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u prijateljskom, gostovanju u Gibernu  
London, 20. prosinca 1917  
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PEOPLE OF THE UNIVERSE

THE WOMAN

PASSION'S FURNACE

RECONCILIATION

THE INVINCIBLE SHIP



**People of the Universe**  
*Four Serbo - Croatian*  
*Plays by Josip Kosor*

LONDON: HENDERSONS  
66 CHARING CROSS ROAD

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## CONTENTS

	PAGE
THE WOMAN, <i>A Drama in Three Acts</i> . . .	7
PASSION'S FURNACE, <i>A Drama in Four Acts</i> . . .	85
RECONCILIATION, <i>A Drama in Three Acts</i> . . .	171
THE INVINCIBLE SHIP, <i>A Drama in Five Acts</i>	259





DRAMATIC PERSONÆ

I

**THE WOMAN**

*(Translated by P. Selver)*

## DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

PETAR NEBOGIN, about forty years old.

LIMUNKA, his wife, about twenty-seven years old.

ILIJA UDAROV, about thirty-eight years old.

IDAN, a young man, twenty-seven years old.

MARTIN SCHATINITSCH.

SVETISLAV OSTRWITSCH.

A TELEGRAPH MESSENGER.

A YOUNG GIRL, aged fourteen.

FOUR MEN, in crimson attire.

EIGHT MEN, in handsome attire.

A WOMAN, who abuses her husband.

A BEAUTIFUL YOUNG WOMAN.

AN OLD WOMAN, in national costume, who abuses  
Limunka.

OLD WOMEN, in national costume.

YOUNG WOMEN AND MEN, in Roman costume.

The action takes place in a Dalmatian coast town.

## ACT I.

*Night. Card room with a table, a smaller table and a few chairs. Gaslight. On the left a window looking on to the harbour ; against it the storm beats from time to time with a whistling and roaring sound. In the background a door. At the table on the right sit PETAR NEBOGIN and ILIJA UDAROV, the gamblers. On NEBOGIN'S right MARTIN SCHATINITSCH. SVETISLAV OSTRWITSCH is sitting by the window, pensively absorbed in the storm. All four give the impression of overnight weariness. On the table lies paper with pencil. On the smaller table a bottle of absinthe with several small glasses.*

### Scene I.

NEBOGIN, UDAROV, SCHATINITSCH and OSTRWITSCH.

SCHATINITSCH. (*Clutching the pack of cards in one hand and UDAROV'S hand with the other.*) Stop ! Stop !

UDAROV. Let us alone !

NEBOGIN. (*To UDAROV.*) Give me a card.

SCHATINITSCH. No, he shan't give you any more.

UDAROV. Let go of me ! (*Frees his hand and drags the pack of cards from the hand of SCHATINITSCH.*) What does it matter to you if he wants to go on playing ?

SCHATINITSCH. It is getting inhuman, bestial. . . . Surely you must have a heart, a little compassion ! . . .

NEBOGIN. Be quiet !

UDAROV. Hold your peace !

SCHATINITSCH. I won't hold my peace. I'll go into the town and shout it out in all the streets—it's a sin, it's a crime.

UDAROV. Hold your peace when I tell you !

SCHATINITSCH. You have ruined him, robbed him of half his fortune.

UDAROV. Isn't that—— (*Seizes SCHATINITSCH by the head fiercely.*) Stop your whimpering !

SCHATINITSCH. The house in the town, and what a house ! Like a palace. And the fields and vineyards—and what vineyards ! Where the best wine thrives. You want to make him a beggar. It goes to a man's heart.

NEBOGIN. Quiet, Schatinitsch, quiet !

SCHATINITSCH. It's a great sin . . . it's a madness. It has been going on a whole month, day after day, night after night, and nobody comes to separate you.

OSTREWITSCH. How sadly and darkly it is howling outside ! I feel that the sea and the night are utterly worn out by the storm. You men yonder, stop ! The storm in your blood is so petty and wretched against the one that is raging on the sea. . . . (*Gets up, goes to the table, drinks a small glass of absinthe and sits down again by the window.*)

UDAROV. (*Handing NEBOGIN a card.*) His great-grandfather slew my great-grandfather. Was not that a greater crime ?

NEBOGIN. In a duel on the frontier of Montenegro, according to the family tradition.

UDAROV. It makes no odds how and where—he slew him.

NEBOGIN. And your grandfather revenged himself on my grandfather for it, with this difference—that it

happened at night, and my grandfather was found lying with his face on the earth. He had been attacked from behind.

UDAROV. It makes no odds. Then in this matter we are quits.

NEBOGIN. Truly, my grandfather was attacked from behind.

UDAROV. Are you so certain of it ?

NEBOGIN. Yes.

UDAROV. And you could never forget it ?

NEBOGIN. That is my affair.

UDAROV. Your family has a very delicate memory. . . . But in the tradition of your ancestors is there any mention of how on a far-away pitch-dark night, long, long years ago—and the storm was howling then as darkly and deeply as to-night—a whole flock of sheep was missed from our fold, and that this flock of sheep was discovered the next day on one of your remotest fields ? A tenth of them had been slaughtered in the meantime, so that the theft might be concealed by the decrease in numbers.

NEBOGIN. That is a lie ! The sheep were discovered, as my grandfather told me, not in our field, but in the neighbouring one. Anyhow, that was no offence against the custom of the time. Why did you not watch and protect your sheep better ? At that time robbery was extolled and honoured in all countries—it reflected glory on a hero. Shortly after those events my illustrious ancestors were raised to the nobility with the title “Nebogija of the Mountains.” But as I have heard from older folk, your ancestors were also raised to the nobility just after the bloodiest of slaughter and wholesale robbery !

UDAROV. Maybe ! But let that go to the devil ! It only depresses your spirits and drives the blood into your head.

SCHATINITSCH. Our ancestors had a very good time. A man could do what he wanted, according to the amount of strength he had. But nowadays we live in a foolish age of laws, and (*sighing*) killing is visited with punishment.

UDAROV. Is gambling not visited with punishment ?

NEBOGIN. The punishment for it is far slighter than for murder.

UDAROV. Perhaps that's why you've chosen gambling, to beat me in that way.

(NEBOGIN *stares straight before him.*)

UDAROV. And you've beaten yourself.

(NEBOGIN *assumes a sullen and gloomy air.*)

UDAROV. You wanted to ruin me.

NEBOGIN. Let's talk no more about it.

UDAROV. And you've ruined yourself.

NEBOGIN. We shall see that later.

UDAROV. You'll lose everything.

NEBOGIN. We shall see that later. Besides, how do you know that beforehand ?

UDAROV. I don't know it. I only feel it. My soul has flung itself with its whole will upon your soul and bends and shapes it just as it pleases.

(NEBOGIN *looks at him challengingly.*)

OSTRWITSCH. Stop, you petty creatures ! Do not offend Nature with your petty wrangling. Hold your breath and come here, to listen to this gloomy, raging majesty.

SCHATINITSCH. Nebogin, have you insured your two



ships that are bound for France with a cargo of oxen ?

NEBOGIN. No, why ?

SCHATINITSCH. I'm beginning to feel anxious about them.

NEBOGIN. You're talking nonsense.

SCHATINITSCH. My anxiety increases with every breath.

UDAROV. (*Puts the cards down.*) I'm going. (*Gets up.*)

NEBOGIN. (*Alarmed.*) What do you mean ?

UDAROV. I won't play any more.

NEBOGIN. You won't play any more ?

UDAROV. No.

NEBOGIN. You won't play any more, after you've won half my fortune from me ?

SCHATINITSCH. Bravo, Udarov ! Nebogin, I implore you.

UDAROV. This raving has been going on for a whole month now, and I'm tired of it. I'd really like to know the reason for this hideous duel.

NEBOGIN. The reason ?

UDAROV. Yes, the reason.

NEBOGIN. You know it very well.

UDAROV. I know nothing. I want to hear it from your mouth.

NEBOGIN. You don't need to hear it—you know it.

UDAROV. Is it really possible that we are going on with the work of our ancestors in this manner. Deuce take it, we've received, if not much, anyhow a few drops of civilisation. We've both been to school.

NEBOGIN. Drop our ancestors, drop school—that's nothing to do with it. And why I'm fighting you ?

I'll tell you that at the end of the game, although you know it beforehand.

UDAROV. (*Gets up.*) I won't touch the cards again.

OSTRWITSCH. Storm and sea and darkness, clutching and biting each other, are raging in a huge matted tangle through space. (*Gets up, drinks a glass of absinthe and sits down again.*)

(*Pause.*)

NEBOGIN. (*Starting up from his reflections, rises and seizes both UDAROV'S hands, hissingly.*) Why did you look at her with such shameless eyes the last time by the pier ?

UDAROV. (*Noisily.*) Ha, ha, ha ! Now we've got it. There's the solution to this great riddle.

NEBOGIN. (*Dragging at his hands.*) Why did you look at her so shamelessly ?

UDAROV. (*Pulls his hands away and raises them up.*) I swear by my living God, by the light of my eyes and by the light of my soul, that I esteem her and adore her as no other being upon earth. Yes, I adore her more purely and loftily than you.

NEBOGIN. You lie, knave. In your glance there was a flame, a flame of treacherous, brutish desire. Your eyes shrieked for her and started from their sockets.

(UDAROV *turns pale, starts back and clutches at his dagger.*)

SCHATINITSCH. (*Seizes his hands.*) Think what you're doing. Come to your senses. What are you about ? (*Kisses his forehead.*) Come to your senses. Calm yourself.

UDAROV. (*Controls himself, in a low, gloomy voice.*) We'll go on playing. (*Both sit down at the table.*)

UDAROV *shuffles the cards, gives one to NEBOGIN, one to himself, then he picks up the paper.*) I'll put in the pool everything that I've taken from him before witnesses, and that's set down here on the paper. The house, the fields, the vineyards, the carriage and team, and I'll go on playing only on condition that the whole pool is staked on one card.

NEBOGIN. Ah! (*Turns pale and stares at him.*)

UDAROV. Yes.

SCHATINITSCH. (*To NEBOGIN.*) You must go home at once. I implore you on my knees.

OSTRWITSCH. Nebogin and Udarov, I see you sinking. I stand by the shore and see you sinking down heavy as lead in a close clutch . . . and at the bottom of the sea there is a beauteous nymph who drags you down by a very thin golden thread. . . . (*Suddenly*) Absinthe is too weak, I'm going out to drink storm and darkness. . . . (*Rushes out.*)

NEBOGIN. Give me a card—I agree. I'll settle the pool.

UDAROV. What do you stake?

NEBOGIN. The villa on the sea-front and my estate Olotov with three hundred acres of ground.

UDAROV. Good! (*Gives him a card: hissingly.*) I wish you much luck. (*Lays a card in front of himself.*)

NEBOGIN. One only! Enough!

UDAROV. (*After he has taken a card and looked at it.*)  
Two aces. . . . You're done for!

(NEBOGIN *for a while stares at his cards, tears them into pieces, stands up, attempts to walk, staggers.* SCHATINITSCH *rushes up and seizes his arm.*)

SCHATINITSCH. Come out, come into the fresh air. Come quick! (*Leads him out; pause.*)

(UDAROV looks straight in front of him for a while, then he goes to the window, opens it and stares out into the night and storm. From without a sudden impact of howling storm-notes.)

## Scene II.

UDAROV, OSTRWITSCH.

OSTRWITSCH. Nature out yonder is like a chaotic poem, that is still raging in the blood and phantasy of God. . . . (*Looks closely at UDAROV, then casts a glance outside.*) And you! You are plunging your covetous, revengeful glances into Nebogin's villa yonder. . . . I've just heard all about it, out there. You've made him a beggar. . . . Look, there is a light in the window-panes; it is midnight, and she is not asleep yet. She is writhing in the sorrows of offended blood and an offended soul. She is brooding on revenge . . . woe to him! For a whole month he has paid no heed to her. . . . (*UDAROV sighs and wrings his hands.*) You are wringing your hands for the villa, for her. You are thinking of her, you love her. I hear your heart beating, so stormily does it beat for her. You would possess her. Look at the streaks of light from the lighthouse. Shadows are creeping around, densely serried shadows: they are the secret lovers, the hesitant lovers, who, shunning the light of day, in their wishes and cravings wanton with her. Like dogs harried by rut, with glowing flames in their eyes they slink around the villa. They know that none of

her glances will come their way, that none of her thoughts will stir for them, and in spite of all they slink around the house ; indeed, they slink around all the more. . . . They all would love her and possess her. You, I, the whole town—for she is beautiful as only the soul, when it feels the raptures of the body, can amid its most blazing fever, conjure up in dream. . . .

UDAROV. I feel as if my soul wishes to join the storm in comradeship, that it might raze the villa to the ground and snatch her away from the flying ruins and soar away with her to the bounds of the unsullied sky. It is fifteen years since I saw her for the first time, for fifteen years a longing for her has blazed in me——

OSTRWITSCH. Longing ?

UDAROV. Why do you look at me so strangely ?

OSTRWITSCH. Longing ?

UDAROV. Ah well, perhaps you are right, perhaps he was right too. . . .

OSTRWITSCH. Hm, hm !

UDAROV. Perhaps it is not longing. . . .

OSTRWITSCH. Hm, hm !

UDAROV. Perhaps it is truly a craving. . . .

OSTRWITSCH. You are still in doubt. It is the most brutish of brutish cravings. Bah ! Not one of us has even a notion of what real love is.

UDAROV. And I have roved through all countries, seeking forgetfulness. I have steeped my youth in alcohol and debauch, but nothing under the sun helped me.

OSTRWITSCH. Udarov, let it go to the deuce. (*Striking his forehead.*) Stop, I have an idea—an idea that can make you a historical figure, that can make you



a legend for all coming generations of the islands. The idea is treacherous, but—(*their glances meet in a cunning smile*) but—

UDAROV. Do not speak, I implore you.

OSTRWITSCH. Ha, ha, ha ! You have the same idea, your eyes divulge it to me. Look, listen to me, do not hide your idea so cravenly in your eyes. It is already straining out ; it stares, it shrieks, does this idea. Look, he too, the husband, has the same idea at this very moment ; in the glowing mist of his brain the same idea is writhing, or rather, it is not writhing, but fearsomely and treacherously it is creeping through all the twinings and furrows of his brain. And the merciful Schatinitzsch, that pious knave, whose craving for her is no less than yours and mine, has at this very moment hit upon the same idea. And even she, Limunka, with all her magic and grace, is this instant vehemently stirred by a dark foreboding. . . . I see her now sitting on the couch brooding on revenge—suddenly start up. . . . You have killed Nebogin. . . .

UDAROV. He will come to his senses again.

OSTRWITSCH. Never !

UDAROV. He will come to his senses.

OSTRWITSCH. Yes, on the day of the Last Judgment, as you will too. . . .

UDAROV. What, as I will too ?

OSTRWITSCH. You have killed yourself as well.

(Pause.)

UDAROV. Go, go, you fuddle yourself with absinthe and then you talk nothing but nonsense. However—

OSTRWITSCH. What, however ?

UDAROV. You do not know what and how I think about Nebogin now.



OSTRWITSCH. Thoughts do not help us at all ; we always have the most beautiful thoughts, sheer pearls in our souls, but it avails nothing, we are bent and kneaded by passions.

UDAROV. You do not know what I have resolved. I am beginning to have quite different feelings towards Nebogin. Compassion for him is stirring within me, and like a gentle sunbeam it melts and destroys all hatred.

OSTRWITSCH. That is no compassion, that is a physical and moral weakness. A complete inner and outer exhaustion. You are beginning to be afraid. See how pale you have suddenly become. You are so strangely pale.

UDAROV. Leave me in peace, I say.

OSTRWITSCH. Fear, naked fear, is gradually beginning to get power over you, and to shake and gnaw you.

UDAROV. You devil !

OSTRWITSCH. With barbed and icy claws it is clasping your wretched heart. I know that unreasoning state when we become the miserable prey of dark, icy forces.

UDAROV. (*Shrieking.*) Leave me in peace.

### Scene III.

*The same.* NEBOGIN and SCHATINITSCH enter arm in arm. NEBOGIN gloomy, broken. SCHATINITSCH is talking to him persuasively.

UDAROV. (*Walks towards NEBOGIN and offers him his hand tremblingly.*) There is my hand for you.

NEBOGIN. I will not take your hand.

UDAROV. Nebogin!

NEBOGIN. I do not want your hand, take it back.

UDAROV. (*Hastily imploring.*) Nebogin!

NEBOGIN. Take back your hand, or I'll rip it open for you.

UDAROV. (*In the same tone.*) Nebogin! I am offering it to you in friendship.

NEBOGIN. I will have none of your friendship.

UDAROV. By my living God, by the mother's milk with which my mother fed me, by the light of the sun, by the light of my eyes, by the ocean which I love with the deepest tenderness of all, by the storm, that is my sole prayer—I offer you my hand in friendship.

SCHATINITSCH. (*To NEBOGIN.*) Give him your hand, he is speaking the truth.

UDAROV. Schatinitsch and Ostrwitsch, you were the witnesses of our gamble.

SCHATINITSCH. More's the pity!

OSTRWITSCH. Why more's the pity? We had our amusement from it and revelled in Nebogin's sorrows. Listen! the storm is howling again—or rather it is not the storm that is howling. In such hollow, such monotonous, such black tones the storm cannot howl. It is weariness that is howling from the deep, mouldering, mildewed vaults and ruins of the ancient palace. In the presence of night it is hurling accusations at time. . . .

UDAROV. What have I won?

SCHATINITSCH. Ah!

(NEBOGIN *sobs.*)

UDAROV. What have I won?

OSTRWITSCH. And time howls and hisses back at weariness. . . .

UDAROV. Listen to me—You are no longer the witnesses of what I have won.

SCHATINITSCH. What is the meaning of that ?

UDAROV. I will take nothing of my winnings.

*(Short pause.)*

SCHATINITSCH. Oh, the grace of God is upon you—

UDAROV. I will take nothing of my winnings.  
*(Tears up the paper on the table.)*

*(SCHATINITSCH is about to embrace UDAROV, who gently prevents him.)*

UDAROV. I renounce all my winnings. May a black curse and the sore punishment of God strike me, strike my every thought and my every feeling if they were roused by greed for Nebogin's possessions. May God and all holy powers slay and crush me on the spot if even with the slightest and most distantly quivering thought in my brain I dare to lay hand upon the sanctity, the host upon Nebogin's altar ! May my every gesture and every movement of my limbs be knotted in an eternal rigidness if in the slightest they are sinfully seduced by the blood ! May my eyes be blinded if they are lifted to her, to wondrous Limunka, in any other wise than to Heaven ! . . . indeed, I will not make bold to look on her at all. In my sight she shall become God, the Invisible, the Almighty, the Austere, of whom we do not dare to think. Nebogin ! Let us destroy the past, let us be men, let us be brothers, give me your hand !

*(Pause.)*

SCHATINITSCH. *(Pleadingly.)* Nebogin !

NEBOGIN. No, no, no, never, never, never ! I will go on gambling.

SCHATINITSCH. In Heaven's name, what are you thinking of ? You have gambled away everything.

NEBOGIN. I will gamble. (*To UDAROV.*) I am no beggar. I want no alms from you. How dare you offer me alms, how dare you insult me ! You knave, I will gamble, gamble, gamble !

SCHATINITSCH. But you have nothing more to stake upon the cards.

NEBOGIN. The two ships with oxen bound for France.

OSTRWITSCH. The storm is gambling with them, or has already gambled.

#### *Scene IV.*

*The same.* A TELEGRAPH MESSENGER.

MESSENGER. (*Handing NEBOGIN a telegram.*) I ought to have been here half an hour ago, but at the corner by the Telegraph Office the storm seized me and flung me along for ten yards. It was lucky for me I fell on the hay that is stored there in bundles, or else I shouldn't have been able to bring you the news at all.

(*SCHATINITSCH reads the telegram with NEBOGIN ; utters a cry.*)

OSTRWITSCH. I suppose now he can't stake on the card the ships with the oxen. That's it, eh ?

SCHATINITSCH. (*Reading.*) "Near Pola arose a perfect hurricane from which nothing escaped. Both

ships were shattered, and sank. All cattle drowned." Oh, oh, oh! Why did you not insure the ships? And so much poor cattle! Oh, oh! What a disaster!

OSTRWITSCH. You are talking nonsense, Schatinitzsch. That is a thoroughly simple, strictly logical chain of events. When a man loses or gambles away all his fortune, what else can happen to him afterwards but that his ships sink, or such like? I fancy that is not yet the worst. In this occurrence there is even something affectingly beautiful, I mean in the darkly tragical, mysterious aspect of it. . . . The real shipwrecks have yet to come.

NEBOGIN. (*In wild grief.*) And for all that, I must gamble, I must gamble. I must, I must. . . . Udarov, I possess nothing more, but I possess my life. . . . I'll stake my life on the card, and if I gamble it away (*takes a revolver out of his pocket*) you have the right to——

UDAROV. No, Nebogin, I want you to live, I want friendship between us, I want you to live. . . .

NEBOGIN. But I will not.

UDAROV. You must live.

NEBOGIN. You are cowardly.

UDAROV. I am not cowardly; you must live.

NEBOGIN. If you are not a coward, let us play for our lives. I'll stake my pistol and you your dagger, and the weapon of him who wins shall bring death to him who loses. That will be play indeed. All our play up till now was child's play, play fit only for cowards. We will show that we are descendants of our ancestors. Yes, yes, yes, let us play in the style of our ancestors. . . . Let us play with life and death for stakes.



UDAROV. I am not at all proud of my ancestors, and at this moment I have reason to value life more than you.

NEBOGIN. I repeat it, and this very night I will have the whole town roused with the drum and have it announced that you are a coward. You are the greatest coward I ever saw in my life. . . .

### Scene V.

*The same. A well-made, strange YOUNG MAN enters.*

YOUNG MAN. Pardon, friends. The darkness and the storm outside are terrifying, and the light here was so enticing that in spite of myself I ventured in. It is howling so uncannily, so icily, that it freezes your blood with fear. That points to something evil.

OSTRWITSCH. You are lying, you are not afraid. Why, I saw you yonder slinking around Nebogin's villa. . . . You most of all. . . . Half an hour ago I saw you standing in a streak of light wringing your hands in front of the window.

NEBOGIN. (*Pointing out UDAROV to the YOUNG MAN.*) Whoever you are, friend, foe or devil, you are unknown to me ; but look at that face and store up that face, that low brow, well in your memory.

YOUNG MAN. (*Taken aback.*) What is the meaning of that ? Why this abuse ?

NEBOGIN. This fellow is the greatest coward in the world.

UDAROV. That is not very just dealing. You want to challenge me by force, but you do not choose fair means for it. You give me the name which belongs to



your own character ! and I will add to it that you are at the same time a usurer of the meanest sort. Out of base, revolting greed you wanted to ruin me and you've ruined yourself.

NEBOGIN. It was not greed that prompted me.

UDAROV. Greed, greed, you despicable usurer ! You are all greed. You have inherited it, you have inherited it from your father. Your father plunged hundreds and hundreds of poor peasants into misfortune and misery, sent them as beggars into foreign countries. Through gigantic, unheard-of greed you will not let your wife be seen in the street, will not even let her be mutely adored. Those are the signs of greed in the usurer who would have all for himself, the whole earth, the whole of Nature, and every breath of Nature and every smile of the dawn. You want to gamble for weapons ? There am I. I'll stake on the card everything that I've won from you.

