(*MARUSIA falls on her knees in despair.*)

Marusia.— Oh, father, father, how terrible!

Sergius.— What! what's happened, Marusia?

Marusia.— Shattered is the beautiful form! Shattered is the beautiful form, father!

Sergius.— Is he dead? Oh, why don't you speak?

Marusia.— He — his reason has left him. (*Silence. Leaping up.*) What is it? Cursed life! Where is the God of that life? Whither is he looking? Cursed life. It's better to exhaust oneself with tears, to die, to depart! What's the use of living when the best perish? When the beautiful form is shattered! Do you understand it, father? Life isn't worth living, it isn't worth while living.

Sergius.— Tell me all about it.

Marusia.— What for? Do you think it possible to tell that? To be able to tell it — one must comprehend it. And do you think one can comprehend it?

Sergius.— Go on.

Marusia.— He has been my banner. When the barbarians threw him into prison — I thought: You are but barbarians — but he is the sun. I thought: Pretty soon all that are like him will rise and shatter the prison walls, and my sun will shine once more! my sun!

Sergius.— How did it happen?

Marusia.— How is a star extinguished? How does a bird die in captivity? He ceased singing, grew pale and sad, but kept on comforting me. Only once he said: 'I can't understand the iron grating. What is an iron grating? It is between me and the sky.'

Sergius.— Between me and the sky?

Marusia.— And just at this time they beat him unmercifully. The prisoners raised a little mutiny and the result was that the keepers forced the doors open and beat them one by one. They beat them with their fists, they trampled upon them with their feet. They beat them terribly and for a long time — these stupid, cold-blooded beasts. And they did not spare your son, either. When I saw him his face was something awful. The dear, beautiful face that used to smile to the whole world! They had torn his mouth — the beautiful lips that had never uttered a falsehood. Had nearly gouged his eyes out — the eyes that saw only the beautiful. Do you understand that, father? Do you approve of it?

Sergius.— Go on.

Marusia.— Already in prison there awakened in him this terrible, deadly melancholy. He didn't blame anybody; he even defended the keepers — his murderers. But the black anguish grew larger and larger. His soul was dying. But he kept soothing and pacifying me, and once he said to me, 'I carry within my soul the sorrow of the whole world.'

Sergius.— Go on.

Marusia.— First his memory began to fail him; then he ceased talking. He would come out silent, would remain so while I would talk to him, and go away silently. His eyes grew larger and darker, as if they contained within them the anguish of all the world — and father, such beauty I have never beheld before! When I went to see him to-day — he had already been taken to the hospital. When they took him out for a walk yesterday — he wanted to throw himself out through the window, but he was caught in time. Then — madness, the straight jacket — and that's all.

Sergius.— Have you seen him?

Marusia.— Yes, I saw him. But I am not going to say anything about it. I can't. Shattered is the beautiful form!

Sergius.— They have ever stoned their prophets.

Marusia.— Father! But how can one live among these who slay their prophets? Whither shall I go! I can't stand it any longer. I can no longer look at man's countenance — it frightens me! Man's countenance — how terrible! Man's countenance! I have cried out all my tears already. The same anguish ahead of me! The last mortal anguish. You see — I am quiet. Look how many stars! (*A pause.*)

Sergius.— Does Inna know it?

Marusia.— Yes.

Sergius.— What do the doctors say?

Marusia.— They say: An idiot.

Sergius.— Nicholas — an idiot?

Marusia.— Yes. He'll live long; he'll grow indifferent; will eat and drink lots; will grow stout. Yes, he'll live long. He'll be happy —

Sergius.— Nicholas — an idiot! How difficult it is to imagine that. This beautiful man, this harmonious, luminous spirit plunged into darkness, into wearisome, miserable, barely movable chaos. He must have grown ugly now, Marusia?

Marusia (bitterly).— Yes, he is ugly. Do you care?

Sergius.— I am glad that you are so calm. I didn't think you were so strong.

Marusia.— Day after day for—for a whole month, I have been undergoing this continuous strain and torture. I have grown used to it. What is habit, father? It must be a kind of insanity too —

Sergius.— What are you going to do now?

Marusia.— I don't know. I haven't thought of it yet. I would be ashamed of myself, father, to think of my life, my new life, when the grave is so fresh in my memory. It takes some time even for a dog to forget her dead pups.

Sergius.— I shall take care of Nicholas now, he needs but very little, and you, Marusia, must not go to see him. Don't go at all.