NEBOGIN. (*Eagerly.*) And what else ?

UDAROV. And my whole fortune. Five houses in the town, my estate Rovina with six hundred acres of ground, my vineyards, my meadows, my fields, my movables, everything, everything, everything. . . .

NEBOGIN. And ?

SCHATINITSCH. Udarov ! You are overwrought. You are in a delirium.

UDAROV. (*Shouting.*) I will sate you, I will sate you, I will sate you. . . .

NEBOGIN. And ?

UDAROV. (*Tears open his shirt and lays bare his breast.*) And my life in the bargain !

(*Thrilled silence.*)

NEBOGIN. And what shall I stake ?

UDAROV. You stake nothing.

NEBOGIN. I stake nothing ?

UDAROV. But——

NEBOGIN. But ?

UDAROV. Her. . . .

NEBOGIN. Her, whom ?

UDAROV. Limunka.

OSTRWITSCH. (*Taking a hasty breath.*) At last !  
Thank God, thank Satan ! Oh, what delight !

(NEBOGIN utters a cry ; pause.)

(NEBOGIN goes to the window, opens it, stares out  
for a while and suddenly begins to shake.  
*Creaking and groaning of ships in the harbour  
and a chaos of storm-bursts presses abruptly  
in.*)

SCHATINITSCH. (*Jumps towards NEBOGIN.*) You are  
unwell, you look paler than death. What ails you ?  
Look, his whole body is shaking. That is horrible.  
The horror of it is clutching me as well.

OSTRWITSCH. (*Jumps towards NEBOGIN.*) What  
ails you ? (*Shakes NEBOGIN by the arm.*) Calm  
yourself.

SCHATINITSCH. (*Fetches water.*) Drink a little, that  
will do you good.

NEBOGIN. (*After he has taken a gulp and a short  
pause has ensued.*) I have seen her.

SCHATINITSCH. Whom ?

NEBOGIN. My dead mother.

OSTRWITSCH. You have seen your dead mother ?

NEBOGIN. I have seen her.

OSTRWITSCH. You have seen a great thing then.  
In your dead mother you have seen your hour.

SCHATINITSCH. You have seen your hour.

OSTRWITSCH. Nebogin, listen. That was a sign, it always occurs before great events. Stake the spectre on the card and your wife in the bargain. The phantoms of the dead possess huge power in which the living are under the ban of death. I knew a man who at the prompting of a vision dug up huge treasures, became rich and afterwards made away with all his enemies. You can defeat him yet by the mystical power from beyond.

SCHATINITSCH. Before Petar Adowitsch got the lovely Spanish woman for whom all the neighbouring islands were sensually enkindled, he saw his dead bride. It always brings gain. Stake it.

OSTRWITSCH. Consider that the ghost came for the sake of a card, to gamble. You will win, stake it.

SCHATINITSCH AND OSTRWITSCH. Stake it! (*Hastily.*) Stake it!

NEBOGIN. (*Pale, in a scarcely audible tone.*) I'll stake it—

YOUNG MAN. (*Flings himself at NEBOGIN'S feet.*) Don't stake it, don't stake it—by your living God, by the light of your soul, don't stake it. You do not know what you are doing, your eyes are blind, your soul is blind. You want to gamble with the highest. You want to play away the highest, you want to play away your God. Don't gamble, don't gamble with angels, with God and Fate as stake, it will take a bitter revenge on you. Think of her, think of her soul, think of the beauty of her soul, and you will at once feel what a blasphemy you would commit. Think of her face and her form. She is fairer than angels and nymphs. She is the fairest creature that is. Her magic excels the loveliest dream. No bird and no

flower of the earth possesses that grace which she possesses. She is fair as light, as the highest light of yearning. Her hair is fragrant with the fragrance of the laurel and the orange. She is sublime and mighty. She is a divinity.

OSTRWITSCH. You pining animal, away from here !  
(*Kicks at him.*)

SCHATINITSCH. Away from here with you ! (*Drags him away from NEBOGIN's feet.*)

(UDAROV goes to the card-table with resolute step, NEBOGIN staggering.)

OSTRWITSCH. They say that men go to the scaffold with leaden feet.

(UDAROV is about to shuffle the cards.)

NEBOGIN. (*Takes the cards from UDAROV.*) I will set them out. (*Gives one to UDAROV, one to himself.*)

UDAROV. Only one more——

NEBOGIN. (*Hands it to him, then presses it tight against the table. Suddenly in an imploring tone.*) Don't look at it at once, I won't look at my card at once, either. I'll only take a single one, too.

UDAROV. Well ?

(*Fierce whistling and moaning of the storm.*)

NEBOGIN. (*Confused.*) Let's wait a while. . . . My heart is beating so vehemently . . . and my heart is in such torment. I can't bear it.

UDAROV. Let's go into the fresh air.

NEBOGIN. (*Softly.*) What a good thought ! Let's go into the fresh air. Condemned men always have a certain amount of time to themselves before they are executed. But wait, we will first nail the cards down. No stranger's glance may see our fate. Then we'll

go on the sea, we'll take a boat, and then I'll tell you about *her*. . . .

UDAROV. You'll tell me about *her* ?

NEBOGIN. Yes, I'll tell you about *her*. . . . (*Goes out, brings a hammer, and nails both cards to the table.*) The surf must be roaring gloriously now in the dark. It roars, and roars, so sweetly . . . so sweetly. . . .

UDAROV. And in this roaring all can be forgotten.

NEBOGIN. I love the foam, it roars so gently. . . .

UDAROV. I love it too.

NEBOGIN. As a child I was so fond of sitting down on a rock and holding my hand in the surf.

UDAROV. And as a child I let the foam spurt into my face.

NEBOGIN. (*With a changed and sorrowful voice.*) Ah, Udarov——

UDAROV. What is the matter ?

NEBOGIN. Perhaps all this that we are doing is——

UDAROV. What ?

NEBOGIN. (*Bitterly.*) Not we, but what another is doing against our will and makes us so petty and wretched. There you have my hand . . . and wait. There you have my brotherly kiss. . . . (*Kisses the forehead of UDAROV, who smiles bitterly. Both go out sobbing.*)



*Scene VI.*

*The same without UDAROV and NEBOGIN.*

SCHATINITSCH. I have a fear that the two will never return.

OSTRWITSCH. They will certainly return. They are only treading their path of death beforehand. . . .

YOUNG MAN. When it became well known in all lands that Ammanhaija, the lovely princess, daughter of King Aschaheir, was ready to be wooed——

OSTRWITSCH. What are you raving about ?

YOUNG MAN. I will tell a tale.

OSTRWITSCH. Tell it then, for my part.

SCHATINITSCH. You can tell it for my part, too. It is sometimes pleasant to hear the words of a stranger while you are listening to what is within you.

YOUNG MAN. Then came princes, knights and heroes in handsome attire in front of the place of King Aschaheir. Three days and nights they tarried in front of the palace without food or drink. The princess would not let herself be seen. She let herself be called by her name, and not until it was called with the right note by a stranger in simple attire, did she come out and let herself be seen. Her beauty blinded the eyes of all and they all fell before her in the dust. Only the one in simple attire remained upright and breathed softly, like the breath of an Æolian harp : “ Ammanhaija ! ” “ See, ” she said to those who were kneeling, “ him it is whom ye have to thank that I appeared, for he named my name with the right note. In his voice sounded the soul and truth, while in your voices there was something impure that comes from the blood. Ye know me beautiful and



have nothing but desire for me ! ” Then all swore by the light and by their lives that they too had laid their souls into their voices, and if it had sounded differently to the princess, then what she heard had only been because she had misheard. The princess repeated that she had heard it quite well, and that if they supposed otherwise, that meant that their souls were not beautiful. . . .

On the next day the princess said to the suitors who were pining so much for her that she would take that one among them who divined what was the most beautiful thing about her. And then there arose a wild emulation for beautiful, delicate words, heaven and earth—sun and stars were called upon for aid to praise her beauty. One praised her face, the second her eyes, the third her hair, the fourth her elfin shape. Many sang of her in poems, and many crept before her on the earth, to utter their adoration for the princess in mute and grievous gestures. And the man in simple attire who had named her name with the right note, first gazed reverently up to the sun, then with noiseless step he went up to her and said : “ It is the invisible about you that is the most beautiful ! ” . . . “ See,” she exulted to the rest of the suitors, “ he loves me and divines everything . . . him will I take.”

Then all the princes, knights and heroes were in revolt and their breasts surged like the ocean in storm. . . . “ What is he . . . this fellow in simple attire ? There is nothing knightly, nothing kingly about him, and his attire betrays him as just a simple man. There is no splendour of silver and gold about him, everything upon him is of wool. . . . What has he done hitherto, what deeds has he accomplished ? ” And all

the princes, knights and heroes began to boast of their deeds. One had hacked off full a hundred heads, the second had seized upon many lands, the third again had dragged huge treasures from his enemy. And they all clamoured at the man in simple attire, that he should also recite his deeds. But he was not at all offended thereby, but smiled gently and said : “ One day a wounded bird fell from a branch in the forest. I took it with me into my hut and nursed and fed it till it was well and flew away exulting into the blue heavens.” . . . “ Is that all ? ” they cried, shaking themselves with mocking laughter. . . . “ That is all, with the addition that I am the enemy of all poisonous plants, and tear them out wherever I find them.” . . . “ You are speaking to them of things that they cannot understand, you are casting before them pearls which they cannot see,” said the princess to him, bending gently towards him and giving him a kiss in the sight of all the princes, knights and heroes.

And this kiss had the effect upon them all of a huge poisoned whip ; it bowed them down and bent and thrust them with a curious power as far as the sea. It scorched their souls, filled them with unheard-of hate and envy, that they could no longer check themselves—but they all took each other’s hands, and in the raging throes of brotherly hate and envy they rushed into the sea and were drowned. And the man in simple attire became king to a queen of beauty, and as it is the custom to say : “ They lived happy ever after.”

OSTRWITSCH. In spite of all that is lame and deaf about you, you seem to be a mysterious fellow. In your eyes a firm intention can be read, and your face

seems to be rather dangerous to women. I have seen you at least five times creeping on all fours around Nebogin's villa. And when the moon peered forth from the sooty, shaggy clouds, you wrung your hands and moaned grievously up to her. It seems to me that Nebogin's villa has become a Mecca and Medina. Pay heed to what I tell you: "Don't gamble with your life!"

*Scene VII.*

*The same.* NEBOGIN, UDAROV, *arm-in-arm, both in drenched tattered clothing.*

UDAROV. That was sheer madness. What demon could have persuaded us to take a boat out in the night and storm such as is now raging on the sea?

NEBOGIN. You forget everything. Did I not tell you that I will talk to you about her only on the sea?

UDAROV. But the first wave clutched us ragingly and flung us on to the shore.

NEBOGIN. I have never seen the ocean rage so venomously, Udarov. I am much stirred that so darkly powerful a storm has shattered my ships.

UDAROV. Truly, you have encountered exceedingly great things. You, the storm and the ocean, you were in a brotherly embrace. Embrace amid misfortune. The cry of your heart was blended with the time-old cry of the raging power. Through storm and ocean you yourself became something dim, monstrous, great.

NEBOGIN. Why do you keep on speaking words that fill me with fear?

UDAROV. I do not speak. It is the impression, it is the image. The ocean has received pinions ; the ocean has been transformed into a monstrous, cosmic giant-serpent, that twists, writhes, hisses and froths venom and glimmers dark green.

NEBOGIN. And you link my feelings with this horror incarnate. O God ! I am beginning to grow fearfully weary.

UDAROV. You must not grow weary now.

NEBOGIN. It is as if my breast were burnt out—barren, empty—I have lost something.

UDAROV. What have you lost ?

NEBOGIN. I cannot come to myself. How long were we out yonder ?

UDAROV. You have lost your feeling for time. That is very dangerous.

NEBOGIN. There is a maddening chill in my heart, my brain is as if torn away. I feel as if I had lived an eternity nailed down in a coffin . . . nailed down. . . .

UDAROV. Yes, nails are in store for us. Perhaps you are no stranger to those nails.

NEBOGIN. (*Clutches UDAROV's hands.*) Can you conceive what the nails of the crucified are like ?

UDAROV. I have never thought of it.

NEBOGIN. Just attempt to think of it. . . . Tell me again how it was you saw Limunka for the first time. How was it ? The ship glided proudly, majestically amid the fluid purple of the west into the harbour—

UDAROV. On that evening the heaven looked like a soft, silken, coloured fan, which wafts gentle breezes into the countenances of angels. . . .

NEBOGIN. Strange it is, how we all become poets at such moments.

UDAROV. When I saw her among the many voyagers she appeared in white on deck with her mother. When I saw her in the western light, when I gazed upon her in the light of her great dark eyes . . . in the light of her glorious countenance . . . in the light of her hair, that, like another living creature, dazzling the eyes, flowed over her shoulders with unspeakable magic; then my heart throbbed and shrivelled up, and I cried aloud as if I had too suddenly met my destiny that enraptures, and at the same time murders.

NEBOGIN. When did you cry aloud?

UDAROV. Fifteen years ago, and in my soul I still hear this cry, and I hearken to it within me. Sometimes I sink down and crouch and hearken to it.

NEBOGIN. At that time she was ten years old, but strikingly ripened and beautiful. I too saw her for the first time—Ah! (*Clutches at his head as if in pain.*)

OSTRWITSCH. (*Points questioningly to NEBOGIN'S head.*) Look at his head!

SCHATINITSCH. What's the matter?

OSTRWITSCH. Look at it closely—in these last few hours it has become quite grey.

SCHATINITSCH. By God, you have got grey hair!

UDAROV. You have become an old man!

OSTRWITSCH. Tear out the nails. Free him from his torment!

SCHATINITSCH. Let us tear out the nails!

OSTRWITSCH. Let us tear out the nails—let us free him from Golgotha.

SCHATINITSCH. Let us free him from Golgotha!



NEBOGIN. (*Seizes their hands imploringly.*) No, no ; not yet, no ! Let me still live . . . no !

OSTRWITSCH. (*Shouting.*) Curiosity is consuming us. It is slaying us.

NEBOGIN. (*Warding them off.*) No, no ; have pity on me !

OSTRWITSCH. You have pity on us ! (*Tears out the nails and uncovers the cards of both.*) Ah ! . . . Udarov has won Limunka !

SCHATINITSCH. (*Softly.*) And the dead mother into the bargain !

NEBOGIN *staggers along and collapses on the ground.*

(*An anguished pause of suspense, and into the deadly stillness of the room there suddenly bursts a shrill wail from the adjoining room. A pretty girl of fourteen, with her hair dishevelled by the storm and her eyes big with dread, rushes in. The GIRL looks around her timidly, stands a short while as if rooted to the ground, then, catching sight of NEBOGIN, she flings herself at his feet. Whistling and moaning of the storm.*)

THE GIRL. Sir, have pity ! Come home, come home, come home ! The mistress is crying, she cries and cries and cries . . . it makes one's heart burst, she cries so ! Sir, listen, listen ! (*Looks into his eyes awaiting an answer.*) Listen ! Alas ! He won't listen, he won't listen ! (*Looks again into his eyes and shakes him.*) Alas ! he can't listen, he can't listen ! And she's crying. . . . Alas ! I am afraid she will throw herself from the balcony into the sea. (*With folded hands to NEBOGIN.*) Listen, listen ! . . . (*Turns with folded hands to the others.*) She will throw herself from the balcony into the sea ; she cries and cries and



cries ! Listen, all of you ! Alas ! Nobody here listens, nobody here can listen. . . . I'm cold, I'm cold ! (*Is about to go, but grows bewildered and strays about the room for a short while like a frightened bird.*)

(*The YOUNG MAN goes up to her, takes her by the hand, kisses her gently on the forehead and leads her noiselessly out on tip-toe.*)

(*Curtain.*)

## ACT II.

*A spacious room. On the right and left a door. In the background a balcony door. In front on the right a table, a couch and two chairs. It is lit by candles. On the left a round, black-marble table, on it Southern fruit in a silver plate. Close by, a dagger. Beside the table a huge palm. On the walls fantastic pictures.*

*When the curtain rises, LIMUNKA'S delicate slender form can be seen moving on the balcony. She has a thin, clinging, dark red dress on, that plainly reveals the beauty of her limbs, and handsome oriental sandals on her bare feet.*

*She beckons with her hands to the castaways, who are struggling with the seething ocean for life and death, and whose cries of distress : " Help, help ! O God, come to our help ! Come to our help ! " penetrate loudly into the room.*

### *Scene I.*

LIMUNKA. It is well with you, it is well with you ! Thank God, thank God, thank destiny ! It is well with you ! I envy you !

*Scene II.*

## LIMUNKA, THE GIRL.

THE GIRL. (*Runs in terrified from the left.*) Mistress, mistress! (LIMUNKA looks round.) Where is she? God, where is she? (*Sees her on the balcony.*) Ah!

CRIES OF THE CASTAWAYS. (*Protracted, stammering, then broken.*) Heavenly virgin, protectress of castaways, come to our help, come to our help!

LIMUNKA. (*Shouting towards them.*) Do not try for the harbour, try for the open sea. The sea is calling for you, its beauty is calling for you, its raging majesty! Let yourselves be overwhelmed, let yourselves be destroyed by the white-flaring waves! Oh, how wretched am I! Oh, how cowardly am I!

(*A mighty storm-burst: disjointed cries of distress: "God, God, God!" A shrill voice: "Satan, Satan, Satan, help!"*)

LIMUNKA. (*Giving an hysterical laugh.*) Yes . . . yes . . . yes . . . Satan! Satan! He'll help, he'll help! But, alas! you are vanishing, the sea is towering above you, the foam is hissing with malice. . . . I can see you no longer in your dismay, only in my cowardice can I still revel. . . .

THE GIRL. (*Rushes suddenly up to her, seizes her hand wildly.*) Mistress, good Limunka! Come to yourself! What words, what dark words! Alas!

LIMUNKA. (*Embraces the girl and kisses her.*) I have nobody but you!

THE GIRL. I was there——

LIMUNKA. Well?

THE GIRL. Nobody there would speak, they are as silent as the dead. . . .

LIMUNKA. And he ?

THE GIRL. The master is sitting on the ground and does not listen, cannot listen. He looks as if he had not a drop of blood left. . . .

LIMUNKA. Yes, he has not a drop of blood left for me, . . .

THE GIRL. That is how he looks, . . .

LIMUNKA. Yes, yes, he has not a drop of blood left for me . . . and not a spark of soul has he left for me. I am lonelier than a gull in the storm upon the ocean. I have been lonely for a whole eternity. I am lonelier than a lighthouse in the ocean. I am lonelier than a tear shed by a poor woman. My hands and my face are orphaned, and my eyes are harrowed by tears. . . . (*Looks at herself in a hand-mirror.*) Only with the storm and the ocean and with its snaky hiss do I dally. (*Holding the mirror towards the storm and the ocean.*) And you, my lovers, storm and ocean, look at your dark faces, you monstrous Moorish giants !

THE GIRL. (*Clutches at her in fear.*) Mistress, calm yourself, calm yourself !

LIMUNKA. Oh, how it hurts, how it hurts, how it crushes and consumes the heart !

THE GIRL. Calm yourself, he will come.

LIMUNKA. (*In fury.*) A man, a man, and even if he had the looks of a goblin, with tiny piggish eyes, with a puffy and loathsome face, with a humped back, with crooked legs and long broad feet. . . . Revenge, revenge !

THE GIRL. (*Embraces her.*) How can you fling filth upon yourself so, how can you fling horror and ugliness upon yourself so ? How can you heap curses upon yourself, with all your goodness and radiance !

(*Footsteps are heard.*) He's coming, he's coming, some one is coming, the master is coming or—— (*Runs out to the door on the right.*)

(*Knocking at the left-hand door.* LIMUNKA *listens.*  
*The knocking is repeated.* LIMUNKA *opens.*)

*Scene III.*

LIMUNKA. *The handsome, well-made* YOUNG MAN  
 (IDAN) *enters.*

LIMUNKA. How dare you cross my threshold in the night? Do you not know that I have a husband, and that nobody besides my husband may see me close at hand?

YOUNG MAN. Your husband has lost his whole fortune——

LIMUNKA. What?

YOUNG MAN. He has lost his whole fortune and he staked you upon a single card. . . .

LIMUNKA. What are you saying? Who are you?

YOUNG MAN. And he has lost you——

LIMUNKA. Who are you?

YOUNG MAN. For a month your husband has been playing cards madly. . . . Now he is a beggar.

LIMUNKA. That is—but how do you know?

YOUNG MAN. He has lost you to a man whose name is Udarov. I was there when it happened, but I have been there a long time. I have tracked it the whole month through.

LIMUNKA. What have you tracked?

YOUNG MAN. The moment that I heard he was neglecting you I set sail and sped hither. For a month my bark has beaten about your harbour.

LIMUNKA. But what have you tracked ?

YOUNG MAN. I tracked everything. . . . I know every twitching of his ugly passion and every fibre of your noble soul. . . .

LIMUNKA. There is truly much charm about you and your words sound so pleasant, you are very welcome to me. I have felt a frenzied irk in these days and nights. I have felt an irk as a storm does, when it has to moan. Did you know that storms must moan and do not want to . . . ?

YOUNG MAN. It offended me unspeakably. Oh, how the blood mounted to my head and how my hand was clenched at that moment. I was on the point of seizing my dagger, but the thought of you steadied me. Then I began to implore him, but it had no effect, he was already completely overwhelmed and was bending over the edge of the abyss.

LIMUNKA. And tell me just this—but sit down. (*Points to the chair by the sofa.*) You are very, very welcome to me. Tell me, does the ocean seem to you more beautiful and more majestic when the storm holds it swayingly in its clutches, or when the liquid sun-gold fondles it ? To me it seems immeasurably more splendid in the clutches of the storm—and to you ?

YOUNG MAN. The mournful truth has so afflicted and embittered me that I still have not quite regained my consciousness. . . . I am still absorbed in the mournful event. . . .

LIMUNKA. What has embittered you ?

YOUNG MAN. That they dare to abase holiness so. . . . It is possible to imagine that it happened in a moment of madness . . . the passions of the two were



like this night, the grief of the blood was ragingly great . . . but nevertheless . . . God ! God ! it should never be forgotten. . . .

LIMUNKA. (*Giving a deep sigh.*) Is it a dream, or madness ?

YOUNG MAN. Madness. . . .

LIMUNKA. But tell me now who you are.

YOUNG MAN. I am one who lives for the ocean and his yearning. . . .

LIMUNKA. I am cold, I begin to be afraid, I feel how fate is approaching, dark and cruel. . . . (*Raising her hand as if in defence against something invisible.*) Away, away ! Away from me ! (*To the GIRL.*) Come, my heart, come quickly to me, there is coldness in my heart. . . . The blood is freezing in my veins . . . a cold, heavy mist is settling upon my brain. (*The GIRL kneels at the feet of her mistress.*) And you. . . . I thank you for the tidings ; leave me !

YOUNG MAN. I am exceedingly grateful to you.

LIMUNKA. (*Looking at him with questioning eyes.*) For what ?

YOUNG MAN. That I was permitted to spend a few moments in your presence.

LIMUNKA. (*Looking deeply into his eyes.*) That you were permitted—— (*Is about to give him her hand involuntarily and then gives a sudden start.*) What is that ? Is it you ? Is it you, or—O God, I feel dizzy ! . . .

YOUNG MAN. (*Kneels down at her feet, takes her hand and kisses and fondles it passionately.*) It is I, I, I. . . .

LIMUNKA. You, you, you, my home-land, you my lovely island-home, my childhood, my days of girlhood, you !

YOUNG MAN. (*As if he were gazing into the past.*)



Limunka, my tender little Limunka ! My dear, pensive Limunka in the sacredly quiet fragrant olive-grove ! My lovely, sacred, rapt Limunka in the boat on the gentle, dark, oily sea, with the flare of the rosy and orange sunset around you ! . . .

*(Growling storm-bursts.)*

LIMUNKA. *(Turning to the balcony.)* Storm and ocean ! Stop, call me no more, I turn away from you, beloved ones ! Nebogin, a curse upon you, a curse, even until heaven a curse ! *(Embraces him, bursts into vehement sobbing.)* Idan, Idan, Idan, my all, my sunshine, my star of fate, my sweet, unending ocean !

YOUNG MAN. The instant I heard that he was neglecting you, I sailed hither. . . .

LIMUNKA. But why did you not come before my eyes, before my soul earlier ? My soul has kept fretting and bleeding. . . .

YOUNG MAN. I was afraid you would despise me.

LIMUNKA. I despise you ?

YOUNG MAN. And as if thrust by the breakers, I have hurled myself from rock to rock. . . .

LIMUNKA. And yet in the end you had courage ?

YOUNG MAN. When your sacredness is in question I ever have courage to stake my life.

LIMUNKA. What are you saying about life ?

YOUNG MAN. Perhaps you do not divine it, but all the men in the town are against you—they all hate you.

LIMUNKA. You meant : They all love me.

YOUNG MAN. They all hate you.

LIMUNKA. Yes, they all love me, but I despise their contemptible love.

YOUNG MAN. Limunka, sunshine of our blossomy

island-home, let us not deceive ourselves—God and beauty can be loved only by a very few. . . .

LIMUNKA. Oh, why did God not mate us together ?

YOUNG MAN. He did mate us together in our souls.

LIMUNKA. Oh, why was fate's will other than our will ?

YOUNG MAN. Our fate was your mother. She wanted you to take the rich man. Whenever I think of her, my heaven grows gloomy.

LIMUNKA. And at that age I was not capable of offering any resistance, except the cry of the heart. All winds of any strength made me swerve towards his side, but now——

YOUNG MAN. Now—— ?

LIMUNKA. Now I have been made hardy by sorrows and torments. . . . (*Listening.*) I hear steps. Those are his steps. But how strangely feeble and tottering they are ! . . . Idan, you must never leave me again. We must never part any more. We have lost each other in sorrows, to find each other in the victory of love. . . . We have found each other with clenched hands amid the breakers ; we have found each other in the storm, in the storm of fate ! Oh, how long, how all eternity long have I had to wait in sorrows for my happiness ! Fate, fate ! (*Kisses into the air.*) Take the kiss of my curse.

(*Beating of the storm. Knocking at the left-hand door.*)

YOUNG MAN. (*Embraces her feet.*) And my soul has thought of you since the earliest ray of light, loved you, bled for you, suffered pangs for you in all things, in earth, sun and stars. . . . In the glowing light of yearning it saw your radiant, splendid soul. . . .

In the glowing light of yearning our souls clasped themselves in each other's arms firmly and almightily, and in their blazing sun-kiss they created God. Oh! there is too much light, my breast is overburdened, there is too much happiness, too much, too much. . . .  
(*Kisses her feet, and sobs. Repeated knocking.*)

LIMUNKA. (*Hastily to the GIRL.*) Lead him into my room, on to my couch, where I have dreamed my fairest dreams of sorrow. Yonder in the cupboard are the most precious spices from India—kindle them for him, that in the gentle fragrance he may go on weaving out our destiny. . . .

#### Scene IV.

LIMUNKA. NEBOGIN *enters, broken and gloomy. He is followed by UDAROV, who bows deeply before LIMUNKA.*

LIMUNKA. (*With keen mockery.*) Welcome, Nebogin! Welcome, Udarov! Welcome, sweet bridegroom! Ah, how long I have suffered pangs, waiting for your coming! . . . Nebogin, I am deeply grateful to you for the choice. . . . Udarov has long been my yearning!

(NEBOGIN *attempts to approach LIMUNKA and suddenly collapses.*)

UDAROV. I fancied that!

LIMUNKA. Water, water, water! The widower is unwell!

(*The GIRL runs in with a glass of water. LIMUNKA takes the water and sprinkles it on NEBOGIN, who soon comes to himself and sits down on the couch.*)

NEBOGIN. (*Steadies himself.*) I have come only to tell you that I am ruined.

LIMUNKA. Why did you not fling yourself from the rock into the sea, instead of coming here? What cowardice!

UDAROV. Pardon me, pardon us, we have been fighting each other, Nebogin and I, but in so senseless a fashion. . . .

LIMUNKA. I have already heard about it all.

UDAROV. (*Taken aback.*) You have heard about it?

LIMUNKA. And you approve of it?

UDAROV. (*Bewildered.*) I am deadly tired, I must go.

LIMUNKA. Stop, I wish to hear you.

UDAROV. I am deadly tired. . . .

LIMUNKA. Do you approve that I should belong to you?

UDAROV. I beg you most solemnly to forgive me. It was in a bewildered moment of madness, when my brain was surrounded by mist, in spasms of dread. Our souls clutched each other and strove in a frenzied, shifting tangle. It was not you, but we ourselves we wished to abase through the highest and holiest. We did as common men do when in their defencelessness and desperation they rail against God.

LIMUNKA. I thank you.

UDAROV. For what?

LIMUNKA. That you at least realise how you two have abased me.

UDAROV. I am only just beginning to come to myself. It will take a long time yet before I recover from the fever.

LIMUNKA. You know what you two have done to me.

UDAROV. You are an angel and must forgive us for it.

LIMUNKA. You know that the town will talk about it.

UDAROV. You are a great and magnanimous soul who can forgive everything.

LIMUNKA. A woman cannot forgive such an abasement.

UDAROV. I am prepared to crawl round the town on all fours. Oh, if Nebogin had but chosen some other kind of duel ! . . .

LIMUNKA. Are you not satisfied with this kind ? After all, you have made him a beggar.

NEBOGIN. (*Stammering.*) A beggar, a beggar. . . .

UDAROV. What I have won does not belong to me.

LIMUNKA. To whom then ?

UDAROV. To the person through whom it was won.

LIMUNKA. To whom ?

UDAROV. To you.

LIMUNKA. To me ?

UDAROV. Everything belongs to you. And not only that, but my whole fortune too, and, if you like, my life as well belongs to you. Earth and ocean, stars and sun, and everything, everything. . . .

LIMUNKA. Ha, ha, ha !

UDAROV. Yes, laugh, laugh ; you are right to scoff and despise.

LIMUNKA. Why should it belong to me ?

UDAROV. Since I saw you for the first time, I have realised that everything belongs to you : Paradise and Hell, God and Satan—you hold everything by the reins. Your silvery nails are clutching tightly at the mane and it dashes and dashes madly on throughout the whole world. Whither ? Into the abyss ! Down into the divinest abyss. . . .



LIMUNKA. How long have you known me ?

UDAROV. Since a sunset fifteen years ago which still blazes in my heart as if it had been yesterday. . . . with your splendid dark hair, with your eyes, and with the whole redly blazing ocean. Ah ! I sought forgetfulness, and sought it in wine, in debauch, in roving, and found only sorrows.

LIMUNKA. Then you are in love. Ha, ha, ha !

UDAROV. Yes, laugh me to scorn ; the more cruel, the more splendid you are. But I should like it most if you plunged your nails into my heart.

LIMUNKA. What is your demand ? Now, after you have won me at cards ? How splendid that sounds : " At cards " ! To make me your mistress, your wife, I suppose ?

UDAROV. Have pity on me, do not torture me.

NEBOGIN. Udarov, I implore you, leave us now.

LIMUNKA. Have you taken leave of your senses, Nebogin ? Udarov is surely at home ! Have you forgotten your bargain ? From this night onwards I belong, of course, to Udarov. It is you who can go away. (UDAROV *is about to go away.*) No, stay here, Udarov. You are beginning to gladden me.

UDAROV. Have pity on me, a ruined man.

LIMUNKA. Do not pretend. You ruined ? You are a very lucky man. You have got what you wanted, even though it was at cards. You will give me all that you have won ?

UDAROV. O God !

LIMUNKA. I ask you in all seriousness ; it is surely no trifling matter !

UDAROV. O God, how you love to torture !

LIMUNKA. According to Nebogin's bargain, I should



be poor, in utter poverty. I am truly grateful to you, I am beginning to feel grateful towards you. It is foolish after all that has passed, in such a moment . . . but we women are weak, we are unhappy without splendour and riches. Udarov, I accept your gift with great gratitude.

NEBOGIN. Udarov, we have become brethren in sorrows. We acted in anguish, in madness! Udarov, brother!

UDAROV. If you truly accept it, I should be the happiest of men.

LIMUNKA. I take it because I need it.

NEBOGIN. Limunka, I will dig for your sake.

LIMUNKA. Dig for your own sake, Nebogin; dig yourself a grave—that is the best thing you can do. Or rather, you do not need it, Udarov has already dug one for you; . . . but what do I see? You are no longer the one you were, you have changed into an old man. . . . You are old, old, old. . . . You have grey hair. You look as though you had come from the beyond . . . brr! . . . you infect me with horror—go, go, go! . . .

NEBOGIN. And in spite of that, it was all done through you and for you. My love has changed into my suicide.

UDAROV. There is nothing on earth I would not do for you.

LIMUNKA. Look into my eyes!

UDAROV. Oh, these eyes! These two abysses dark as night, full of bliss, full of magic lustre! These eyes will drag the whole universe from its axis. Oh! for these eyes I have most grievously strayed, sobbed and bled. . . .

LIMUNKA. I believe you——

UDAROV. Oh, my joy, my all !

LIMUNKA. Thank you, Udarov !

(UDAROV bows down low to kiss her hand. LIMUNKA draws it away from him.)

NEBOGIN. (*Raging.*) Limunka, my transgression is great. What has happened cannot be recalled. But if you loved me only a little, only the merest glimmer——

LIMUNKA. You ask whether I loved you . . . ?

NEBOGIN. Yes, yes, if you loved me only for a second——

LIMUNKA. I have lived with you since my sixteenth year. . . .

NEBOGIN. Yes, Limunka, since your bud-like sixteenth year. . . . And——

LIMUNKA. But I have never thought of that——

NEBOGIN. Of what ?

LIMUNKA. Whether I loved you.

NEBOGIN. Aha ! you might have spared me this torment. . . . However (*he pulls himself together*), Udarov, everything that you have won belongs to you. I will soon find out how to toil and live. But do not let us make laughing-stocks of ourselves, Udarov, by consenting to lose a legal wife at cards. . . . I am wedded to her. . . . And then, the times are different—these are not the times of our forefathers. . . . And for that I ought truly to thank God Almighty. As you yourself admitted, it took place in a moment of madness and stupid drunkenness ; or in a dull, wild reversion back to the times of our forefathers. . . . And now we have come to our senses.

UDAROV. The goddess shall decide as to that !

LIMUNKA. It has already been decided—you will remain with me.

NEBOGIN. (*Pointing to his breast.*) Then stab away, if you have fully decided to murder me.

UDAROV. You are miserably ridiculous. When I am face to face with the highest moment of my life, you want to make me a criminal.

LIMUNKA. We will share what remains of this very night, Udarov !

(NEBOGIN *collapses.*)

UDAROV. (*Stretching his folded hands towards her.*) Day and night I have dreamt of you thus, as you are now. . . . Like an angel you hovered gently through all my dreams. . . . For your sake I have sacrificed my youth. . . .

LIMUNKA. If I had known it, husband.

UDAROV. Oh, the things I have thought of, to approach you ! . . .

LIMUNKA. You should have. . . .

UDAROV. (*Pointing mutely to NEBOGIN.*) Your vampire.

LIMUNKA. You should have. . . .

UDAROV. Oh, if I, poor wretch, had but guessed that in your heart only a glimmer—

LIMUNKA. Oh, why did I not meet you before, ah ! (*To NEBOGIN.*) Leave us alone for a short while, we have much to say to each other that for strange ears must remain strange. . . .

(NEBOGIN *sobs.*)

LIMUNKA. You have kissed me enough, leave us alone.

NEBOGIN. My God ! whence came this cowardice so suddenly upon me ? I have become a wretched outcast.

LIMUNKA. Leave us alone, my blood demands it, my heated blood, Udarov !

UDAROV. (*To NEBOGIN.*) You have always shown so much pride ; I implore you, show it now, go away, go, go ! I beg of you, go ! I will let you take half my own fortune, and my coat-of-arms as well and everything, everything ! I implore you as God, go ! (*Yelling.*) Go !

LIMUNKA. (*To NEBOGIN.*) I also implore you, go, go, go ! I do not wish to see you again, go ! . . . I am quite dazed, it has come upon me so suddenly . . . and it is no wonder, for a whole month you have neglected me a whole month.

UDAROV. I will revere and love you like an angel, like a god !

(*NEBOGIN bursts out into loud sobbing.*)

UDAROV. And when you die, I will have a monument built of the noblest marble. . . .

LIMUNKA. I am ashamed that you have been my husband—By God, I am ashamed ! Fie !

UDAROV. (*Perplexed.*) What are we to do ?

LIMUNKA. Go, I say, go, go, go !

(*NEBOGIN snatches the revolver from his pocket and turns it towards his temple.*)

LIMUNKA. (*Snatches it away from him.*) No, no, no ! You must not kill yourself. You must see it, you must see it ! Udarov, he must see it !

UDAROV. He must see it !

NEBOGIN. (*Rushes towards the balcony.*) No, no, no, rather a thousand deaths !

LIMUNKA. (*Rushes up to him.*) You must see it with your own eyes, with your own eyes, with your own eyes ! Udarov, hold him, he must see it with his own eyes ! We will bind him ! Udarov, let us bind him.

UDAROV. Let us bind him !

LIMUNKA. (*Shrieking in madness.*) Revenge, revenge, revenge !

UDAROV. (*Spreading out his arms towards her, is about to embrace her.*) You goddess, you splendour of the sun, you endless glory !

LIMUNKA. Stop ! You must not touch me before I will. . . . I want first to gloat over his torments. . . .

UDAROV. (*Crawls in front of her, with folded hands.*) Pity, pity ! I am going mad, the blood is bursting my heart. Only a kiss, a single kiss. . . . You nymph, you sphinx, you godhead !

LIMUNKA. (*Seizes the dagger from the marble table.*) Do not touch me, do not touch me, or I will thrust it into your heart. . . .

UDAROV. (*Stammering in throes of agony.*) Iu-iu-iu-iu-iu-iu !

(*Exulting cries can be heard from without. The GIRL rushes into the room.*)

THE GIRL. Mistress ! Below, in front of the villa a large crowd of men has gathered and they are shouting. Go and look, in case anything should happen.

CRIES. (*From without.*) Show yourself, show yourself ! Hail to you, hail to you ! Death to Nebogin ! Death to Udarov ! Hail to you !

LIMUNKA. What are you shouting for ? (*Goes on to the balcony. Noise and shouts resound from below.*)

CRIES. (*From without.*) Hail to you ! Hail to you ! Death to Nebogin ! Death to Udarov ! Hail to you, O queen ! Hail to you, O goddess !

(LIMUNKA beckons to them with her hand, whereupon the rejoicing below breaks out even more tempestuously.)



CRIES. (*From without.*) We are coming to serve you and praise you !

(NEBOGIN and UDAROV listen in suspense, UDARVO bent down kneeling, NEBOGIN clutching the couch tightly.)

*Scene V.*

*The same. Four sturdy young men burst into the room. The door remains open. A crowd of men pushing in the passage, peering in.*

FIRST YOUNG MAN. Forgive us ! We could no longer control our hearts. We have come to greet you with the deepest reverence of the men in our town. All the men of the town are excited by the event which Schatinitsh, holding up a banner in his hand, proclaimed in the town. They are celebrating a festival and exulting, and are ready at any moment to fall down at your feet.

LIMUNKA. Welcome, welcome ! You are free to enter, my husband has opened the door of his house to all men. . . .

SECOND YOUNG MAN. We have come to hear your wishes and commands, and the more difficult they will be to accomplish, the more joyful will it make us.

LIMUNKA. Welcome, men, welcome !

FIRST YOUNG MAN. You are our sunshine, our radiance !

SECOND YOUNG MAN. Receive our thanks for every tiny word, for every glance and movement and breath !

LIMUNKA. Men, listen ! If you are to celebrate it, then let us celebrate it as is fitting. I summon you all



to-morrow afternoon into the cypress-grove by the shore.

ALL FOUR. (*Stammering.*) You sunshine, you radiance !

LIMUNKA. And in the grove we will celebrate my farewell festival !

FIRST YOUNG MAN. Your farewell festival ? You sunshine, you goddess !

LIMUNKA. Yes, my farewell festival, my liberation ! I am separated from my husband . . . he has forfeited me. . . .

VOICES. (*Swelling to a roar in the passage.*) Hurra, hurra, hurra !

LIMUNKA. We will celebrate my farewell festival and at the same time my wedding festival. Ha, ha, ha ! What do you say to that ? The world shall be turned upside down.

FIRST YOUNG MAN. Your new wedding festival, goddess—with whom ?

THE THREE. You queen, you sunshine !

LIMUNKA. With one who will be amongst you.

(ALL FOUR *look at each other slyly.*)

VOICES. (*In the passage.*) Hurra, hurra, hurra for the queen ! Hurra for the goddess !

FIRST YOUNG MAN. (*Trembling.*) O God, with one—he might be any one of us !

LIMUNKA. Take that message to the men of the town and come to-morrow to fetch me. The earth and the ocean shall ring out at our festival. Hurra for the joy of life ! Hurra ! Hurra !

ALL. (*Except NEBOGIN and UDAROV, bursting forth.*) Hurra for the joy of life ! Hurra, hurra ! Hurra for the queen ! Hurra for the sunshine !

FIRST YOUNG MAN. The whole town will appear in fine clothes and decorations, and great things will happen. O God, I cannot find the words, my breath is giving out and scorching my throat. . . .

(LIMUNKA beckons to them affably with her hand, whereupon bowing amid sighs and affectionate shouts of "Sunshine, Queen, Radiance!" they depart. The exultation, noise and turmoil outside become unrestrained. LIMUNKA makes an imperious gesture towards NEBOGIN and UDAROV, who go out meekly, brokenly, and with heads bowed low. IDAN enters. Pause.)

### Scene VI.

LIMUNKA, IDAN.

LIMUNKA. (*Muses for a while, turns round and falls sobbing into IDAN'S wide-open arms.*) I have nobody besides you. . . . All are lying in wait for me with their bestial fangs. . . . They all hate me—you spoke the truth—all, all. . . .

IDAN. What did you say to them ?

LIMUNKA. Did you hear it ?

IDAN. Everything.

LIMUNKA. I will have my revenge.

IDAN. On whom ?

LIMUNKA. On the man.

IDAN. On which man ?

LIMUNKA. On the man, on all men ! . . . I was staked upon a card and gambled away. Oh, oh, oh ! Am I a slave ? Am I a lifeless thing ? What am I then ? Am I not a woman ? A wife ? A sister ? A mother ? A human being ? What am I taken for ? For a food,

for fruit, at the thought of which their loathsome desire whets its teeth. . . . And they still had the boldness to come before my sight, after all that. . . . They still had the boldness to ask for forgiveness. . . . As if the mere thought, the thought alone, of gambling with a human being's dignity, were not the greatest of transgressions. . . . Not the deed, the thought is the most mean and revolting thing about it all. . . . And instead of breaking out in exasperation, in wrath, these brutes in the town had the boldness to turn the event into festival and celebration and to come to me. To insult me with their folly and by force to make me play the hypocrite and actress. . . . He gambled her away, and now any one of us can have her, think the brutes. . . . God, God, God! But wait, wait, wait, I will give you a festival, a celebration, that you will remember your whole life long. . . . I will show you what it means to be a woman! Idan!

(IDAN *looks gently into her eyes.*)

LIMUNKA. You must come there to-morrow as well.

IDAN. Into the cypress-grove?

LIMUNKA. Yes.

IDAN. O God, I know, I feel, the insult is a crime, is a blasphemy of the basest kind, but——

LIMUNKA. You are afraid?

IDAN. I am afraid for you, not for myself. They are coarse, brutal souls, who are not yet purified by sorrow, and every trick, every venture with them is dangerous. And——

LIMUNKA. And what?

IDAN. And perhaps it is not their fault that they are like that. Perhaps they do not know what they are and what they do. . . .

LIMUNKA. You must come !

IDAN. Yes, I will come, I will come.

LIMUNKA. But not as you are now.

IDAN. How then ?

LIMUNKA. Like this : When I kiss you in front of them, so that the brute in them strains and rebels still more, their desire hisses like a serpent and their pride is turned to dust—you must be in the guise of a goblin. O God, all is destined beforehand, I had the image of it in my mind before you came to-night, and before anything had happened, perhaps when the idea first stirred in them. You must come in the guise of a monster with tiny piggish eyes, with puffy cheeks, with a narrow, vacant forehead, hump-backed and, if it can be done, flat-footed. . . .

IDAN. My God, what an idea to get !

LIMUNKA. You *must* come like that.

IDAN. (*Taking her hand.*) The storm has abated and now only a light wind is blowing. Come, my beloved, come, my wife, let us flee away from this hell. . . . The bark is waiting for you in the harbour, the same one in which we once used to go sailing as children, the same one in which you always used to sit at the helm, whose tiller I have had mounted with silver : it is *The Swallow*—even the oars are still the same—I have preserved them till to-day, until your sacred hand can share the ocean with them again. . . . See, I always cherished the hope that we should yet share the ocean together with our bark.

LIMUNKA. No, we shall enter our paradise not in flight, but in triumph. . . .

IDAN. Oh, those days in which we lived of old !

LIMUNKA. We will enter there in triumph.

IDAN. The rocks on which we once played with the seagulls will again offer us their moss for soft resting-places.

LIMUNKA. In the Easter light !

IDAN. And we will roam again in the sunshine by the side of the endless ocean as far as the blue sky . . . and in the sandy bays we will gather small shiny pebbles and shells and tiny sprays of coral, as of old in our childhood.

LIMUNKA. (*Kisses him.*) O God !

IDAN. And when the sunset begins to fade in the oily, gently-foaming child-like ocean, when ocean and heaven nestle together in an embrace of unending worship, when the heaven sinks on its knees before the ocean and they tenderly mingle in the yearning kiss of eternity, in the mystical quivering of eternity, then we will fall with our faces to the earth and plunge our kisses into the lustre of eternity and unite the breath of our souls with the hot fervent breath of eternity. . . .

LIMUNKA. We will remove paradise on to our island, Idan, but first of all—revenge !

IDAN. Ecstasy, ecstasy, Limunka !

LIMUNKA. Revenge ! Revenge !