Marusia.— No, sir, I am going to do it.

Sergius.— That's scoffing; that's not right, any more than it would be to keep a corpse in one's room. Corpses are to be destroyed by fire.

Marusia.— I would even keep a corpse in my room.

Sergius.— What for?

Marusia.— Do you know pretty Helen? Well, I am going to take her with me.

Sergius.— Are you against anybody?

Marusia.— I don't know,— against you.

Sergius.— Against me?

Marusia.— Yes, I have hit it; I know what I am going to do now. I shall build a city and shall people it with all the old, like pretty Helen, with all the wretched and the crippled, the insane, and the blind. There shall also be there the deaf and dumb, the lepers and the palsied. I am also going to have murderers —

Sergius.— I am sorry for you, Marusia.

Marusia.— I am also going to people it with traitors and liars, and creatures like man, but more terrible than beasts. And the houses will resemble the dwellers therein — crooked, hunchbacked, blind, diseased; dwellings of murderers and traitors. And they will collapse upon the heads of those who will occupy them. They will lie and stifle with ease. And we are going to have constant murders, famine, and mourning. I shall appoint as king Judas Iscariot, and I shall name the city 'To the stars!'

Sergius.— Poor Marusia, I am very sorry for you.

Marusia.— You are not sorry for your son.

Sergius.— I have no children. All human beings are alike to me.

Marusia.— How heartless. No, I shall never understand you.

Sergius.— This is because I think of all. I think of the past, also of the future. I think of the earth and the stars — of all, and in the mist of the past I can see myriads that have perished, and in the mist of the future I can also see myriads of those who are going to perish; and I see the Cosmos, and I see everywhere about me endless rejoicing life — therefore I cannot mourn the loss of one!

(INNA ALEXANDROVNA and PETIA appear on the staircase. She walks with difficulty, supporting herself on PETIA. They slowly pass through the dome.)

Inna Alexandrovna (throwing herself upon her husband).— Our Kolushka, Kolushka! —

Sergius (makes her sit down gently, straightens out and shouts).— They robbed us of our son! Imbeciles; fools; raising their own hands upon themselves.

Inna Alexandrovna.— It's nothing, papa. We'll manage to get along. Kolushka dear, Kolushka —

Sergius.— They would extinguish the sun if they could reach it — so as to die in darkness. They took our son away! They took him away. They have taken our light away. (*Stamps with his foot. PETIA and MARUSIA crying, fall on their knees and are caressing INNA ALEXANDROVNA. SERGIUS NIKOLAIEVITCH walks off a few paces and returns.*)

Marusia.— Forgive me, father.

Sergius.— You must not cry. You mustn't. We possess thought; we possess reason. Oh, do help us! Yes, I am probably getting old.

Inna Alexandrovna.— Kolushka!

Sergius.— That's nothing. Life, life is everywhere. Just at this moment — yes at this very moment! Somebody is born; it may be a Nicholas, — nay, better than he, for nature does not repeat herself.

Marusia.— Is born to go mad, to perish. Is born only to be mourned by his mother. Is that what you want to say?

Sergius.— Life, like a gardener, cuts off the best flowers, — but their fragrance fills the earth. . . . Look there; into that infinite space, into that inexhaustible ocean of creative energy. Look, how peaceful. But if you could only hear through space and see through eternity — you would perhaps die with, perhaps be inflamed with joy. With cold frenzy, obedient to the iron will of gravitation, countless worlds whirl around in space along their orbits — and over them all there rules but one great, one immortal spirit.

Marusia (getting up).— Don't talk to me about a God.

Sergius.— I talk of a creature like ourselves, who is also suffering and thinking, also searching and seeking. I don't know him, but I like him as a friend, as a comrade.

When at the casual meeting of two mysterious powers the first life flamed up, the tiny, infinitesimal life of the amoeba, protoplasm, — already at that moment these huge, luminous bodies had found their master. This is — we who are here and those who are there.

Mighty space of heaven! ancient mystery! you are above my head, you are within my soul, and you are also at my feet, — at the feet of your master!

Marusia.— It is silent, father! It laughs at you!

Sergius.— Yes, but I *will* — and it speaks!

Thither, into that ocean blue, my searching glance I send forth, and gliding from space to space it comprehends and conceives things which no man has ever seen.