(*Through the balcony door the pallid moonlight streams in.*)

IDAN. (*Gazing into the light.*) Look, Limunka, look, our day is dawning. The ocean is beginning to redden in the early light. The ocean has grown quite calm, it has become reconciled with the storm. You also must become reconciled with yourself. See how the majesty of God is softly sweeping along upon the unending mirror. . . . O ye breezes of the angels, ye azure



breezes of the nymphs ! . . . See how the sails of the fishing-boats, like giant seagulls, are soaring towards the yearning of the islands ! . . . And yonder by the rosy sky, nestling gently like a child upon its mother's lap, rests our own island. . . . Look yonder, it is beckoning over to you with its azure peaks. It is calling to you, it is my heart and my soul. . . . (*Ecstatically.*) Sing, O heaven ! Sing, O ocean ! Exult, O soul ! Limunka, sing ! . . . Let us celebrate the Easter light !

LIMUNKA. (*Towards the dawn, wringing her hands.*) All is sore within me, heavenly nymph, O light of dawn ! Heart and soul are sore within me, and it cries, cries and cries ! (*Crying aloud.*) O God, God, God ! Heaven, Heaven, Heaven !

IDAN. Yes, let it cry, let it cry aloud to the heavenly light, to our resurrection. Calm yourself, my angel, calm yourself !

LIMUNKA. I cannot, I cannot ! It cries and cries, and bursts my breast. . . . (*Clutches at her breast in pain.*) Flames, hell, revenge, Satan, calm yourselves, calm yourselves, calm yourselves !

(*The light streams in glowingly.*)

IDAN. Calm yourself, calm yourself ! (*Presses her to his breast.*) Calm yourself, calm yourself ! Light, light, light !

(LIMUNKA gives a convulsive shudder and sobs aloud.)

IDAN. (*Covers her face feverishly with kisses.*) My poor angel, calm yourself, calm yourself ! O dawn, O sun, O day !

(*Curtain.*)



## ACT III.

*Cypress-grove by the shore. On the left a glade with a red tent. In the background lies the expanse of the calm, sunny, glittering sea. A rock.*

## Scene I.

*Eight men in handsome costume are sitting in the grass upon gaily-coloured cloths. SCHATINITSCH and OSTRWITSCH also. The eight are staring before them in burning impatience, with their hands entwined about their up-raised knees. SCHATINITSCH has a disturbed look on his face. For a while, silence. OSTRWITSCH inspects the eight and SCHATINITSCH and laughs.*

OSTRWITSCH. Who erected the tent ?

SCHATINITSCH. Ask rather, why was the tent erected ? Who dared to do it !

*(A few among the eight men shrug their shoulders and make signs of not knowing.)*

OSTRWITSCH. Ha, ha, ha ! What madness ! What flabbiness in the madness of the blood !

SCHATINITSCH. They ought to send doctors over here from civilised countries to study this new disease.

OSTRWITSCH. What folly ! Why have you come ? Why are you silent ? Maybe you are lying low to count the pulse-beat of your hearts ? Or the pulse-beat of your dread and your envy ?

SCHATINITSCH. Just look how dread and envy have distorted their faces ! . . .

OSTRWITSCH. Who ever heard of the like ! One woman has turned the heads of five thousand men. In

the breasts of the five thousand men there lives and throbs one and the same hope. . . . Five thousand men are seized by one envy and are raging within themselves against each other.

SCHATINITSCH. And not only the men, the women are raging too, infuriated like witches ; they are bursting with envy of Limunka. . . . They would like to rip her up with their poisonous nails. And what a craze for adornment has come upon the men and women overnight ! . . . All are overwhelmed by a craving to adorn themselves. All the tailors and milliners of the town have spent the night bent low, dripping with sweat, over their work. . . . All the gold and all the silk is coming to light from the old chests to-day. (*Looks to the left.*) Just look there ! A flag is flying in front of Garavin's house !

OSTRWITSCH. (*Looks.*) Ha, ha, ha ! The event has taken on the form of a national festival.

SCHATINITSCH. (*Looking to the left.*) Aha ! And not only Garavin, others have hoisted flags too : Budock, Maulin, Ajkitsch, Sembritsch and Katilian. O Day of Judgment !

FIRST OF THE EIGHT. (*To SCHATINITSCH and OSTRWITSCH.*) If you are so distressed, why have you come here ?

OSTRWITSCH. I, merely to study the madness of the blood in you. I have been studying it for a month in Nebogin and Udarov.

SECOND OF THE EIGHT. And perhaps the doctor can study the disease best in himself.

THE REST. Ha, ha, ha !

SCHATINITSCH. And I have come, to be still more distressed. . . .

FIRST MAN. (*To* SCHATINITSCH.) To be still more distressed? (*Laughs.*) You once told me though, when you were drunk, how utterly repulsive you find your ugly old wife whom you married for her money, how you are always trembling and shaking for fear that you might throttle her sometime in bed . . . and that when you think of the joys of Paradise which Nebogin drains in the arms of beautiful Limunka you are a wretched victim of your hot envy, and in the flames of this envy you are always throttling and murdering poor Nebogin. . . .

OSTRWITSCH. (*To* SCHATINITSCH.) You knave! And you have deafened my ears with your talk of churches and legends of the church and holy statutes.

SCHATINITSCH. Bah! you are no better, and I am not much worse than you. . . .

THE REST. Ha, ha, ha!

### *Scene II.*

*The same. A WOMAN enters from the left, searching for somebody. When she catches sight of him, she looks closely at him for an instant smilingly and then calls out.*

THE WOMAN. Fie, fie! What are you doing there? What business have you there?

THE MAN. Go to the devil! Who told you to come here? Away, away, or I'll murder you.

THE WOMAN. Look how he has dressed himself up! Ha, ha, ha!

THE MAN. Away, wench, away!

(*IDAN creeps softly in from the left and listens.*)

THE WOMAN. I am a wench, am I? Because you

want to betray me, because you have already betrayed me in your thoughts, you base creature. . . . Where does that fine attire of yours come from ? With whose money did you have it made ? You had it made with my money ! Ha, ha, ha ! And what have you in your belt ? A purse of money. It is my dowry that you have taken out of the cupboard. It is not in the cupboard, now—you have stolen it from me ! Look, people, he has been thieving from his own wife ! . . .

*(The MAN, gnashing his teeth, tries to catch hold of her.)*

THE WOMAN. *(Slipping away.)* Don't touch me, you knave, you thief ! Don't touch me ! I don't belong to you any more. Now I am going to the Court and I will lodge an accusation of theft against you and demand a separation. *(Exit.)*

*(The MAN stands there for a moment ashamed, then exits.)*

THE REMAINING SEVEN. *(laughing at him.)* Ha, ha, ha !

OSTRWITSCH. Not at all a bad lesson—it will cure him of the madness of the blood.

SCHATINITSCH. *(Looking at the sky, turning up his eyes.)* O God, O God, how corrupt is mankind ! . . . Hm, hm ! . . .

IDAN. *(To the SEVEN MEN.)* It would be best if you too went home at once. You misunderstood her last night. . . . That was only her way of speaking—she meant quite a different kind of feast—not a lewd, sinful one like that. . . . You do not understand her, you are only insulting her, . . . and such things take their revenge on the one who offers the insult. . . . *(The SEVEN MEN look at each other in bewilderment : to*

OSTRWITSCH *and* SCHATINITSCH.) And you go home, too. It will be best if nobody is there.

OSTRWITSCH. (*Shouting out.*) You are again in my sight, you thrust yourself forcibly on our attention. . . . Have you forgotten what I told you : Don't gamble with your life ? . . . (*To the SEVEN MEN.*) Keep a watchful eye on him, he is a dangerous fellow. . . .

(IDAN *calmly meets the sharp, threatening glances of the SEVEN MEN and then departs.*)

### Scene III.

*The same.* NEBOGIN, UDAROV.

SCHATINITSCH. (*Rushes towards NEBOGIN and embraces him.*) My Nebogin, my unhappy brother ! How does it fare with you ?

NEBOGIN. (*Softly.*) O God !

(*The SEVEN MEN whisper something among themselves and move away to the side into the background, whence they peep across.*)

SCHATINITSCH. Oh, if my life would avail as a sacrifice which could release you from your torments ! Oh, if it were possible ! O God ! (*Raises his glance to the sky.*)

OSTRWITSCH. (*Shaking his head.*) A regular knave !

NEBOGIN. Stop ! Stop ! Do not meddle with my wound !

SCHATINITSCH. I have an idea for you, Nebogin, brother !

NEBOGIN. An idea ? O God, I have long had no ideas left in my poor brain.

SCHATINITSCH. An idea which can save you,



NEBOGIN. Utter it then !

SCHATINITSCH. Go to America, my brother !

NEBOGIN. To America ?

SCHATINITSCH. Go there and learn to work. O God ! if we all went to America, if we all learned to work, and afterwards taught the others here to work, there would truly be much less evil in the world. We work far too little, we do not work at all, my brother ! To eat, to bask in the sun, to fondle women, to dream of beautiful foreign women, and now and then—to pray when we have glutted ourselves with sins to bursting-point—that is not hard work ! Indeed, it is not work at all. . . . (*Considering.*) Or wait, I have yet another idea, a devout one which might lead to the salvation of your soul, if, brother, you were to show any aptness towards it.

UDAROV. Why do you torment us so much ? Utter it, then !

SCHATINITSCH. Turn your back on this sinful world and go into the quiet, cool shade of the cloister-walls among the monks, those worthy brethren. . . . Go, brother, go ; I will follow you. Udarov shall go too, and the incense, Ostrwitsch, would not hurt you and your wildness, either. . . .

OSTRWITSCH. By the living God, I am only just beginning to understand you. You are the living emblem of a knave.

NEBOGIN. I have found my path, that is to say, it was destined to me beforehand, and you can jeer at me as much as you like.

UDAROV. We have found our path, you say ?

NEBOGIN. On to the peak of the rock . . . and down into the sea !



SCHATINITSCH. On to the peak of the rock ? It makes my flesh creep.

*(Shouts of joy can be heard in the distance.)*

NEBOGIN. *(Looking towards the left, gives a sudden start, in an altered voice.)* There they come, there they come ! *(Looking again.)* And not in a bark, not in a carriage and four, no ; they are coming in a Roman chariot which they have taken from the museum ; they are coming drawn along by four panthers, by four vampires, by four men in wantonly blazing red attire ! Aha ! four men have let themselves be harnessed in front of their triumphal chariot. And amid what shouts and rejoicing and waving of hands ! But what are they shouting, what are the words ? *(Listens, bursts into mad laughter.)* “Ave, Limunka ! Ave, Limunka ! Ha, ha, ha ! They are hailing her with Caesar’s greeting. Limunka is holding sway over our town, as Caesar once did over Rome ! *(Sinks on to his knees, with folded hands.)* Limunka, how great and almighty you are ! Up till now, in spite of my baptism, I was a heathen ; my heart was never moved to prayer, but now there proceeds something from you that flings me on to my knees. . . . Before this I would never hear of a God, . . . but the God that proceeds from you overwhelms me, slays me, turns me into fluttering dust. . . . Limunka, guard me, protect me, wretch that I am, have pity on me in your triumph ! Fate ! God ! Invisible spectre ! Grant that this moment may be changed into eternity, into the eternity of blissful torment. . . . Alas ! they are approaching, they are approaching ! Do not draw near, do not draw near, move away and approach, eternally move away and eternally approach in a sweet

and grievous dalliance ! . . . Alas, alas, alas ! do not approach ! (*In an altered voice.*) But she is all in white, she looks like a lily, like an angel, she looks like an angel clad in lilies. . . . O God ! what betokens this white ? This heavenly innocence led on by the bellowing of lewdness ? . . . O God ! is it not, is it not . . . a glimmer, a glimmer of hope ? . . . Yes, yes, Limunka is chaste, Limunka is pure, Limunka is exalted and gracious, she can forgive everything. . . . (*To her.*) You have given me the faith, give me also the resurrection ! (*Sobs.*)

UDAROV. Look, look, and behind her triumphal chariot the whole town is rushing along, the whole town is pouring along—men and women in Roman attire. What does that mean ? Have the ages rended their grey veils to conjure up the gods and goddesses for us again ? . . . Or is my darkened gaze deceived ? . . . How beautiful, how almighty you are, O goddess !

SCHATINITSCH. But do you not see also how the women are raging behind her with clenched fists upraised ? . . . How they are hissing at her with the desire to tear her in pieces ? . . .

OSTRWITSCH. All is changing into a magnificent, raging chaos. . . . (*Raising a shout.*) Fate is rising up and turning the hand of the clock to twelve !

NEBOGIN. (*Praying with folded hands.*) Forgive me the sins of the past, my recklessness, my wildness and my darkness !

UDAROV. Forgive us, wretches that we are !

NEBOGIN. Purify my soul from all evil.

UDAROV. Purify our souls from all evil !

NEBOGIN. Make firm within me the wavering will to live.

UDAROV. Make firm within us the wavering will to live !

NEBOGIN. Show me the way to eternal mercy !

UDAROV. Show us the way to eternal mercy !

NEBOGIN. To eternal light !

UDAROV. To eternal light !

NEBOGIN. To the radiant God of all !

UDAROV. To the radiant God of all !

NEBOGIN. Amen !

UDAROV. Amen !

*(Shouts, roars of rejoicing, a crowd of children and people run up to the shore.)*

#### Scene IV.

*The same.* LIMUNKA *in delicate, translucent, flowing white, with bare feet, a wreath of laurel on her head, standing in a Roman quadriga, holding up the reins, drawn by four men harnessed in a row, wearing wantonly blazing attire. Women and old women in national costume, raging with clenched fists and with the cry : "A curse upon her ! A curse upon her ! The last Judgment ! Such shame the world has never seen ! She deserves to be hanged on the gallows !"* *On the other hand ring out the shouts of joy of the young men and women in Roman attire : "Ave, Limunka ! Ave, Limunka !"* *At these words LIMUNKA smiles and beckons to the men, whereupon the shout rises in a perfect storm. In the meanwhile IDAN enters from the right and with an imploring gesture stretches out his folded hands towards her.*

IDAN. (*In a muffled and earnest voice.*) I conjure you by the light of our love, leave the place of lewdness. . . . This will have a bad ending !

LIMUNKA. (*Makes a commanding gesture ; with an earnest voice, sinking her eyes deeply into his glance.*) You must . . . you must . . . it is my will. . . .

(*IDAN exit sadly, with his head bowed low.*)

VOICES OF THE MEN. What is that ?

FIRST MAN. (*In blazing red attire.*) Who dares to step towards you in this moment ?

VOICES OF THE MEN. Who dares it ?

LIMUNKA. It is a beggar, but he has chosen a bad time. I am not in the mood now to bestow alms. Away !

VOICES. Hurra ! Hurra !

(*As the chariot is about to move on, NEBOGIN and UDAROV arrive accompanied by SCHATINITSCH and OSTRWITSCH from the background and fling themselves on to their knees with folded hands before LIMUNKA. LIMUNKA raises one hand, exulting.*)

FIRST MAN. (*In blazing red attire, pointing to the kneeling men.*) In her splendour she will have nothing to do with beggars.

VOICES OF THE MEN. (*Murmuring angrily.*) Over their bodies ! Over their bodies !

(*The chariot moves towards the right with the retinue. NEBOGIN, UDAROV, SCHATINITSCH and OSTRWITSCH also follow the chariot. Only a crowd of old women in national costume remain behind.*)

FIRST WOMAN. Let us punish her !

CROWD OF WOMEN. (*Bellowing.*) Let us punish her !

FIRST WOMAN. Let us tear out her hair !

(A YOUNG MAN *approaches.*)

YOUNG MAN. Who dares to tear out her beautiful, queenly hair ?

CROWD OF WOMEN. (*Raging.*) Let us tear out her hair !

FIRST WOMAN. Let us scratch out her eyes, her false witch's eyes !

CROWD OF WOMEN. Let us scratch out her eyes !

FIRST WOMAN. With which she has put a bad spell on our whole town.

CROWD OF WOMEN. She has put a bad spell on the whole town !

FIRST WOMAN. Let us break her snaky arms !

CROWD OF WOMEN. Yes, her snaky arms !

FIRST WOMAN. With which she wants to entice away our lads and men !

YOUNG MAN. Her delicate, slender, lily hands ?

CROWD OF WOMEN. She is a witch—a witch, a witch !

FIRST WOMAN. And let us beat her legs crooked !

CROWD OF WOMEN. And let us beat her legs crooked !  
Legs, legs, the legs !

FIRST WOMAN. With which she wants to entwine our lads and men !

ANOTHER WOMAN. (*Sobbing.*) My husband has lost his senses through her !

AN OLD WOMAN. My husband has already one foot in the grave, but he too has completely lost his senses !



A THIRD WOMAN. My betrothed has sent me back the ring !

CROWD OF WOMEN. She is a witch—serpent—witch !

FIRST WOMAN. Let us drag out her teeth and tongue with a red-hot pair of pincers !

CROWD OF WOMEN. Her tongue, her false tongue ! (*Frenzied.*) Let us chop her in pieces, let us skin her alive ! Come, come ! (*Are about to rush after her amid shouting and uproar when suddenly the men get in front of them with their fists upraised.*)

FIRST MAN. Stop, stop, you old creatures ! In your watery blood green envy is boiling and seething and striking you blind. . . . You have no power over yourselves. It is envy that has power over you ! Whoever even only touches her will be sent to the other world. You have as little regard for what is seemly as we have. Only you cannot bear to see her enthroned and holding sway.

(*Dead silence, astonishment, pause.*)

### Scene V.

*The same.* LIMUNKA without the chariot, accompanied by the Four Men in red attire and the Young Men and Women in Roman garb. NEBOGIN and UDAROV, SCHATINITSCH and OSTRWITSCH on one side.

LIMUNKA. O how it intoxicates ! . . . O how blissful it makes me ! . . . how it uplifts me ! As if I had drunken of the sunshine . . . men ! Ah ! why have I not five thousand lips and five thousand arms ?

(*Outbursts of joy from the men, clapping of hands, leaping in the air.*)



FIRST MAN. (*In red attire, ecstatically.*) We will sing to your glory—the beauteous songs of the islands.

MEN. (*In an outburst of joy.*) The beauteous songs of the islands!

A BEAUTIFUL YOUNG WOMAN. (*In Roman garb.*) And we will smile upon you in your grace, the sweetest smile of spring-lilies.

YOUNG WOMEN. (*In Roman garb.*) The sweetest smile of spring-lilies. . . .

FIRST MAN. (*In red attire.*) And to your glory we will sing the dark songs of the storm!

THE MEN. (*In an outburst of joy.*) The dark songs of the storm. . . .

BEAUTIFUL YOUNG WOMAN. The kindly smile of young brides!

YOUNG WOMEN. And to your glory we will sing the icy songs of death. . . .

MEN. (*In an outburst of joy.*) The icy songs of death!

BEAUTIFUL YOUNG WOMAN. And we will smile upon you in your grace, the pale smile of dead love. . . .

YOUNG WOMEN. The pale smile of dead love. . . .

FIRST MAN. (*In red attire.*) We will go forth and search for conquests in foreign lands. . . We will plunder, rob, shed blood, sow fire, we crave for death and destruction. Life is deeply mournful. We will go forth and search for conquests in the universe. . . . We will create and destroy. . . . Life is deeply mournful and you are the very fountain-head of eternal strength. . . . O give us strength to build up a new universe! . . .

THE MEN. (*In an outburst of joy.*) Strength, strength, strength, give us strength! . . .

LIMUNKA. Love!

THE MEN. (*Wring their hands and stammer.*) Love, love, love !

LIMUNKA. (*Beckons to them with her hand, whereupon there is dead silence.*) The festival shall begin——

VOICES OF THE MEN. The festival, the festival, the festival !

LIMUNKA. The high festival of liberation. . . .

VOICES OF THE MEN. Hurra, hurra, hurra !

LIMUNKA. And the choice. . . .

THE MEN. The choice, the choice !

LIMUNKA. That will give you strength and love. . . .  
(*Exultant shouts of the men.*)

FIRST MAN. (*In red attire.*) We have erected a silken tent, and within it is a couch with cushions of soft red silk. . . . As in triumph of victory after a bloody war. . . . We are waging a bitter war together for your beauty. . . and it shall be well with the happy hero who is to lead the goddess into the tent of love. . . .

LIMUNKA. Ha, ha, ha ! But before we begin the festival, before I begin to choose, let us begin with the trial.

VOICES. (*Dismayed.*) With the trial ?

FIRST MAN. (*In red attire.*) Whom shall we try, goddess ?

LIMUNKA. (*Pointing to NEBOGIN and UDAROV.*) Look well at these two men. Tell me, dear men, is there a greater sin than the sin which these two men have committed ?

(*Shouts of indignation amongst the men.*)

FIRST MAN. (*In red attire.*) Never yet was divinity so insulted and abased. Tell us, goddess, what tortures you vouchsafe them, or if your heart is in too great a

turmoil, and for the moment you cannot decide on any tortures, leave that to our fantasy. . . .

THE MEN. With our nails and teeth we will tear them into pieces. . . . They are doomed. . . .

LIMUNKA. Stop, stop! Let them live, let them live! You have not understood me aright! I have not accused them in your presence, to obtain your sentence of death upon them. . . .

FIRST MAN. (*In red attire.*) But?

LIMUNKA. I have accused them so that I can pardon them. . . . (*Pointing to NEBOGIN and UDAROV.*) They shall live on and take their joy in the sun!

THE MEN. How great, how divine, how gracious!

FIRST MAN. (*In red attire.*) And now, goddess, the festival, the choice!

THE MEN. The choice, the choice, the choice. . . .

FIRST MAN. (*In red attire.*) We are burning with wish and desire. Uplift your hand and let the rays of favour be shed upon the happy one. . . . Alas! how my breast quivers with anguish. . . .

SECOND MAN. (*In red attire.*) My heart is perishing in icy dread. . . . And behold! Dread is beginning to clutch at them all. . . .

THIRD MAN. (*In red attire.*) In the instant when you point with your hand to the happy one, an icy thrill of madness will dart through our brains! Look at the pallid faces! . . .

(*The men begin to droop their heads and to fall upon their knees.*)

FOURTH MAN. (*In red attire, wringing his hands.*) Mercy, mercy!

(*All the men kneel down and stretch out their folded hands towards LIMUNKA.*)

LIMUNKA. (*To the men.*) You are lying, you do not love me !

THE MEN. (*Grievously stammering.*) We love you, we love you !

LIMUNKA. You hate me, you desire me, you are lying in wait for my body like brute beasts. . . .

FIRST MAN. (*In red attire.*) What has suddenly befallen you ? What has startled up doubt within you ? You are beginning to be loathsome to the divinity. . . . (*To LIMUNKA.*) Demand the sacrifice that can prove our love to you. . . .

LIMUNKA. (*Slowly, with emphasis.*) I desire you to love me as a sister. . . .

FIRST MAN. (*In red attire, is about to kiss her feet. She will not allow him. To the men.*) You have heard ! Can there be under heaven a greater honour for us, than to be allowed to call the divine beauty our sister ?  
(*The men wave their hands.*)

VOICES. Sister, sister, sister !

LIMUNKA. If these hands were not my hands, and this face and these eyes and this hair, if I had nothing but my soul which speaks to you, and is yet invisible, say, by your life, by your living God, whether you would then love me. The inmost of my soul asks and implores you : Do not trifle with what is holy, speak nothing but the truth !

FIRST MAN. (*In red attire.*) Yes !

THE MEN. Yes, yes !

LIMUNKA. You would love me, even if I were ugly ?

FIRST MAN. We should always love you, even though you were the ugliest.

THE MEN. To eternity, to eternity !