I call — and from the darkest crevices of the earth crawl forth, obedient to my command, trembling mystery. She writhes from fear and anger, she threatens me with her bifurcated tongue, blinks her blind eyes — powerless, pitiful monster,— and then I rejoice, and I say unto space and time: ‘Hail to you, son of eternity! Hail to you, my unknown, distant friend!’

Marusia.— But death, madness, and the wild orgy of slaves? Father, I cannot leave this earth; I don’t want to leave it. She is so unfortunate. She breathes anguish and horror — but she gave me life, and I carry in my blood her sufferings and her sorrows, and like a wounded bird, my soul is ever falling towards the earth.

Sergius.— There is no death.

Marusia.— And Nicholas? And your son?

Sergius.— He is in you, he is in Petia, he is in me — he is in all of us, who keep sacred the fragrance of his soul. Is Giordano Bruno dead?

Marusia.— He was great.

Sergius.— Only beasts die, for they have no soul. Only those die who murder, but the murdered, the tortured, the burnt,— these live forever. Man is immortal! there is no death for the Son of eternity!

Inna Alexandrovna.— Kolushka! Kolushka!

Sergius.— In the temples of the ancients an everlasting fire was kept. The wood turned into ashes, the oil burned up, but the flame was kept up forever.

Don’t you feel it here,— everywhere? Don’t you feel within you its pure flame? Who gave you this gentle soul? Whose thought that flew out from some mortal body is abiding within you? Can you say that that is your thought? Your soul is but an altar upon which the Son of eternity is performing divine services. (*Holding out his arms towards the stars.*) Hail to you, to you, my unknown, my distant friend!

Marusia.— I shall go forth into life.

Sergius.— Go. Return to life that which you have taken from her. Give back to the sun her warmth. You shall perish as has perished Nicholas and as are perishing all those whose measureless happy souls are destined to support the everlasting fire. But by your death you shall find immortality. To the Stars!

Petia.— You are crying, father. Let me kiss your hands, let me!

Inna Alexandrovna.— Don’t. Don’t cry, papa. We’ll manage to get in — somehow.

Marusia.— I shall go. I shall keep sacred all that has been left of Nicholas — his noble thoughts, his tender love, his gentle soul. Let them again and again kill him within me, but high above my head I shall carry his pure, uncorrupted soul.

Sergius (holding out his hands towards the stars).— Hail to you, my unknown, distant friend!

Marusia (holding down her hands towards the earth).— I greet thee, my dear, my suffering brother.

Inna Alexandrovna.— Nicholas — Nicholas ——

THE LYRIC ORIGINS OF SWINBURNE

BY VAN TYNE BROOKS

MR. GOSSE has said of Keats that at the time of his death he was 'rapidly progressing towards a crystallization into one fused and perfect style of all the best elements of the poetry of the ages.' It is only because Swinburne's individuality is always the pre-eminent thing, because he somehow submerges and transforms into Swinburne all gifts of phrase and mood, that this may not obviously be applied to him also. He has been sensitive, as a great poet must be, to all the elements of the world's anthology. He has detected all, assimilated all, identified all.

Most preromantic poets were the product of some single school, had some one principal prototype. Milton could hardly have written without Virgil, Dryden without Juvenal, Johnson without Seneca, Congreve without Molière. But scholarship was almost a hindrance to the romanticists. What Sappho might have sung of the passions of life could have no vital literary effect on a Shelley whose own emotions and whose own genius for expression were in such intimate relationship. Mode was cast aside, precedent was of no avail; it was the individual singing to the individual — neither a product of evolution, both essentially primitive. It was thus that Burns found an audience, that Byron threw aside the ideal Greece for the Greece of reality.

Keats was not scholarly enough to apprehend the phrase of other literatures. He interpreted the Greek feeling, without reading a word of the Greek language; he was a Spenserian by instinct, a Provençal by temperament. Browning and Tennyson were reactionaries. The scholarship that returned with them did not, like Johnson's, destroy the poetry: the poetry that was in them, did not, as in Burns, destroy the scholarship. Rather the scholarship and the poetry were co-ordinate and always imperfectly fused.

But Swinburne liquifies and welds both elements. He is a great scholar in the greatest sense — a great *artist* in scholarship. He conceals the traces of midnight oil, he grows more and more human. The whole world of poetry seems to have passed into him, and to have come forth essentially his own. I deny neither Browning's subtler penetration nor Tennyson's extraordinary range of human appeal. But I assert that Swinburne, greater or less than they, is far more typically, more purely a poet.



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