LIMUNKA. And you, Nebogin, my dear spouse ?

NEBOGIN. Even if you had leprosy, I would have loved you. I would go from door to door for you, I would have become a beggar for you, and I would have dug earth with my nails. . . .

UDAROV. I would endure the greatest torments, only to be able to serve you. . . .

ALL. We love your soul. . . .

LIMUNKA. Enough! These are the words I wished to hear, they will suffice for my whole life. . . It is for them I have yearned as long as I can remember and perhaps even before I was, before my life, in a strange life I yearned for these words. . . . They have been the greatest, the most mysterious, and the most fervent yearning of woman, since the dark beginning of all things. . . .

OLD WOMEN. (*In national costume: waving with scarves and hands.*) Bravo, sister! bravo, bravo! You are the conqueror for us, the dawn of our day!

THE WOMAN. (*Who before led the abuse.*) The Holy Ghost is speaking from you!

THE MEN. (*Stretching out their hands towards her.*) Our dear, our beloved sister!

LIMUNKA. (*Stretching out her hands towards them.*) My brothers, my long-desired brothers, my brothers whom I have desired since the beginning of all eternity! (*Bursting into a wild shout of ecstasy.*) Resurrection, resurrection of the earth! (*Stamping on the earth, speaking to the earth.*) You gray old slave, bestir yourself, rejoice, exult, moan! The day of your triumph has come, the soul of brethren has bestowed light upon this day! Peace-making of the sexes! Destruction of the time-old curse! Unending embrace! Joy, unspeakable joy! Oh, if the whole earth could hear me!



My God, hearken to me ! (*Mounts on the rock.*) Storms, why have you abated, why are you silent ? I am celebrating the wedding of my soul with the soul of my brethren. Storm and ocean, resound ! Suns and earths, resound !

(*Exulting and cries of joy among the men and women.*)

LIMUNKA. (*Beckoning with her hand.*) Shout, brothers and sisters, shout and exult, let us celebrate the resurrection ! Now we will play as brothers and sisters. . . . (*In an exhausted voice as if in pain.*) Whom of you shall I kiss, whom embrace ? (*All the men rush eagerly forward in an uproar.*) It is alike to me who kisses me and folds me in his arms, it is alike with whom I walk and live, for all are my beloved brethren ! (*Turns pale, reels.*)

VOICES. She has turned all pale ! What is amiss with her ?

LIMUNKA. (*Coming to herself, panting.*) That it shall not end with mere words . . . (*bursting forth*), let us first destroy what hatred, envy and murderous thoughts have sown between us, let us destroy the curse that afflicted us and made our lives ugly. . . . See,—my nails ! With these nails of mine I will furrow and rend my face and breast ! (*Tears her garment so that the upper part of her breast is laid bare.*) And see this hair. (*Loosens her hair that rolls down in a huge dark flood.*) This hair will I cut off. And see these eyes—I will pluck one of them out. One suffices me to gaze upon God's world, to gaze upon you, my brothers ! Who desires me *thus* ? Who desires me *thus* ?

(*All move slowly back ; short pause.*)

LIMUNKA. (*Rushes forward, pressing upon them.*) Who desires me *thus*, who desires me *thus* ? Nebogin,

my spouse, where are you ? You shall lead me through the world, one-eyed, wrinkled, disfigured. We will go from door to door—not to beg, but to tell of brotherly love. (NEBOGIN *moves back*.) Udarov, where are you, my brother ? I do not desire your gift, but take me thus, when I am disfigured. . . . (UDAROV *moves back in alarm*.) What is that ? Was it a dream or a madness ? Brothers, heroes, where are you ? Alas, alas, alas ! you have all deserted me. . . . You have all lied. You have lied, you have lied to us ; from the very beginning of things, you have taught us to lie ! O eternal lie, I am lonely, lonely, lonely, and you force me to be cruel ! (*Steps up, mounts the rock, and speaks to the ocean*.) Ocean, love of my soul, I am lonely, lonely, lonely ! (*Weeping*.) I, poor wretch, am lonely. When your storms and hurricanes arise once more, let them pour the blackest of curses upon the sexes and give wings, talons and claws to the eternal lie ! (*Shouting into the ocean*.) Æther and ocean ! Who desires me, who desires me, who desires me ?

### Scene VI.

*The same. A bark comes sailing up suddenly. IDAN beneath a mask.*

IDAN. (*About to approach her*.) I desire you, I, I, I. . . .

(*Uproar, turmoil, noise. Voices : "Horrid spectre, monstrous creature ! Brute beast !" A few men get in IDAN'S way : "Away from here, you monster !"*)

FIRST MAN. (*In red attire*.) Do not offend our gaze ! Do not offend the festival ! Away, away !

THE VOICES. Away, away !

IDAN. (*Calling to LIMUNKA.*) I am yours, I, I, I. . . . Tear everything from you, I am yours. . . .

LIMUNKA. (*Rushes up to him.*) Leave him, leave him ; . . . let nobody dare to touch him. . . . (*Drags herself away from the throng, folds him in her arms and kisses him passionately.*) You desire me, you, you, you, you love me, for our souls love each other. . . .

FIRST MAN. (*In red attire, shouting.*) The earth is turning, twirling around us, the earth is flying, the sun is flying. . . .

SECOND MAN. (*In red attire.*) Look towards the sea, the sea cannot bear the disgrace, the sea has reddened. . . .

THIRD MAN. (*In red attire, to the crowd, pointing to LIMUNKA who is holding IDAN in her arms.*) Do not look, do not look, look towards the sky.

(*All turn to look towards the sky, but in such a way that as they raise their eyes they again cast burning glances at LIMUNKA and IDAN.*)

FIRST MAN. (*In red attire.*) Something in my throat is choking me. It chokes and chokes. . . .

SECOND MAN. (*In red attire.*) The ground is burning under my feet. . . . Flames, flames, flames ! . . .

LIMUNKA. Ha, ha, ha, ha ! Just look closely at him ! Do not be horrified, do not be horrified, his soul is great and beautiful. And listen, for the love of him, of him, of him, I will not furrow my face, and pluck out my eye. . . . To him belongs my eye and my hair. I belong utterly to him ; he is my bridegroom, and this moment is my wedding festival, and you are all witnesses to my marriage ! (*To IDAN.*) Come, my beloved, come, I feel so sultry and my soul is so full

and my heart is leaping into my mouth for joy. Come into the tent to share our victory, to share our spoil; we have fought bitterly and bloodily for it. . . .

IDAN. No, no, come into the bark, not into the tent. Come swiftly, the people's blood is raging, and in their raging blood the dangerous brute has awakened; come swiftly, swiftly. . . .

LIMUNKA. No, no, no, they have erected a tent of love for us—here in front of their raging madness we will share the wedding victory. . . .

IDAN. (*To the crowd.*) Go home, go and regret and do penance. You have insulted her greatly, you have insulted God in her.

LIMUNKA. (*Dragging him towards the tent.*) To Paradise, to Paradise, our Eden is beginning. . . .

NEBOGIN. (*Trembling to UDAROV.*) Come on to the peak of the rock.

UDAROV. (*Brokenly, gives him his hand.*) Let us go, it is the highest time, it is the last hour. . . .

(*Exeunt both.*)

IDAN. (*To the crowd.*) Go, go, offend her no longer by your presence. Away, go, vanish! Restrain the brute in you, and go. (*Stir, swerving, muffled rage, hissing, clenching of fists.*) Go home, and learn to love man and to despise the covetous, ugly brute. Alas! their faces are growing ugly, the rising blood is painting hell and demons upon them; from your eyes the soul is vanishing! Alas! from your eyes the soul is vanishing! . . . Turn away, turn towards the sun, towards the sun, towards the sun! Be men, men! . . .

(*Gloomy, threatening silence.*)

LIMUNKA. (*Dragging IDAN.*) Come, come, come!

IDAN. You will not go away. You are awaiting perchance for the final wonder. You have perchance still a final ugly hope for her. Ha, ha, ha! (*Stretching out his arms violently.*) Oh, I, too, have blood in my body, and it is raging from my heart up to my head and striking my brain blind! (*Giving a hoarse shout.*) Ho! (*Drags the mask from his face.*) Away from here, knaves, and beasts of prey! She is my wife, she is my spouse! She has belonged to me from the first day of our lives, she has belonged to me from the very beginning of all things, from eternity, from the beginning of the soul. . . . We have celebrated festivals of sun and stars in closest embrace beneath the blossoming palms and laurels of the universe! The festival belongs to us . . . understand me! Why do you stare at me so, why do you threaten me, why do you threaten us? A curse upon you, a curse, a curse! May the dark flight of the storm lash, cow and crush the brute within you! (*In a mournful tone.*) Sun, sun, sun! (*Feverishly to himself.*) My God! how shall I defend myself against them, how shall I protect her from their glances and plundering clutches? . . . (*Seizes hold of LIMUNKA.*) They are plundering from you with their baseness, their glances are beasts of prey, the beating of their hearts a lustful bellowing. How can I protect you? (*Embraces her and covers her with kisses.*) Thus, thus, thus, thus, thus. . . . (*Lifts her powerfully into his arms.*) Let us flee, let us flee, let us flee, but whither, my God, whither? (*Pressing her firmly to him.*) Their desire creeps, crawls and writhes everywhere around you. . . . (*Runs about with her in his arms.*)

LIMUNKA. Into the tent, into the tent of love, into



the tent of victory ! (*Singing in his arms.*) The stars are afar, the stars are afar :

Unto the stars we cannot go,

Unto the stars we cannot go !

IDAN. (*Panting.*) Still there are stars, still there are suns. . . . Into the tent of love, into the tent of victory !  
(*Both disappear into the tent.*)

BELLOWING OF THE MEN. Death, death, death, death ! murder, murder to them ! . . .

OSTRWITSCH. Let us kill the knaves !

SCHATINITSCH. The knaves, the knaves, the thousand-fold knaves !

BELLOWING OF THE MEN. Death to them both, to them both ! . . .

(*All the men rush like beasts of prey in frenzied rage and with clenched fists on to the tent.*)

(*Curtain.*)

THE END.



II

**PASSION'S FURNACE**

**DRAMA IN FOUR ACTS**

*(Translated by F. S. Copeland.)*

## DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

ILARIJA SALIC,<sup>1</sup> aged fifty-five, pious, peace-loving.

MARA, his wife, same age ; strong character.

ILIJAJA,<sup>2</sup> aged twenty, his son, a shrewd, prepossessing youth.

RUZA,<sup>3</sup> promised to Ilija, sweet-tempered, pretty, gentle, aged seventeen.

GUSA<sup>4</sup> RIGALIN, aged forty-five, a man of primitive instincts.

STANA, his wife, about the same age ; very pious, with a martyred expression.

ADA, his son, takes after his father.

MIRKO, ex-university student.

THE JUDGE, an average man, with the qualities of a poet and peace-maker.

A SURVEYOR.

THE VICAR.

THE NOTARY, venal.

FIRST CONSTABLE (in the field).

SECOND CONSTABLE (at Rigalin's window.)

VASILJEVIC,<sup>5</sup> forester, brutal, insolent, swaggering.

MATIC,<sup>6</sup> gamekeeper, his toady.

A GIPSY FIDDLER.

PETAR MISKOVIC <sup>7</sup>	} Neighbours of Salic's.
TUNJA COVIC <sup>8</sup>	
MARTIN DIMIC <sup>9</sup>	
GABRA MATIC <sup>10</sup>	

GIPSY JELA,<sup>11</sup> a fortune-teller, who feeds Stana on confidence and happy delusions. SALIC'S SERVANT. A BEGGAR WOMAN. A BLIND MAN with a little girl leading him. TWO REVELLERS. TENT GIPSIES. WORKING MEN. VILLAGE LADS AND LASSES. A PIPER. WEDDING GUESTS. GIPSY BAND. A MAN from the field. FIRST YOUNG GIRL. SECOND YOUNG GIRL, etc.

The action takes place in a Slavonian village. A year elapses between the second and third Acts, and a day between the third and fourth.

NOTE.—<sup>1</sup> Pronounce *Ilarya Shalich*; <sup>2</sup> *Ilya*; <sup>3</sup> *Ruzha* (*z=s* in treasure); <sup>4</sup> *Gusa*; <sup>5</sup> *Vasilyevich*; <sup>6</sup> *Matich*; <sup>7</sup> *Mishkovich*; <sup>8</sup> *Tunya Chovich*; <sup>9</sup> *Dimich*; <sup>10</sup> *Matich*; <sup>11</sup> *Yela*. (Vowels as in Italian.)

## ACT I.

*The coppery light of an early autumn evening. The endless stretch of stubble fields is suffused with the warm damp reflection of a crimson sunset sky. In the foreground of a newly-ploughed field the course of a rivulet is discernible darkly hidden beneath overhanging willows. You can hear the sound of running water.*

*From the distance beyond comes the sound of shepherds singing, and the sweet melancholy wailing of shepherds' pipes. The Scene is laid in Salic's field, on which the stubble is gleaming. In the field are ILARIJA SALIC,*



ILIJA'S father, their neighbours, PETAR MISKOVIC, TUNJA COVIC, MARTIN DIMIC and GABRA MATIC. In the neighbouring field, MIRKO the ex-student, in peasant dress, ploughing. The handles of his plough are visible on the scene, and a little of the furrows, but the oxen are out of sight.

Scene I.

ILARIJA SALIC, PETAR MISKOVIC, TUNJA COVIC, MARTIN DIMIC, GABRA MATIC, MIRKO.

ILARIJA. (*Shouting cheerily.*) Hard work ploughing—eh, Mirko?

MIRKO. None so easy, when there has been no rain for so long. . . . My people did say there was no hurry, but once the autumn rains set in—

ILARIJA. The sooner the better. And I should have begun too, but for that which hindered me; the maize will have to be sown before long.

MIRKO. At what hour do you expect the Commission?

ILARIJA. They ought to be here by now, but you know how it is. The gentry are always a bit behind time.

MIRKO. So they are, the gentry. Woa there! (*Calls to the oxen and disappears from the scene.*)

PETAR. (*Shouts after him.*) Well, mate, got used to the plough yet? You used to be all for the books.

MIRKO. (*From without.*) Thank the Lord, I can manage. I used to go ploughing with father when I was eight.

PETAR. Why did you leave college? Might have been a judge or a professor and learned us all. . . .

MIRKO. You're a sight too clever by nature. . . .

PETAR. Of course. Like father, like son!

MIRKO. (*Chaffing.*) Chips of the old block.

TUNJA. (*Earnestly, somewhat anxiously.*) Look here, Daddy Ilarija, are you certain that you've got right on your side? Of course, all of us here know that you have, and the kind of man you are, but it's a question of whether you are in the right with the Commission—you know, it all depends on your being right with the Commission.

ILARIJA. I am surer of my rights than I am of my life, but as to the Commission— (*Shrugs his shoulders.*)

GABRAMATIC. Sure, and it's all honour to your face! It's an honest man you are. We know you, and the whole place knows you, Daddy—I wish you would just tell me how the d——d trespassing began. It's a bad business, in all conscience, and Gusa Rigalin is a rascal anyway.

TUNJA; MARTIN. (*Together.*) Yes, tell us how it began!

ILARIJA. (*Earnestly, distinctly, rhetorically.*) Every year, as it were with his teeth and not with his plough, he gnawed away clod after clod from me until he had gnawed away a whole furrow. I kept myself well in hand and I thought to myself: Bad luck to him! He is covetous and greedy, let him have the furrow. God made him wicked. But that didn't satisfy him. The following autumn he started his plough afresh and cut off a full handsbreadth of my field. And it was as much pain to me as if he had taken and cut off a piece of my own flesh with his plough-share. I have a family. I have an only son, and my son will one day

have a son ! And then I saw how he sowed that field, and how he grinned to himself : What a fool he is, that Ilarija Salic ! The third year he cut off another whole handsbreadth of ground. That day I wasn't in the field, but when I came out next day the field spun round me. " You are gripping my heart," I called out like a madman and fled back to the house. I wanted to go straight to him, to bring him to his senses,—“ Gusa, you devil, you fiend, don't eat the flesh off me ! ” When on my way I by good luck met his Reverence, our late Father. . . .

GABRA. (*Interrupting.*) God rest his soul. He was indeed a man. He fed and housed the whole village.

TUNJA. (*With a sigh.*) He was father and mother to the whole village. As for this screw, this hypocritical shaveling—

ILARIJA. “ Praised be Jesus Christ, your Reverence ! ”—“ For ever and ever, Ilarija ! Well, how goes it ? ” “ Thus and thus, your Reverence. ” “ If the Evil One has you by the hem of your garment,” says he as it were in the words of the Holy Gospel—“ cut off the whole skirt, and get free from the devil. ” I bent down, kissed his hand and called God to mind,—and I forgave him that handsbreadth of land.

PETAR. And he goes on stealing because he sees that you are soft as butter and that he can twist you round his finger.

ILARIJA. The fourth autumn I was ill abed on the day of the ploughing and sent my son to the fields ; presently he comes back clean distraught : “ Father, he has cut away a whole foot of the land. ” I cried and turned my face to the wall. That blow laid me prostrate and made my illness last some three weeks longer.

There was nothing for it but to go to law. . . . Good God, how I felt in that hour ! As if I were looking down into hell and the winds of hell were beating upon my face and upon my soul, so that I was hurled down backwards. . . . That spring his Reverence, the ornament of the parish, died. . . .

TUNJA ; MARTIN. (*Together.*) God grant him a crown of glory !

ILARIJA. And that brought back his face to my mind, his powerful glance, and as if I'd had a revelation of paradise I said : " I will dedicate this sacrifice to his memory. . . . "

GABRA MATIC. Cousin Ilarija ! You are too straight !

TUNJA COVIC. And too soft-hearted !

ILARIJA. The fifth autumn I go into the field to take note of his trespassing and to take a pleasure in watching his rascally enjoyment. And lo, so long as I was looking, he guided the plough straight, but the moment I turned my eyes away, his hungry plough-share went crooked and ate into my field. I stood there and I waited. Suddenly, as if he had got tired of seeing me standing there, he furiously turned his plough and took off a whole furrow. " Stop," I shouted, and went up to him with a curse. " That is the fourth furrow you have stolen from me ! " His chest began to heave, and his face worked till he changed into the very likeness of Satan. " Do you want me to smash you ? d'you want me to throttle you ? " Then he stalked across to my field, and the blood froze in my veins ; if I kill him, I shall go to prison, and good-bye to my son and my wife and to all I have, and if he kills me, then I shall have lost it all anyhow.

PETAR MISKOVIC. He is a devil, and no mistake.

ILARIJA. "Keep off," I shouted, "keep off. The Court shall decide!" (*Excitedly shakes his fist as in the scene with GUSA.*) "Keep off, or I'll kill you on the spot! I don't steal from you, but it's you that steals from me, and now you have the face to attack me." The brute already had his hand on his knife, but I so cowed him with my eye that he could not move, but went back like a beast that is faced by a stronger. . . . I drew a deep breath of relief, for it had been a very near thing. . . . Let the Court decide. . . . That hour has cost me five years of my life.

MARTIN DIMIC. You didn't prosecute him at once?

ILARIJA. Well, I put off, and put off, and it worked in me like a poison, till my heart was cold as any stone. The year after that I left him to steal in peace. Let him just go further into the trap, so that he may get caught all the more sharply; the coil will be all the thicker by the time he gets taken in it. When I reckoned that he had stolen full five furrows, I was pleased and chuckled to myself: "Oh, good for the Court!"

GABA MATIC. And you began your law-suit?

ILARIJA. For illegal appropriation of land.

GABRA. The case has been dragging on for a long time.

ILARIJA. He greases wherever he can.

GABRA. But you wouldn't do that.

ILARIJA. Why bribe for the sake of my just inheritance?

GABA. They say that Gusa has been tampering with our honourable Parish Council, and with our immaculate notary.



MARTIN. Two of Gusa's last litter of pigs are squeaking in the notary's pig-stye.

ILARIJA. The notary asked me to call.

TUNJA. E—eh ?

ILARIJA. "Master Ilarija, that law-suit has dried up the grease in your cartwheels ; can't you hear them creaking ?" he murmured in my ears.

THE OTHERS. Ow, ow !

ILARIJA. "My cart is going very nicely, thank you, sir."

TUNJA AND MARTIN. Fine, Daddy Ilarija, fine !

GABRA MATIC. The fat brute would gobble up everything like a pig.

(*Silence.*)

MARTIN DIMIC. Daddy Ilarija, is your Ilija fit again ?

ILARIJA. (*Nods assent.*) Yes, thank God he has got over it all right.

MARTIN DIMIC. It's God's miracle that he has ! 'Tisn't enough for him to steal your land, but his son must need take his knife to your son. That, my good people, *that* is simply——

ILARIJA. (*Tormented, makes a deprecating movement.*) All kinds of thoughts passed through my mind before that miserable business. I thought of forgiving him. I thought of making him a gift of the land, of letting him have his fill of it. But since I heard that his son had attempted the life of my son—— (*Pauses.*) Since that evening when the lads carried home my only boy, all bedabbled with his own blood—the flesh of my flesh, whom I had held dearer than the apple of the eyes in my head, and wouldn't let the very dust light upon him, the lad for whom I in most fervent prayer held communion

with God—when I beheld him on my threshold borne home in his friend's arms and the blood dripping from his white clothes. . . . Oh, oh, oh! (*Sobs with sudden violence. All soothe and comfort him.*)

MARTIN. Forget it, brother, forget it. God in his mercy has spared your son's life.

ILARIJA. (*Passionately.*) Since then I have forgiven those hounds nothing, and if I haven't killed them it is only because I am not a man of blood, and because I consider my dear ones and myself. . . . (*Momentary pause.*) They can say what they like. But there is such a thing as justice, I know there is. I don't just know how to explain it, but there is. It is there, not in the hands of those gentlemen, but it is there and will avenge its own cause. . . .

GABRA. But if the surveyor should be crooked in his measurements? If he has also been bribed by him?

ILARIJA. The surveyor is a well-paid man and thinks more of his reputation. But if this one should not draw the chain straight, I will call in another, and a third, and a fourth, and a hundredth—so long as they don't bring it out right—(*Passionately*)—and he will twist and wriggle like a poisonous snake, and perhaps he will in the end beg me and protest on his oath, but I will be hard, not because of the law, but because of my flesh and blood.

## Scene II.

*Enter ILIJA from the willow copse L.*

ALL. (*Call out cheerily.*) Here comes your boy.

ILARIJA. (*Flies to meet him.*) My dear boy! oh, my

dear boy ! (*Embraces him passionately.*) We were just talking about you, and so you came, as if the good Lord himself had sent you to help me in my——

ILIJA. I had an idea that when the surveyor had drawn his chain, and the Court had given its decision, those swine might possibly . . . (*To the rest.*) Praised be Jesus Christ, neighbours !

ALL. For ever and ever, Ilija.

ILARIJA. Welcome, but we must avoid evil.

ILIJA. But for mother and you, I should already have gone to gaol because of his Ada.

ILARIJA. What ?

ILIJA. It's a shame, Dad, that we put up with everything from them.

ILARIJA. Ilija !

ILIJA. You're good and yielding, and that's no good either.

ILARIJA. What ails you, lad ?

ILIJA. A tooth for a tooth.

ILARIJA. Never !

ILIJA. As I went by their house just now and caught sight of Ada in the window, a burning rage rose in my gorge—to break into his house——

ILARIJA. Into hell !

ILIJA. To wring his neck on the spot.

ILARIJA. Did you not promise your father that you would be like him, peaceable, and——

ILIJA. I promised you, but I can't go on any longer. And then, whenever my thoughts run upon my enemy, they show him to me as a corpse.

ILARIJA. You meditate and contemplate evil. . . .

GABRA. Isn't the ruffian in gaol yet ?

ILIJA. This is his last day, he is waiting to see how

the case goes ; but I have a feeling as if he were lying in wait for me.

ILARIJA. And so you too would be a gaol-bird ?

GABRA. (*Slyly.*) It's the hot blood calling. Boys will be boys.

MARTIN. (*Smiling.*) A girl. . . .

GABRA. The blood !

MARTIN. A girl !

(*ILIJA blushes and looks confused. TUNJA and PETAR talk aside.*)

TUNJA. When Ada went for Ilija yon evening, he seized on his girl and carried her off.

PETAR. And Daddy Ilarija knows nothing about that !

TUNJA. The boy is not such a fool as to tell his father. Did you see how he blushed ?

PETAR. Up to the ears !

MARTIN. (*Calls.*) Here comes the Commission.

### Scene III.

*Enter from over the hill the JUDGE, the SURVEYOR, GUSA, the NOTARY, a CLERK and a field-constable. GUSA keeps close to the NOTARY whispering insistently. The NOTARY tries to ward him off. All take off their caps as the COMMISSION enters.*

THE JUDGE. Praised be Jesus Christ, gentlemen !

ALL. For ever and ever, your Worship.

THE JUDGE. Ilarija Salic.

(*ILARIJA comes forward.*)

THE JUDGE. Now Master Ilarija, what's this about the land ? It would be ever so much better for you two to agree peaceably like decent good neighbours.

ILARIJA. Your Worship, I have always been for peace.

THE JUDGE. The Court cannot help you much—at least not in the chief matter, which is that you ought to be good neighbours. You want your rights, but these rights, my good people, cost money and sacrifice. How much time have you already spent in flying about from one hearing to another, and how much money in paying the lawyers? And what for? For nothing at all, out of pure spite! You each want to strike at the other, not with fist or bludgeon, but with the law.

ILARIJA. (*Angrily.*) Your Worship! . . .

THE JUDGE. What is all the fuss about? About a square yard or so of land! . . . About foolishness! Whom does the land belong to? To Salic. And to whom did it belong originally? To some savage, whom Salic's great-great-grandfather, being the stronger, robbed of it. Good heavens!—nothing but robbery all the time!

GUSA. Might is Right.

(*Most of those present laugh.*)

THE JUDGE. You admit that you took this land from Salic?

GUSA. I admit nothing. I was only talking.

THE JUDGE. Will you come to an agreement?

ILARIJA. I want my rights, your Worship.

THE JUDGE. (*Regretfully.*) Those rights, Ilarija, that you are clamouring for, you are more likely to find in your souls than in the law courts. I am myself a man of the people and I know how plain folk think. Plain folk are quite right when they are afraid of the courts. I have met country folk who dreaded the Court as the



devil does holy water. They had the fear of it in their bones, as soon as they set foot on the threshold of the courthouse. They divined quite justly that it represented something cruel, strange and remote, not the justice they yearn for, and of which they themselves do not know what it rightly is. . . . And in truth, that is a matter of godliness, of that pious longing for God, the most merciful Judge! Poor people! Instead of going to law, go to church or to the public-house, and over your prayers or your whiskey forget what has worried you . . . that would be ever so much better.

ILARIJA. But, your Worship, there is blood between us and an armed assault. . . .

PETAR. And many other things besides. . . .

ILARIJA. So that all compromise is out of the question.

THE JUDGE. (*Tries to penetrate his soul.*) But you must put up with one another. We all have to put up with one another, the whole world. Otherwise life would be impossible. We all mutually hate each other, and then again all of a sudden love each other; we are all irritated and ensnared by fear, and that compels us to harmony and concord, which is the measure of our strength or our cowardice.

ILARIJA. Your Worship—

THE JUDGE. You must get the better of yourselves and offer to shake hands and be friends . . . there is no such thing as a wound which will not heal, and no such thing as an enmity that cannot be converted into friendship. In Nature, in the secret womb of things there rules a grim power which wills that all enemies should in the end lay down their arms and exchange

a brother's kiss. . . And why should you do that only after a crime has been committed, whereas you can do it at once, here, before us. . . .

*(Silence.)*

GUSA. I will yield him one furrow.

ILARIJA. *(Laughs bitterly.)* He will yield me one furrow!

GUSA. And I forgive you all that has mounted up against you in me. . . .

ILARIJA. Hear him threatening. . . .

*(THE JUDGE silences ILARIJA with a glance.)*

ILIJA. Father, not one handsbreadth.

ILARIJA. Be quiet, my boy! *(Wearily gives way to reflection.)*

GUSA. I forgive all enmity, and that one furrow into the bargain.

GABRA. Ilarija, what are you considering!

ILIJA. Not one clod, father!

JUDGE. Leave your father alone.

GUSA. I give way only once in my life. Think of that and reckon with it!

PETAR. Daddy Ilarija, the matter is plain as daylight.

ILIJA. Remember, father, his son stuck his knife into me.

THE JUDGE. *(Calling him to order.)* Ilija!

TUNJA. And the girl!

*(ILIJA seizes TUNJA'S hand and gives him a fierce look to make him keep silence.)*

THE JUDGE. Like two peaceable and God-fearing neighbours.

ILIJA. His son stabbed me foully, like a common murderer from behind. He shamed me before all the

girls and boys, before the whole village . . . me, your only son. . . . Father !

ILARIJA. (*Sullenly.*) Bring out the chain !

(*General interest.*)

GUSA. (*Cries out gloomily.*) O—oh !

(*The JUDGE occupies himself with papers. The SURVEYOR takes the chain from his leather bag. A caravan of touzled, long-haired gipsy tinkers comes across the fields and stands in the background where the fiery light of the sunset lights up their faces. GUSA and the NOTARY come forward and stand apart from the rest.*)

GUSA. Now, by the Lord, take all your wits together, and keep a sharp look-out.

THE NOTARY. (*Cautiously.*) I have done my very best, and now keep quiet, quiet as a graven image.

GUSA. If there is anything you lack in your house or your purse you shall never want for it, I promise you !

THE NOTARY. I have done all I can, I tell you.

(*A knot of navvies come across the fields with their bags of tools on their backs ; they pull off their caps without speaking and stand in a group beside the gipsies.*)

THE JUDGE. Begin, surveyor.

THE SURVEYOR. (*Gives one end of the chain to the CONSTABLE.*) Go to the other end of the field.

THE CONSTABLE. Very good, sir !

(*The measuring can be watched from the stage and is followed with intense interest by all present. The SURVEYOR and the CONSTABLE go off in opposite directions. The JUDGE is lost in*

*contemplation of the sky and indulges in slight gestures of delight and admiration.)*

THE JUDGE. What a glorious evening ! How exquisite is the appeal of autumn to the heart !

THE NOTARY. (*Tries to keep off GUSA, who is incessantly near him.*) Don't buzz round me ; it's noticeable.

GUSA. I dare not be alone just now. My brain and my bones are like ice. . . . I shall do something foolish. Look at the surveyor shaking his head ; he is puzzled ; the devil he's puzzled ! Now he's opening his mouth. D'you think he's been bribed by him ?

THE NOTARY. Rubbish ! (*Leaves him abruptly and crosses over to the JUDGE, who is walking to and fro in the field and is lost in fascinated absent-minded contemplation of the view. To JUDGE, pointing skywards.*) Beautiful, isn't it, m'lud ?

THE JUDGE. Man clean forgets everything and becomes a child once more. Do you love Nature ?

THE NOTARY. (*Laughing.*) A little.

THE JUDGE. You prefer other things ?

THE NOTARY. More or less, m'lud.

THE JUDGE. (*Stands still.*) You ought to have a wash now and again. You stand in need of it.

THE NOTARY. A wash ! What do you mean, m'lud ?

THE JUDGE. You should see more of Nature ; you are getting crusted with office work.

THE NOTARY. It's that same office work keeps me from having any leisure, m'lud !

THE JUDGE. And you must wash your hands of Gusa, too.

*(The NOTARY lowers his glance. The dim outline of the gipsy caravan passes R. to L. in the*

*background silhouetted against the blue twilight. The wild song of the gipsies dies away in the distance.)*

“Oy Heaven!

I gave to him the dayspring,

Gave the heart from out my bosom,

Oy Heaven! Oy Heaven!”

THE JUDGE. (*Listening.*) How this great unsatisfied longing touches the soul! (*Leaves the NOTARY.*)

THE SURVEYOR. (*To CONSTABLE.*) A little to the right there. There . . . that's it. (*The interest in the measuring grows. Silence.*) A strip of precisely three yards in width has been taken from Salic's land and added to Rigalin's.

ALL PRESENT. (*In amazement.*) Three yards!

(GUSA turns livid, presses his hand to his heart, uttering a bestial, inarticulate cry.)

ALL. (*Crowding around him.*) What ails him!

GABRA. The devil has got a stroke.

THE JUDGE. What is the matter with him?

TWO OR THREE VOICES. The Surveyor has choked him, the surveyor's chain!

ILARIJA. God's judgment!

ILIJA. The devil!

ILARIJA. My son!

ILIJA. (*In savage elation.*) To-night we'll have a dance and pipers! Friends, gipsies, tramps! Come along to-night to our house. My father will open a keg of brandy. and a barrel of wine! Come, come all, we'll have a rattling evening and we'll make a night of it!

ILARIJA. You are forgetting yourself, my son. God does not love rejoicings such as these! (*To the others.*)



No, my brothers and friends, not to-day. I do not wish to crow over him who has been stricken ; but come to the wedding of my only son : to that I bid you all as guests ! But to-night I feel the need for peace and for meditation upon godly matters. (*To the JUDGE, with his hand on his breast.*) My heartfelt thanks !

THE JUDGE. You owe me no thanks. The decision of the Court will be forwarded to you. From to-day you are again master of your land.

ILARIJA. I thank you from my heart, your Worship. Believe me, upon my soul, it's not my fault, but his own, that he made that horrible noise. If he had only come to me and said, Brother, I need more corn in my barn ; or if he felt shy about it, if he had only kept quiet, and thought well of me in silence. But he burrowed like a mole about my land, and with his thoughts about my soul. . . . He hates me and despises me so bitterly that his son has become infected with his hatred.

GUSA. (*Interrupts savagely.*) And I hate you now, I do, you pious humbug, you coward ! You hide your covetousness beneath your church-going, your piety. You lie, I never stole anything from you, and if I did do as you babble, why didn't you defend what was yours, you drivelling petticoat ? Why do you dither and hide behind the law ? Why didn't you go for me that time I offered to thrash you ? Why didn't I wring your neck that time in the field ? Thank God for it, that I pitied you as I would a beggar. That's what your mean face looked like. And you go snivelling round the village that you wouldn't soil your hands, but——

ILARIJA. (*Bursts out.*) Yes—I wouldn't soil my hands, but man for man, I'm not afraid of you.

GUSA. (*Furious, as before.*) And it's for that I hate you, for *that*. Is your life worth more than mine, that you must hold your hand, you sneaking psalm-singer? I'll own to it. I love the land, the brown earth; I love it more than my wife, than heaven and paradise, for from it I have come, and to it I shall return, and for it I will die. And, look you, just because you are so careful of your filthy life, I hit at you through your land . . . to rouse you, to wake you up, because you are a coward who hides behind the law! And I'd have you to know (*Grinds his teeth*) the land belongs to me, for I'll see you in heaven first. It belongs to me. (*Rushes at ILARIJA uttering inarticulate cries. ILIJA intervenes and throws him aside.*)

ILARIJA. There, your Worship, you can see what a ruffian he is.

THE JUDGE. (*Sharply to GUSA.*) Your proper place is in the woods with the wild beasts! I order you to keep the peace, or you will be handcuffed and taken to gaol.

(*The GIPSIES and the NAVVIES shake their heads in amazement.*)

THE SURVEYOR. (*To the JUDGE.*) Never since I've been at this job have I ever seen the like.

THE JUDGE. Nor I. He's a regular aboriginal; he's got all the instincts of prehistoric man.

GUSA. (*Turns upon the NOTARY, attacks him and hits him in the stomach.*) And you're the biggest scoundrel of all!

THE NOTARY. (*Groans.*) Have you gone crazy, you savage! M'lud!

THE JUDGE. You can prosecute! (*In a lower voice.*) You can be thankful that I am not your chief, for you would have lost your berth.

GUSA. (*To NOTARY.*) Yes, yes, you are the biggest scoundrel of all!

THE NOTARY. Outrageous! Here you are in the field and in your native element, but the police will soon find you at your house. (*Exit.*)

GUSA. (*Calls after him.*) You always beguiled me with your promises, and when it comes to the point you've no more strength than a nanny-goat.

MARTIN. Wickedness is like nakedness—it's best covered up.

TUNJA. We had thunder last winter: that is unlucky.

GABRA. And in summer a comet stood over the village; that's worse—it means pestilence, war, or famine.

GUSA. May the pestilence take you all!

(*MARTIN and GABRA cross themselves and exeunt.*)

(*TUNJA and ILARIJA nod to them, take off their caps to the JUDGE, and go off with ILIJA.*)

THE JUDGE. (*To SURVEYOR.*) It is late, Mr. Surveyor. We must be going. (*Twilight deepens. The PEASANTS leave the stage.*)

#### Scene IV.

GUSA, the GIPSIES, the NAVVIES. MIRKO, with folded arms, leans against a willow-tree and watches GUSA.

GUSA. (*Crushed, despairing.*) All my labour is lost. So much trouble for nothing. And how I loved this bit of earth, more than my own land! It had just grown to my heart!

A GIPSY. Be sensible, master, for God's sake; don't worry for no reason. You're in a mood to lay hand

upon yourself, and life is one's best possession, worth more than all the earth. (*Makes a sweeping gesture indicating the whole world.*) To whom has the earth ever brought happiness? It lies in wait for us on every hand, and truly on one's way across it it is best to touch it but with the tips of one's toes! Live, as our people live; go whither the wind calls you, and you will be light of heart and glad, and all your days will be glad.

GUSA. (*Unheeding—to himself.*) He thinks that I alone am wicked; and he's three times worse himself—taking away from me what had grown to my heart. And if I had crawled to him, says he, he'd have given it to me. Brother Ilarija—thus and thus. (*Grimaces.*) . . . Scurvy beast! It grieves you that you didn't see me humble, that you didn't see me like a beaten cur, that daren't look his master in the eyes. (*Yells.*) Wait! Wait! I'll make you pay for that, too!

A NAVVY. Now you are sinning for the sake of what is not yours, and you are laying the blame on God. Look at us! We are ragged, hungry, and all we have is our picks and shovels. The sky is our roof, the woods are our home, and all is hard on us—work and being out of work, and bad weather, and every kind of distress. And look at *them*. (*Points to the GIPSIES.*) No one owns less land than they. They are like the birds and their tents are their wings! And all that doesn't worry them. They sing their wild songs and go on through wind, snow and storm, and their hearts are full of light and the praise of the Lord. They are like birds, like the wind, and their whole life is a glorification of the Lord. Ah!

GUSA. (*Still lost in thought.*) And to think—how the Court played with me in its strength and took

from me and gave to him and reckoned it as nought that I had put my heart into my labour; . . . as if I were nothing—as if I weren't human, and as if this thing they are doing weren't worse than what I did; I laboured with my heart. . . . They would toss me about like a toy . . . handcuff me and take me to gaol, me! Threaten me, would they? Let 'em threaten! . . .

*(A wolf's howl is heard from the forest.)*

THE GIPSY. *(Listens.)* The wolf howls! *(Looks towards the west.)* Look, the evening star is shining. Let us go. Our tents are far ahead. The wolf is the best company for him.

*(The GIPSIES prepare to go.)*

THE NAVVY. Wait a bit, mate, and we'll go together. Can we get a night's lodging in your tents?

THE GIPSY. *(Together with the rest of his party.)* You're heartily welcome, brothers! Everybody is welcome who comes to our tents, and it's you we like best of all, because you are like ourselves.

*(GIPSIES and NAVVIES exeunt.)*

### Scene V.

GUSA, MIRKO. *Presently the wolf is heard again howling in the forest.*

MIRKO. *(Watching GUSA, aside.)* From the few furrows which I ploughed, and from these few furrows which life has ploughed upon the souls of these men, I have learnt, upon my soul, more than from all books. . . . Truly a divine privilege to study thus! . . .

GUSA. *(Notices him, rouses himself from his gloomy reflections.)* Have you been here all the time?



MIRKO. Yes.

GUSA. Which is in the right ?

*(The wolf howls.)*

MIRKO. *(Listens.)* Hark !

GUSA. It's a wolf.

*(A cold blast of wind stirs the willows, and the shadows grow deeper around them.)*

GUSA. *(In a subdued voice.)* Which is in the right ?

MIRKO. The wolf,—Nature ! *(Goes out and is lost in the darkness.)*

GUSA. *(Looks after him.)* But force can yet be over-matched by force . . . strength by violence ! *(Contemplates the field.)* Ilarija, you don't know yet, of whom you have fallen foul ! . . . You have opposed me, to break up what was dearest to me, to plant your heel upon my heart ; but I will crush your head like a serpent's . . . yours and your son's and your son's son's—I and my people. Our children's children and our people shall be intertwined like a coil of snakes, and bite and devour, and strangle each other, and that shall not end till your people or mine have perished. *(In a sudden access of rage.)* Thus will I do to you, thus. . . . Oo—oo—oo—oo ! *(Quivering with rage he claws the earth with his hands.)*

*(The howl of the wolf in the woods blends with*

*GUSA'S howl of rage.)*

*(Curtain.)*

## ACT II.

*The same evening in GUSA'S house. A room in a farmhouse, dimly lit by the sad, yellowish glow of a paraffin lamp. A bed against either wall. In front of main wall a table, covered with a white linen cloth and two or three chairs round it. Image of the Virgin on the wall. To the left of the door a tiled stove, with a bench running round it. Two windows overlook the street, one overlooks the yard. Beside the latter a tub on a stand.*

## Scene I.

ADA, GUSA'S son ; STANA, GUSA'S wife—both very agitated.

ADA. (*With his knapsack on his back, ready to go to prison.*) Aye—and father isn't home yet ; I'm afraid I shall miss my train and the police will come for me. I'm just perishing to know how things went.

STANA. I'm all of a tremble, for fear he will commit some fresh wickedness. (*Sighs deeply.*) Oh, dearie me !

ADA. You needn't be alarmed ; he knows what he is doing.

STANA. You're wrong there. He never knows where he has his head. He just staggers and staggers like a blind man with eyes. Oh, what haven't I been through already because of him ! Mother of God ! He will bring me to my grave twenty years before my time.

ADA ; Oh, drop it mother, don't cry !

STANA. When he was no more than a boy he was already the black sheep of the village.

ADA. You needn't have married him.

STANA. When I remember how I married your father it seems to me that I became clean unconscious at the time, and have never come to myself since ; only from time to time it flashes through my mind and I wring my hands—Oh, dearie, dearie, what have I done !

ADA. Well, I shouldn't have been alive but for that.

STANA. God forgive me, and there would have been no loss in that ! Your life isn't much of a credit to you. You are for ever knifing somebody or breaking heads. God forbid that it should be so, but I'm always afraid that's how you will end. Look you, I am your mother. I have nursed you at my breast, but there are times when I fear lest you should raise your hand against me. . . .

ADA. (*With a heartless laugh.*) By Jove, you've got funny notions ! (*Nervously pacing up and down.*) Wonder why he isn't here yet—ach——

STANA. Aren't you sorry you stabbed Ilija ?

ADA. Why should I be sorry ?

STANA. Others are disposed towards sin, but they suffer in their conscience and repent. Have you never once said to yourself, Alas ! what have I done ?

ADA. Drop it, please, mother ; you're talking stuff and nonsense !

STANA. You're a bad one, you are !

ADA. Does he wish me well, d'you think ?

STANA. You don't know ; and besides, how could he, when you're wanting to kill him ? I've known Ilija from a child, and he was always a good boy.

ADA. Then you would take their part ?

STANA. I'm on the side of those who do no evil. But

evil is forever clinging to your father's hands and to yours. Why do you covet another man's sweetheart, when there are girls in plenty ?

ADA. Because I don't want him to have her.

STANA. But she doesn't like you, and love will not be compelled.

ADA. You talk as if you were never my own mother.

STANA. It's because I am your mother that I talk to you like this ; but you don't take after my people. . . .

ADA. (*Proudly.*) Thank the Lord I take after my father's.

STANA. You've nothing to be proud of in your father. He's nobody's well-wisher, not even his own. The whole countryside points the finger of scorn at him, everybody is sick of him. Oh, woe is me ! (*Goes to the window, opens it and looks out.*) There is not a soul on the road ; all the folk are at home, and he isn't back yet !

ADA. (*Meditatively.*) No parties for me now for three months.

STANA. (*Softly.*) The young folk will find it a relief, I doubt.

ADA. What way was I hindering them ?

STANA. (*To herself.*) Have mercy, Mother of God, have mercy !

ADA. Now and again I've broken a fellow's head across with a cudgel, and now I've stabbed Ilija, that's all.

STANA. (*As if praying.*) Never any rest for me, never ! Mother of God, have mercy on me.

ADA. And when I've been to gaol for it we shall be all square. The knock for him, and clink for me. Tit for tat. Na, by the Lord ! that doesn't finish it ; I'm

coming back. And when they next dance the kolo,\* and he stands next to her, I'll catch hold of her again, and, if need be, I'll down him again with my knife. A fellow can't have a pretty girl for nothing; he's got to pay rates for her, and jolly high ones, too; and the main thing is, that he's not to have her anyhow. Fie, how I loathe that filthy Salic crowd!

STANA. Merciful Heaven, how have I deserved this chastisement? (*Her lips continue to move in prayer as she clasps her hands together.*)

ADA. (*Contemplates his mother. Aside.*) He thinks I'm afraid of going to clink. But gaols were built for men. Why, there are chaps who have been jugged for years and come back hale and hearty and with spare cash in their pockets. God knows, there is a heap of clever tricks a man may learn in there. Oh, well—we shall see! And when I come back, look out for yourselves, Ilija, you and your dad, and the whole of the countryside. For it's the devil's own holiday I'll provide for you.

STANA. Saints above, Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us!

ADA. (*With a bitter laugh.*) Imbra Trosic says: "The gaol, old chap, is a building as fine as a palace, with a grand view from above."

STANA. Lay it not to my charge, Mother of God, that I am his wife. I have stumbled and fallen into a pit of water. Queen of Heaven, draw me out of the water!

ADA. (*Still aside.*) Then I'll take the girl I want, as an eagle chooses a lamb from among the flock. And not only from among our farm wenches, but I'll have

\* The Southern Slav national dance.



my fling among the smart young ladies as well. I like the keeper's daughter, the notary's wife is a buxom woman, the bailie's wife might have been made for me ; it'll be Black Friday for all of them.

STANA. Mother of God, draw thine innocent lamb out of the water. . . .

ADA. (*In rising wrath and ecstasy.*) And when I've had my fill of that—for a man can't keep on with meat only, I'll think out something fresh. (*Squats on his heels pensively, striking his forehead.*) I'm not the only one of my kind ; there are hundreds like me. I'll make a band of them and lay siege to the villages. They're fine and rich, are our villages, in wine, and ducats, and cows—and I shouldn't be the first either. There's many a man has been a brigand and then lived honestly on the swag, and that's not an easy job either. And the good folks hereabouts say that a thief is no fool.

STANA. Mother of God, why hast thou caused thine hand-maiden to be born into this world ? why hast thou given me into the jaws of the wolf ?

ADA. (*In ecstasy.*) And then I shall be famous. The talk will be of me at the village gatherings, and I shall be remembered when I am dead. This sort of life has no sense. But where can the father be ? (*Cries out and stamps his foot.* STANA starts and looks round in alarm. ADA continues in a lower voice.) I only hope he hasn't lost his case, and is wandering crazy through the night ! If only he hasn't gone out in a rage to tear down Salic's fence, or to kill some of his beasts ; if only—Where can he be ?

STANA. Christ and our Lady, have mercy !

## Scene II.

*Knocking at the window. Presently enter GIPSY JELA.*  
*ADA goes to the window and opens.*

JELA. (*Without—cries out.*) Oh!

ADA. Who is it? Every devil fears me already.

JELA. It's me. Is good Mistress Stana in?

STANA. (*From the room.*) Come in, Jela! (*Aside.*  
That's all day I've been thinking of her.

ADA. What's she after here?

STANA. I like her.

ADA. I can't abide muck in the house.

STANA. She makes my life so that I can stand it.

ADA. *She!?*

STANA. Yes. She.

JELA. (*Enters with her bag on her back.*) Praised be  
Jesus Christ, Mistress Stana! How are you, my  
heart?

STANA. None so well, thank you. 'Twas the good  
God sent you to me! You always come to me at the  
right moment, as if you could read my thoughts from  
afar. I was all a-tremble with fear, but now I breathe  
again.

JELA. I was down by the houses to get bread for  
the children; you know, mistress, I'm full of trouble  
these days. I have the rheumatics in my bones, my  
old man he takes a drop and beats me, and the children  
go ragged and barefoot.

STANA. Have you your cards with you? Tell me  
my fortune, Jela, so as to forget a bit.

JELA. With all my heart, mistress! (*Takes out the  
cards.*)

ADA. I can't abide those old wives' tales. I'm off to the stables. It's time the horses had their hay.  
(*Exit.*)

*Scene III.*

JELA. I'm so afraid of your Ada that I daren't look him in the eyes.

STANA. I am his mother and I am afraid of him.

JELA. Let's see your fortune, mistress. Turn the card.

STANA. (*Turns up card.*) Just tell me plenty, plenty. I don't believe in the cards at all, but I love to listen to your honey-sweet words.

JELA. (*Indicating cards.*) This one means you are at present in great anxiety, but you need not fear anything, for your heart is pure and good. Nothing whatever can happen to you. That other one means that better days are in store for you ; God will cause your good man and your son (*Looks round cautiously*) to come to their senses. Now this third one means that you need only hope for the best and pray and go to church, and remember the poor—because you can afford it.

STANA. (*Smiles softly.*) I do all that already.

JELA. This other one says that God's great mercy is laid up for you in the next world, so you need not sorrow for aught, because you will have your reward yonder. All good things are laid up for you. This queen here means that you will have no more children.

STANA. God forbid that I should have any more !

JELA. You will not have any more children because

that one son of yours is enough for you. (*Looks closely at a card.*) Have you any rich relations ?

STANA. (*Makes a deprecating movement.*) No.

JELA. Perhaps you have, although you don't know of them ; because this card says that there's a lot of money coming to you.

STANA. I don't want to hear about that kind of thing ; don't talk about it.

JELA. (*Considers a moment, then laughs a little.*) This one says—Oh, what does it say ?—That God's blessing will come to your house. Your son will find peace of mind, and wed and become a changed man altogether, so that you wouldn't know him for the same. His wife will bear him ten children. Twice twins during the first years, and each more beautiful than the last.

(*STANA sighs deeply.*)

JELA. (*Prophetically.*) And your husband will renounce his evil ways and become meek and gentle as a lamb. His greatest joy will be to dandle his grandchildren and to show kindness to the wife of his gage. Every day he will pray her to forgive him the evil he did to her aforetime. And all the countryside will be amazed and astonished at the change that comes over this man. They will all see him going to church and worshipping God ; on every saint's day he asks of everyone how they fare ; to each he offers his help ; he joins with his neighbours in ploughing, sowing and reaping ; and with them he shares the blessed gifts of God.

STANA. (*With her head in her hands, gazes fascinated at JELA ; shivers slightly.*) Go on, go on !

JELA. (*As before.*) Are folk short-handed anywhere ? He is the first whose help is asked. Is there a christen-

ing? He is asked to stand godfather. Is it a wedding? He is asked to be chief guest. Is it a funeral? It is he that carries the crucifix.

STANA. Go on, go on!

JELA. (*Rises, becomes restless.*) I must go home; the children are waiting; they're hungry.

STANA. Just a little more, only a very little! (*Clasps her hands.*)

JELA. And thus, you will grow old together like the ivy and the tree, and around you there will be joy and gladness, blessing all around you like wheat in sunshine.

STANA. (*With a little sob.*) And how sad my life has been hitherto!

JELA. And like little butterflies over the golden field, your grandchildren. . . .

(*STANA sobs louder.*)

JELA. And the whole countryside will stand amazed. God alone knows what has happened to the house of Rigalin. (*Pauses, takes a deep breath.*) And then one day, after many sad and weary days, mistress (*Sobs softly*), you and your goodman will lie down peacefully hand in hand, and about you will stand your son and your daughter-in-law—your daughter-in-law, that is beautiful as a fairy—there's not her equal in the whole village—and your grandchildren, each half a head taller than the next, to lay the cross and flowers in your hands, and you will whisper to them and bless them.

STANA. (*Beating her hands together.*) Oh, dearie, dearie me!

JELA. And it pleases God in His mercy to call you both unto him at the same time. That is what the cards say about you, mistress. (*Short pause. Both dry their eyes and rise.*)



STANA. (*Goes to the tub and puts bread, apples and eggs into JELA's bag.*) Thank you ! May God reward you ! A few sweet words and it puts new life into me. Come every day, when you see that *they* are not in, and always tell me these things, but let them always be the same. I don't believe one bit in the cards, but I love to hear your talk ; I have nothing in the world but my prayers and you—may your lips turn to gold ! (*Accompanies JELA to the kitchen door, then re-enters, kneels before the image of the Virgin, and prays silently. Enter ADA.*)

*Scene IV.*

STANA, ADA. *Knocking at the window.*

ADA. I'm all on hot coals ! If I had known that he wouldn't be home before this, I should have been up and done something which not even the devil would have laid to my charge, for they'd all have said, " Ada went off to gaol to-day," . . . and I should have had just one more good time. There are at least some two-three chaps I hate and whose heads I'd have broken, and I need not have seen them again for many a long day. (*To his mother.*) Look here, why d'you go on praying like that ? You've fair broken my ear-drums, ding-dinging away at your prayers.

STANA. (*Looks at him strangely.*) Can't you leave me in peace even at my prayers ?

ADA. I hate to see you at them ; prayers don't run in our family.

STANA. Leave me in peace, when I am communing with God !

ADA. Get out, don't make me laugh ! Dad is your God, and I am your Christ !

STANA. My son, I have nursed you at my breast ; drive me not to curse you !

ADA. Don't you drive me to curse you with a stick—and I don't care a bit about your curse.

(STANA *cries out in despair.*)

ADA. I'll just tell you that I'm past joking. I have sworn there, out yonder, that I'll never forgive a soul, not even God Himself. I won't go to gaol for nothing.

STANA. (*Wrings her hands in despair.*) Oh—oh—oh !

(*Knocking at the window. ADA starts to his feet and opens the window. VILLAGE CONSTABLE, wearing uniform cap, puts his head in at the window.*)

### Scene V.

CONSTABLE. I've come by order to see whether you had gone out. And then I wanted to see you once more, too. I wanted us to part in all peace and kindness, and all to be done decently and in order.

ADA. Oh, I don't care !

CONSTABLE. I know that, . . . but it's best to have no ill-feeling.

ADA. Best for you.

CONSTABLE. You must have your little joke, Ada. But, before God, believe me, I am very fond of you and your father. You may be a bit wild, but I hold you both in the greatest respect and esteem.

ADA. Thank you for being afraid of us ; just wait, and you'll fear us a bit more when I come back.

CONSTABLE. Ada, Ada, if you think that I

would speak you and your father fair and toady to you from fear, you're mightily mistaken. I've got jolly little to do with you. That's what the police are there for. You can lay your life upon it that the parish would never ask *me* to run you in, but the police. Don't say what isn't true, Ada; believe in God's truth and my words. . . .

ADA. And if I tell you it's pure fear speaking out of you—

CONSTABLE. I don't know why I should be afraid of you. Is it because I've always acted towards you like a Christian? I gave you bread and water when you were in the lock-up, and this is the way you thank me for it now—oh, my! oh, my!

ADA. I'm waiting for my father, and whenever he comes in, I shall start at once; not from fear, but because I want to; I am expecting a lot from my time in there. But I ask of you, while I am in gaol, watch the folk down yonder; mind well what the crook-backed swine are up to, so that you can tell me when I come back.

CONSTABLE. Begging your pardon, Ada, I am in the service of the parish. Someone else will have to oblige you. (*Annoyed.*) Whatever put it into your head that I was to be your private detective?

ADA. Because it's all in the week's work with you, and you've plenty of time while you're gadding round the village. Just you do that for me, and I'll oblige you in return.

CONSTABLE. How?

ADA. When I come back I'll break some other body's head in the parish and not yours. Now d'you understand me?

CONSTABLE. (*Alarmed.*) So you've been thinking of my head already.

ADA. I've taken a fancy to your bald crown. I've never cracked a crown like yours yet.

CONSTABLE. A—a! And why, for the Lord's sake?

ADA. I am telling you, only because I've never cracked a crown like yours yet, and because I'd like to know.

CONSTABLE. (*Shakes his head and touches his forehead.*) Pleasant journey!

ADA. (*Takes him by the head.*) Well, and you haven't promised?

CONSTABLE. Here comes your Dad.

(*ADA abruptly slams the window. Enter GUSA, bare-headed, dishevelled, wild.*)

### Scene VI.

GUSA, ADA, STANA.

ADA. (*Embraces his father.*) Father, I'm killed with waiting—where have you been? I couldn't go before I had heard the news from your own mouth.

GUSA. (*Brokenly to himself.*) All are on his side. All, and not one on mine; they all care only for him, the whole place, and not even the devil takes pity on me. And so 'tis I that have to remember myself. There's never a judgment for me. But I shall be my own judge, and I want no other; and I will judge with a terrible judgment.

ADA. (*In great agitation.*) Have you lost, Dad?

STANA. (*Prays before the image of the Virgin.*) Have mercy, Mother of God, have mercy!

ADA. Speak, father, I must be off. The police will come for me directly.

GUSA. For you! It's for me the police will come, you fool! (*Looks out through the window overlooking the yard.*) Not a sign of it yet; perhaps it hasn't taken. I started it in haste, perhaps it went out again at once; but if it did, then, then—(*Clutches his breast*)—then I will kill myself, because there's no other relief for me. (*Tragically.*) I can't find relief, my boy; it's the bile is choking me. (*Looks out again by the yard window.*) God! Devil! Have pity on me! If it hasn't taken, cast down fire upon it. (*Gruffly.*) Water! No, brandy, brandy, brandy!

(ADA goes quickly for the brandy and comes back with the bottle.)

GUSA. I'll judge you, you scurvy beast! I'll bring you to beggary! I'll go to gaol for you! (*Tearfully.*) Only perhaps it didn't take! Not a sign of it yet! (*Takes the bottle from ADA, drinks, and gives it back.*) Go on, my boy, go on; let's drink our lives away. But it's weak stuff, this. Bring me the raw hot stuff! No, no! Flames! fire! fire! (*Leaps up in a transport of rage.*) It hasn't started yet, nothing! There's nothing! The hay was damp, . . . but it must burn, it must, if I've got to light it with rage. Fire! Fire! Fire!

ADA. I know now, Dad. Be quiet, Dad. I'll revenge you, I will, when I come back; by God, I will!

GUSA. Don't go, revenge is here, revenge is here. . . . (*Drinks.*)

STANA. (*In a low, frightened voice.*) Help! Our Lady of Sotin!

(Suddenly a glare and ever-increasing reflection of flames in GUSA's yard window.)



GUSA. (*In a frenzy of savage glee.*) A—a—a!  
(*Beats his breast.*) Hi, hi, my son, my boy!

(*Father and son fall sobbing on each other's neck.*)

STANA. Help, Our Lady of Lourdes!

VOICES. (*Tumultuously.*) Fire! Fire! Salic's is on fire!

STANA. (*In despair tears the image of the Virgin from the wall and clasps it to her bosom.*) Protect me, Mother of God!

ADA. (*Shudders.*) So long, Dad! Till the next bonfire! (*Exit.*)

(*GUSA's face is hideously distorted in the red glare of the flames. He dances, reeling about the room.*)

### Scene VII.

*Without, the thud of quick rhythmic steps. Enter Two GENDARMES with fixed bayonets.*

FIRST GENDARME. (*With handcuffs in his hand.*) In the name of the law!

(*GUSA holds out his hands to be handcuffed, but even handcuffed continues his frenzied dance.*)

STANA. (*Wrings her hands.*) Have mercy, have mercy, mercy!

(*Curtain.*)

## ACT III.

SALIC'S room. Like GUSA'S, only clean and better furnished. Against the back wall a large grandfather's clock. Around the table large chairs and several three-legged stools.

## Scene I.

ILARIJA SALIC, PETAR MISKOVIC and TUNJA COVIC  
at table with bottles of brandy.

PETAR. You're all withered up and wizened, Daddy Ilarija, as if you'd been spending a year in the desert living on roots and cold water. You're doing penance, Daddy, like any saint.

ILARIJA. (*Drinks from the bottle.*) Have a drink!  
(*Passes the bottle to PETAR.*)

(PETAR *drinks and passes it to TUNJA.*)

ILARIJA. (*After taking another drink.*) No wonder, 'tis a life-and-death wrestle for me.

TUNJA. A wrestle, did you say?

ILARIJA. I am wrestling with the devil. What I mean to say is that I am watching the struggle between the Evil One and God. . . . (*Laughs bitterly.*) I am too weak and helpless by myself to take up the fight with those powers.

PETAR. What sort of words are these?

TUNJA. Daddy Ilarija, that miserable lawsuit has changed you altogether. Gusa, that wretched thief, has fairly broken your spirit!

ILARIJA. And do you know, mates?

BOTH. What ?

ILARIJA. The devil's the strongest.

*(Both startled, rise from the table.)*

PETAR. Daddy Ilarija, in God's name, what ails you ?

TUNJA. You rave like a man in a dream.

ILARIJA. The devil is strongest.

TUNJA. And you say that, you, the most God-fearing man in the whole parish ? Oh—oh !

PETAR. Can't you see, you wicked man, that you are blaspheming God, and the priest and the whole village and ourselves into the bargain. You are preferring Satan before the grace of God !

TUNJA. Daddy Ilarija, come to your senses !

ILARIJA. *(Drinks again, depressed and unhappy.)*  
The devil is the strongest !

PETAR. Holy Virgin !

TUNJA. *(Amazed.)* Whatever has come over the man ? The villain Gusa has robbed him of every spark of courage.

ILARIJA. Don't think amiss of me, my good friends. For, oh, I love the Lord, and fear Him in contrition, and am small before Him even like an ant. But listen ! The Almighty is all-merciful and too full of goodness, to enter deeply into conflict with the enemy, and so the Evil One is stronger.

BOTH. *(With a deep breath.)* Thank the Lord !

TUNJA. And yet and yet—it isn't right for you to speak such words. *(The bottle is passed round once more.)*

PETAR. And now, Daddy Ilarija, let's talk sensibly. There's to be a wedding in your house to-morrow, and you must cheer up for it. You are the soul of the

house, and should give out cheerfulness. Is everything ready prepared ?

ILARIJA. Yes.

PETAR. How many beasts have you killed ?

ILARIJA. Two bullocks and a cow.

PETAR. That's right ; there's cattle in plenty in your sheds. And how many pigs ?

ILARIJA. Three grown animals and three sucking pigs.

PETAR. Praised be ! Your house is rich ! And what about wine ? Whiskey you have in plenty, I know.

ILARIJA. Besides my own stock in the cellar, I have ordered five hogsheads of wine from Brod.

TUNJA. Ay, ay, it'll be a great occasion.

PETAR. And you still looking so glum, think shame of yourself. Excuse me for scolding you, but it's only because I think a lot of you.

TUNJA. Ay, ay, my heart is already all agog with pleasure. And the bride's people, too, have killed heaps of beasts and laid in hogsheads and hogsheads of wine.

PETAR. How many guests have you asked ?

ILARIJA. I don't know right off. That was the wife's business. Everybody who's been a friend of mine in my life, besides my friends and neighbours, and friends from the villages near by.

PETAR. And who is to be "steward,"\* and who is to be "eldest guest" ? †

ILARIJA. I thought of asking you to be "steward" and Tunja to be "eldest guest," but now—— (*Stops abruptly.*)

PETAR. What ?

\* Caus (pr. *Chaush*).

† Stari svat.

ILARIJA. I have asked one more guest, and if he won't come, there'll be no wedding either.

PETAR. Daddy Ilarija, I'm afraid. . . .

TUNJA. And who may that guest be ?

ILARIJA. (*Has a pull at the bottle, painfully.*) I have asked Gusa Rigalin and his son Ada——

(TUNJA AND PETAR gaze at him spellbound.  
*Silence.*)

PETAR. That ruffian and your greatest enemy ?

TUNJA. The villain who would have murdered your son ?

ILARIJA. (*Laughs bitterly.*) Didn't I tell you, brothers, the devil is stronger ?

PETAR. Good-day to you, Daddy Ilarija !

TUNJA. Good-day to you, good neighbour ! Oh !

ILARIJA. (*In despair.*) Don't leave me, for God's sake !

PETAR. What do you want of us ?

ILARIJA. Don't forsake me, I want you like the sight of my own eyes. I want you for my witnesses ; that's why I asked you to come.

PETAR. Witnesses ? What for ?

ILARIJA. I've sent my man to Gusa.

TUNJA. Good Lord !

ILARIJA. I sent him two good ducats in token of peace and goodwill !

PETAR. (*Crosses to the window which looks out on the yard and calls.*) Aunt Mara ! Can ye spare us a moment ? Come here and see what's going on in your house ; see what's come over your goodman ! Hi ! Hi !



*Scene II.*

*Enter MARA, Ilarija's wife, coming in from her work with her sleeves rolled up.*

MARA. What's the matter ?

PETAR. Aunt Mara, go and make yourself smart in your old days : Gusa is coming to see you. Ha, ha, ha, ha !

ILARIJA. I have lost in my contemplation of the struggle between God and the devil. I yield him those five furrows of plough-land.

MARA. What ! ?

ILARIJA. I've made up my mind to give the fiend what he is coveting from me. . . . I want peace.

MARA. Coward ! Do you want to be the ruin of us ?

ILARIJA. Despise me as much as you like—I want peace.

MARA. Mother of God ! Five furrows of plough-land ! To your enemy !

ILARIJA. I'll give him the five furrows which the devil has sneaked from me, and yet another three furrows over and above for the love of God. . . .

MARA. (*Calls through the window.*) Ilija, my heart, come in quick, your father has gone out of his mind !

*Scene III.*

*Enter ILIJA.*

MARA. My dear Ilija, your father has gone crazy. He wants to be the ruin of us all.

ILIJA. (*Laughs.*) Oh, no, mother. The father knows what he's doing.

MARA. He has sent to Gusa.

ILIJA. I'm not surprised, mother. I've known for a long time what father had in his mind.

MARA. You knew ! ?

ILIJA. I've had a feeling.

MARA. He wants to present that villain, that fire raiser, with those five furrows of plough-land and another three furrows over and above.

ILIJA. I've had an inkling of that long since. Already last year in the field. It's nothing new to me, mother.

ILARIJA. (*Broods gloomily.*) Since he and his son have come out of prison, no sleep has come to my eyes ; he writhes like a venomous snake through my dreams ; he raises his head, shoots out his tongue and hisses, till I shiver and freeze to the bottom of my soul. . . . Am I to run the risk of being poisoned by a snake ? In every wayside inn he and his son go about raging and smashing like a black hurricane, and nobody dares stand up to them to stop them. . . . He swears that he and his son have been to school, and that they can get the better of the devil himself now. By all my friends and acquaintances he sends me word that he will "send me to heaven." I love heaven, but I don't want to go to heaven by his hand ! . . . And I love my life best of all !

TUNJA. Gusa has put the devil's own fear into his bones.

ILIJA. You're wrong there. Father loves to torment himself, and to experience things.

#### *Scene IV.*

*Enter ILARIJA'S MAN. He lays two ducats on the table.*

THE MAN. Eh, but it was a Calvary, Master Ilarija.

ILARIJA. Bring me some comfort, tell me what happened.

THE MAN. When Gusa caught sight of me in his room—I came upon him as he was sharpening his razor—he rushed at me, caught me by the scruff, and set the razor to my throat. “You’re one of the Salic crowd, and it’s to hell you belong!” he yells at me. I got away from him and showed him the ducats, and then I told him word for word that you were bidding him to the wedding, him and his son; that you would give him those five furrows and three over and above; that you want peace and that you are bidding him to your home, for you know him to be truly a Christian and a man of God. I did all as I was told.

ILARIJA. And he?

THE MAN. He turned pale and green and began to swear at me, and then in the end he smiled—a kind of frozen smile. By the yard door he seemed to remember something; he caught me by the hand and said that maybe he would send his son along to you. He wouldn’t take the ducats.

ILARIJA. Maybe?

THE MAN. That’s what he said.

ILIJA. (*To the servant.*) Go, please, and ask Mirko to come. (*Aside.*) He is the only one who really understands me.

MARA. White-livered fool that you are! (*Exit.*)

PETAR. Good day to you, worthy neighbour.

TUNJA. Good day to you, good Master Ilarija. Pin the cat’s tail to your cap and be your own steward.

ILARIJA. (*Accompanies them.*) Forgive me, my good friends, but you don’t understand me. I am only acting for the best. (*Exit.*)

(ILIJA goes out and presently returns with a bottle of wine which he sets on the table.)

## Scene V.

Enter MIRKO.

MIRKO. Well, what's the matter ?

ILLJA. Sit down. (*When MIRKO is seated.*) I want to tell you something.

MIRKO. What is it ?

ILLJA. A trifle.

MIRKO. Let's hear what it is.

ILLJA. Let's have a glass of wine first. (*Fills glasses, which they drain at a draught.*)

MIRKO. Good stuff.

ILLJA. Father is better—he's through with it.

MIRKO. Through with what ?

ILLJA. With Gusa.

MIRKO. Thank the Lord ! It was just wearing him out. How has he done it ?

ILLJA. He has made him a present of the lot, and something over and above.

MIRKO. That's very queer.

ILLJA. But that's a mere nothing ; listen ! I shan't go to the altar to-morrow.

MIRKO. (*Looks at him in amazement.*) Shan't go to the altar ? What the devil's the matter with you ?

ILLJA. What happened eighteen months ago—that is the matter.

MIRKO. I don't understand.

ILLJA. That business with Ada.

MIRKO. But what has Ada got to do with your marriage ?

ILLJA. My old wound has broken open.

MIRKO. Why can't you forget about it? Surely he's been punished for it!

ILLJA. He punished me.

MIRKO. With his knife.

ILLJA. Ay—with the knife which he thrust into my heart.

MIRKO. He stabbed you in the back.

ILLJA. To the heart, to the heart. For a year I've been eating out my heart and I don't know what. . . .

MIRKO. Seems to me, you're talking about a different kind of wound.

ILLJA. Yes—a different kind. You remember that when he had stabbed me, he afterwards——. (*Stops.*)

MIRKO. There was some talk.

ILLJA. Yes, it's that talk; I'm afraid it's the truth.

MIRKO. (*Quietly.*) Well, did he—did he hurt you in some way that evening, when——?

ILLJA. It's a black hurt he gave me.

MIRKO. Because he led her off?

ILLJA. Carried her off.

MIRKO. But nothing could have happened.

ILLJA. It's that . . . that's what's been fretting and worrying me, this year and a half.

MIRKO. You've fretted about it for eighteen months?

ILLJA. Yes.

MIRKO. That's queer. But why on earth, man, haven't you asked her? There's nothing in it but pure foolishness.

ILLJA. I've tried hundreds of times to ask her; but I can't. Day after day, night after night, I have tried to gather up my strength for this one and only question; but whenever I've gone near her and thought of it—my tongue just dried up in my mouth.



MIRKO. That's perfectly ridiculous.

ILLJA. I only blushed and my heart grew heavy within me, as if I must wither up on the spot and all my strength were clean gone from me.

MIRKO. You love her over much.

ILLJA. (*Stares in front of him.*) I don't know. And she never speaks, and that frets me, too. She just hangs her head, as if she were ready to sink into the ground. . . . Many's the evening we haven't spoken a word together.

MIRKO. She loves you, and that's the main thing, and all the rest is nonsense.

ILLJA. She's just dying with shame.

MIRKO. And you are not sure of her ?

ILLJA. I don't know myself, but all this is——

MIRKO. Nothing but the creation of your own brain, pure madness.

ILLJA. Maybe—but there's a kind of sweetness in it too.

MIRKO. In what ?

ILLJA. In this madness. Every thought is like a knife in my heart, but sweet. How many days and nights, oh, oh ! . . . Queer, isn't it ? I am eating my heart out at my end for a girl, and father's doing the same at his end for the land, like two caged brutes. . . .

MIRKO. Rubbish ! How could she that evening, when her sweetheart fell by the knife of his enemy, give herself to that enemy ?

(*Silence.*)

ILLJA. Girls like it, when heads get broken for their sakes.

MIRKO. But that evening, and in such a moment ! . . .

ILLJA. And above all, girls like to be carried off.

MIRKO. Yes, but by the boy they like.

ILLJA. Carried off, even if they are left again at once—so long as they're carried off.

MIRKO. Gently—please!

ILLJA. He held the knife to her heart, and his eyes glared at her like a vampire's, and in that moment of crazy terror——

MIRKO. What?

ILLJA. In that terror his face was for evermore engraven upon her soul.

MIRKO. Well—and then?

ILLJA. His disgusting, hateful face—oh, oh!

MIRKO. Most strange!

ILLJA. Have you ever watched animals when they're being whipped?

MIRKO. What d'you mean?

ILLJA. How in their pain they look up at their tormentor, as if they loved him in their pain? . . . and it's just the same with people. She must have loved him that evening in all her crazy fear——

MIRKO. You're crazy.

ILLJA. And have yielded to him in everything.

MIRKO. You will go mad, my man.

ILLJA. I, felled to earth, with the blood trickling from my wound, and he standing over me with his knife.

(MIRKO waves him away, refusing to hear more.)

ILLJA. And the knife that had drunk my blood he held to her bosom—ay! ay! And carried her off through the night—whither? None can say. But you know that he always threatened that he'd have her by force. Scold me, scold me, I implore you!

MIRKO. You're scolding yourself quite enough. Where is your common-sense?

ILLJA. Nobody knows, and she scarcely knows herself. Her soul must have been drunk with fear. I asked Ivo. "Over there in the gardens," said he. There isn't a living soul in the gardens at that time of night, and it's black as the inside of a horn; the trees are thickly planted, so that the moon can't shine through them. Oh, curse the moonlight of that evening! (*Aside.*) How she begged me: "Let's go indoors, I've a foreboding of evil"! Fool that I was! I asked Matt, and he says: "Ada is looking like the very devil to-night, so that you'd scarcely know him." And he says: "He carried her off over there towards the threshing-floor by the hay-shed. The hay-shed. Oi, Oi! Iva Palic\* was right. Ada puts a spell on the girls as the wolf does on men.

MIRKO. But why couldn't you get this nonsense off your chest sooner, instead of waiting till now, when it's only four-and-twenty hours to your wedding? Think shame of yourself!

ILLJA. I deceived myself and forced myself to forget, but all of a sudden it all broke out, and has come upon me like a fire.

MIRKO. Good-bye. I can't help you here; you've quite drowned yourself in your crazy jealousy. (*Tries to go.*)

ILLJA. (*Catches him by the arm.*) Just one moment, for the Lord's sake!

### Scene VI.

*Enter MARA.*

MARA. Ilija, my darling.

ILLJA. What is it, mother?

\* Pron. *Palich*.

MARA. Go down to the barn.

ILLIJA. Why ?

MARA. Your little bride, your little dove, has come to see me. She has brought me presents—shirts and kerchiefs and what not ! And all with her own sweet hands. And I have given her silk for her outfit, silk and great gold ducats. How dear she is to me and how sweet ! Come, darling boy. She will be glad to see you ; she seems a bit worried about you.

ILLIJA. I daren't see her now, mother.

MARA. Wha—at ?

ILLIJA. I dare not see her.

MARA. Mother of Heaven ! To-morrow's your wedding day, and you dare not see her ! !

ILLIJA. I don't want to see her.

MARA. God and Jesus Christ ! Our house is turned into a hell ! Someone go for holy water and incense !  
(*Exit quickly.*)

(*Suddenly shouting within, singing and fiddling.*)

### Scene VII.

ILLIJA, MIRKO. *Enter the FORESTER VASILJEVIC with his green hat and feather, wearing high, light-coloured boots. Round his neck hangs a long sausage ; he is drunk. With him enter the game-keeper MATIC and a gipsy fiddler. ILARIJA accompanies them.*

KEEPER. Master Ilarija, has the wedding-feast already started in your house ? I've brought you a guest.

ILARIJA. Welcome !

KEEPER. Think what an honour I'm showing

you. The Forester doesn't visit just any house. Eh, what ?

ILARIJA. Thanks.

KEEPER. First we got a bit merry at my house ; and because, you know, one can't stay in one place all the time, it's a bore, " Come along," says I, " I 'll take him along to *him* for a while ; he's got a fine rich house. He's making ready for a wedding, and so—that's that ! I've got enough, but he has got more ? Isn't that so ?

*(The FORESTER, his hat on one side, puts his hands on his hips, and skips.)*

KEEPER. Just look at him, isn't he sweet ! How he does enjoy things ! A little while ago we were at the Town Hall, and it was as good as a miracle, I tell you—Ilarija, eh ? You'd scarcely believe your own eyes. No sooner had the Forester crossed the threshold of the office than he fell into a chair—and slept.

ILARIJA. Perhaps the Forester had not slept well last night ?

KEEPER. He doesn't need much sleep. He can carry ten men's wine. Sometimes he won't have his boots off for a week together.

ILARIJA. Perhaps the Forester slept at the Town Hall then, too.

KEEPER. And what else is the Town Hall for ? When I tell you, that no sooner had he closed his eyes and started snoring than that old fool of a notary began worrying him : Says he : " The Board is losing the respect of the populace." As if the Board could lose its respect anyhow ; and as if the Board didn't as one man respect the Forester, and him alone. But that fat pig fears the President as a frog would a snake.



Well, Master Ilarija, I have brought the Forester here ; please not to forget it. (*Whispers.*) Send me a fine large joint up to the house ; you've got loads of meat, and it's a burning shame that one man should have everything.

ILARIJA. (*To the KEEPER.*) You are very welcome, gentlemen !

FORESTER. (*Shakes ILARIJA by the hand.*) Cousin Ilarija—you'll forgive me, but I've taken one of your sausages out of the chimney. I wanted that sausage round my neck ; it's just my favourite ornament.

(*KEEPER offers to shake hands with MIRKO.*)

ILARIJA. What can I get you, gentlemen ?

FORESTER. Bring any old thing you like, and don't ask ! (*Gives a skip, yodels.*) Iyooyoo ! Iyooyoooyoo ! (*Catches sight of MIRKO.*) What sort of chap's that ? (*To ILLJA.*) Good-day to you !

ILLJA. You're welcome, sir !

KEEPER. (*Indicating MIRKO.*) He's a scholar, a student.

(*ILARIJA and ILLJA go to fetch food and drink.*)

FORESTER. Go on, you gipsy ; why did you stop ? (*Sings.*)

“ Play gipsy, play, you beggar,  
Do not think to spare my pocket.”

(*The GIPSY plays a kolo.*)

FORESTER. (*Yodels and dances.*) Come along, Matic !

(*The KEEPER takes hands with FORESTER.*)

FORESTER. Come along, scholar.

(*Re-enter ILARIJA and ILLJA carrying in roast meat on platters, cakes and sundry bottles of wine.*)

FORESTER. Come along, Daddy Ilarija and Ilija !  
Join the kolo.

ILARIJA. (*Declines with a gesture.*) No more kolo for me, Forester !

FORESTER. Join the kolo.

ILARIJA. Anything you like but that, sir.

FORESTER. It's your son's wedding—come along !  
(*Skips and sings.*)

“ Hi, hi, God is wise,  
Gives us girls—or Paradise ! ”

KEEPER. Come on, Daddy Ilarija ! Catch hold of the Forester ; it's an honour !

ILARIJA. 'Tisn't fit for me, sir ! 'Tisn't fit for an old sinner of my age, sir.

KEEPER. You're forgetting yourself, Dad ! Anyone else would have boasted of it before nine parishes.

MIRKO. Why do you bother the man, when you see he's unwilling ?

KEEPER. But if his Honour the Forester wishes it ?

MIRKO. Then his Honour the Forester is silly and perverse.

KEEPER. Mind your own business, young man.

(*ILARIJA steals out of the room.*)

FORESTER. I'm tired of kolo. I'm just pouring with sweat. Stop, fiddler. (*Most of the party go to the table, sit down and help themselves. The FORESTER starts off on a piece of roast meat. Swallowing a large piece.*) Matic, give us a tune.

KEEPER. (*Clears his throat, then sings.*)

“ Three maidens met together—oh !  
Stay Drina, stay thine icy flow,  
Stay bonnie lassie, do not go.”

FORESTER. (*Claps him on the shoulder.*) You're the man to cheer me up! What titbits are in store for me to-night?

KEEPER. A fair and a dark one.

FORESTER. And where am I to meet them.

KEEPER. At the "Bear."

FORESTER. But to-night I feel like lying out in the open under the beautiful sky.

KEEPER. Well, we'll make up a shakedown for his Honour the Forester, in the garden. Would you like an awning?

FORESTER. No, let the dew fall on me through the branches.

KEEPER. As you please, Mr. Forester.

FORESTER. And a gipsy for to-morrow.

KEEPER. A gipsy. All right, sir; they're not to be sneezed at. Eh, but I've sampled them myself!

FORESTER. Eh?

KEEPER. Game is game, but tasty!

FORESTER. Then two for to-morrow, and with eyes black as coal, and teeth like a string of pearls, to keep me snug, you know.

KEEPER. Not just a common gipsy girl from a caravan, but a daughter of the tents. The gipsies have pitched their tents in the field. Lor' love me, prettier than a queen in a picture to my mind!

FORESTER. (*Opens his arms.*) Come to my arms, my darling!

KEEPER. I'm thinking of the tent, Mr. Forester. Why not spend the night in a tent like a jolly tinker? You'll never forget it while you live, sir! By Jove! In a tent or in a drying shed?

FORESTER. (*Clasps him to his bosom.*) Matic, my heart, what a glorious idea!

KEEPER. And if one night of it isn't enough for you, then stay the next. You're a fine up-standing man. And we might all have a bathe together in the Save, and you can play the carp round them.

FORESTER. No one else has ever cheered me up like this.

KEEPER. And when the parish gets to hear of it, everybody will laugh. Ha, ha, ha, ha!

FORESTER. He, he, he, he!

KEEPER. (*Pauses for a moment, then enthusiastically resumes.*) You see, sir—if I was rich, which I am not, I'd get you girls of all kinds from all parts of the world for your pleasure. You ought to be honoured like a grand Vizier, and as a matter of fact, it's little honour you get.

FORESTER. (*Weeps sentimentally.*) You are right, my son! I am the miserable victim of narrow-minded circumstance. How long haven't I longed for a black wench and for a pair of white Arab steeds! And I've always to ride in other folks' carts.

MIRKO. What a gem!

FORESTER. Ilija, I'm hungry.

ILLIJA. Lord bless you, there's a piece of the joint in front of you, sir.

FORESTER. I want a bit of fowl.

KEEPER. What sort of fowl? Roast turkey, sir. The house mustn't forget that the Forester is honouring it with his presence.

ILLIJA. With pleasure, but everybody's very busy in the yard just now.

FORESTER. Ilija—I must have roast turkey.

ILLJA. Well, if you must, you must! (*Exit.*)

(MIRKO looks the other way.)

KEEPER. You just go on, Forester; this house is full of wedding cheer.

FORESTER. Iyoo-yoo-yoo-yoo-yoo! (*Takes a bottle and empties it on the floor.*)

KEEPER. Just you make yourself at home. It's a great honour for them.

FORESTER. I feel at home everywhere.

ILLJA. (*Returns.*) The turkeys are killed.

FORESTER. Turkeys? (*Pauses, tries to recollect.*) Did I say turkey? Perhaps I said turkey, but I thought of duck. Duck is my favourite titbit. I love it above all things. Matic, what did I say?

KEEPER. Turkey. But your words came so slowly, and your face looked so pensive-like, that it was plain you were thinking of duck. A duck is your favourite titbit. I know that.

FORESTER. You're a man and a half. You can read my innermost thoughts on my face. Be off, Ilija; kill the ducks.

(ILLJA hesitates.)

MIRKO. Ilija, stop here.

KEEPER. (*To MIRKO.*) What are you meddling for? What business have you to give orders?

FORESTER. Duck, duck, duck!! (*Lurches up against the street window and breaks it.*) Yoo yoo, yoo, yoo, yoo yoo! This house is full of devilish good cheer.

KEEPER. When the heart is given play, then the hands can't keep still.



## Scene VIII.

*Re-enter ILARIJA.*

ILARIJA. Heaven preserve us, Mr. Forester!

FORESTER. (*Breaks the other window.*) This house is full of mad good cheer!

MIRKO. Chuck out the swine, Ilija; I'll help you!

SERVANT. (*Enters the room running.*) Lord help us!

FORESTER. (*To MIRKO.*) You d——d young puppy, you'd take your hands to me? Let's have a try who's the better man.

(MIRKO and the FORESTER wrestle. General tumult.)

MIRKO, ILIJA and the SERVANT turn out the FORESTER.)

KEEPER. (*Trying to help the FORESTER, shouts.*) Oh my, what a burning shame! To chuck out his Honour the Forester!

## Scene IX.

ILARIJA alone.

ILARIJA. (*Looks at the broken windows.*) Oh these people!—they never keep within bounds. It's disgusting of him to break my window, but it's also disgusting of them to put him out. It's a disgrace that anyone should be put out of my house. I'll go beg the Forester's pardon.

(*Enter ADA noiselessly on tiptoe, so that ILARIJA fails to notice him at first.*)

*Scene X.*

ILARIJA, ADA.

ADA. (*Softly.*) Uncle Ilarija!ILARIJA. (*Turns and looks spell-bound at ADA.*)  
Ada, do my eyes deceive me?

ADA. Father sent me to offer you reconciliation. He sends greeting to you and yours, from the bottom of his heart.

*(ILARIJA, amazed and trembling, shakes him by the hand.)*

ADA. Father wishes all to be forgotten.

ILARIJA. All, all. Gusa is a man of God. I always felt it in my heart.

ADA. He'll take the land, and thanks you for it from the bottom of his heart, although the land has really belonged to him for a long time.

ILARIJA. It belonged to him, yes.

ADA. Father says, "In his heart"; he says that he laboured on the land with his heart.

ILARIJA. With his heart, with his heart, yes! That's what I, too, have thought in the end.

ADA. And he will come to the wedding to-morrow.

ILARIJA. He will come! O Ada, my son! (*Kisses him on the brow.*) O—o—oh!

ADA. "Go," he said; "go, my boy, and be a messenger of peace and joy. And to-morrow when the merry-making is at its height, when the bride is brought home and when Ilarija is feeling life strong within him, when his heart is expanding with love and happiness, then will I come to him to embrace him. . . ."

ILARIJA. (*Deeply touched, dries his tears and calls out.*) Ilija, Ilija!!

*Scene XI.**Enter ILIJA.*

ILARIJA. Embrace and kiss one another, boys!

(ADA and ILIJA shake hands.)

ADA. Let's forget all!

ILARIJA. And olive branches and lilies and roses—(*Words fail him—sobbing.*) God, I thank thee! Ilija, have you chosen your best man? If you have, put him off; take Ada to be your best man. God wills it so, and it is my wish also.

(ILIJA watches ADA cautiously.)

ILARIJA. (*Calls.*) Andrija,\* man, come here!

*Scene XII.**Enter SERVANT.*

THE SERVANT. What is it, Master Ilarija?

ILARIJA. Andrija, my good lad, go down into the village and invite another fifty guests—or a hundred.

THE SERVANT. (*Dumbfounded.*) Whom shall I invite, Master Ilarija, for the Lord's sake!

ILARIJA. Whom? The whole place knows our house, and you shall invite everybody as you meet them. No, don't! Go to every cross-roads and cry aloud: "Salic is giving his son in marriage, and whoever loves a wedding, and wedding cheer, let him come to Salic's merry-making to-morrow! And then add these words, "'Tis a wedding of two friendly hearts. O blessed Resurrection!" Go, be quick!

(*Exit SERVANT.*)

\* Pron. *Andriya*.

ILARIJA. (*Calls through the window in even greater emotion.*) And you, masters, do not spare the house. Kill more beasts, more pigs, sheep and fowls without number. Joy, joy! I want gladness, I want joy! (*In ecstasy.*) Where is my wife! Where is my wife? I must fly to her! (*Hurries out.*)

(*Silence.*)

ILIJA. My best man.

ADA. I like your father.

ILIJA. My father loves everybody, and life above all things. Have a drink with me, Ada. (*Fills glasses. They clink.*)

ADA. Queer that we should be drinking together, isn't it?

ILIJA. It's the most important thing that's ever happened to me. (*With an altered hollow voice.*) Listen, Ada. Before my father became as you see him now, it cost him, God knows, both agony and time. All this joy is paid for by agony as on the cross. His life withered away during those years of suffering; he became a weakling, a poor, whining cross-bearer. And behold, now the tide has caught him and he is become a saint, shouting for joy—and also a dangerous man. Once a miser, wearing himself out in regret and bitterness over his possessions, he is now a prodigal ready to give away his last shirt off his back. (*Refills glasses.*) Clink! (*They drink.*) That tide is rushing upon me, too, and my heart is bursting with joy. (*In extreme emotion he forces himself to keep calm.*) Will you be best man at my wedding?

ADA. I will.

ILIJA. You will?

ADA. I will.

ILIJA. Then, besides the gift that my father gave to your father, accept from me an acre of ground.

ADA. (*Taken aback, rises.*) An acre of ground !

ILIJA. Take two acres.

ADA. (*Stares at him.*) What's the meaning of this ?

ILIJA. And in exchange you will give me——

ADA. What ?

ILIJA. *Three drops of your blood.*

(*ADA looks at him with a frigid stare.*)

ILIJA. (*With a hollow mysterious voice.*) Blood, blood, blood ! . . . You stabbed me in the midst of the kolo and shamed me before the whole parish ; you have torn my soul asunder. . . . I am not thirsting for revenge, but I am thirsting for a play, a play at bloodshed. . . . Listen, when, to-morrow, the bride, drawn by four greys and dressed in silk and gold, has been brought from her home to mine, then they will dance the kolo in our yard, a great kolo. All the young folk of the village will join in the kolo. I have ordered twenty gipsies and the fiddles will scream like the whirlwind. I, I feel on wings already,—and there in the centre of the kolo we shall dance together, and between us the lovely bride ; and then I'll suddenly take you by the hand and lead you into the very centre of the kolo, and then through your silken vest I will draw three drops of blood with a little silver knife. . . . Look, I got this little silver knife for you. (*Shows him the knife which he takes from his pocket and then puts back again.*) I want the feast to be sprinkled with blood ; . . . but you won't really be hurt one bit, only a tiny little scratch of the skin . . . and then I will kiss you on the brow like a brother . . . and the village will wonder. . . . Give me your hand.



(ADA, beside himself with emotion, shrinking backward, offers his hand.)

ILIJA. Do you agree ?

ADA. Yes.

ILIJA. Do you agree ?

ADA. Yes.

ILIJA. But why have you turned so pale all of a sudden ? What is it ? Are you feeling ill ?

ADA. (*In hushed hissing voice.*) When I struck you to the ground that night, I seized her, held her close and held the knife to her breast. She opened her mouth, but her voice died on her lips. I held her in my hands like a little ball. I should think that she half died at least three times on the way to the barn. She lay melting in my arms like a burning candle. How d'you like that—eh ?

(ILIJA, pale as a sheet, struggles internally, his breast heaves, his lips tremble.)

ADA. Two, three times she tried to cry for help, but fright took away her voice. And I laughed to see her tremble. "Do you love me, my sweet dawn ?" I asked ; and I kissed her face in the shadows—and she heavy as a stone and cold as ice. . . . Can you forgive me ?

ILIJA. (*Quivering and stammering.*) Ye—e—es.

ADA. (*With a frozen smile.*) And then I threw her down in the dark—in the dark—in the dark. . . . And she was all unconscious of what I did to her. Can you forgive me ?

(ILIJA, crushed, with down-bent head, stares in front of him.)

ADA. It was pitch-dark in the barn ; you couldn't see your hand before your eyes, and the hay was soft and cosy . . . . (*In savage exultation.*) I was the first

to cast my eye upon her—and you robbed me of her. You are my enemy. Your father struck down my father through the law courts. I don't know who was in the right, nor whether I care who was in the right. I only know that your flesh and blood has struck at mine, and mine at yours, to kill and to strangle the other, and that it's a case of finding out who will whip the other. Ay, ay, you shall fall before me like the grass before the scythe. I will sweep you off the face of the earth. And, mark you, as for that apple of your eye, your diamond in the Paternoster, your guardian angel, I will drain her, body and heart and soul; I will kill her with fears, and through her I will kill you; nay, more, I will kill what you hold most sacred. I seized her, and threw her to the ground and . . . Can you forgive me?

ILIJA. (*Petrified with horror, speaks after short silence.*) You did . . . what you meant to do?

ADA. (*Hisses.*) I did—what I meant to do.

### Scene XIII.

RUZA bursts into the room.

RUZA. (*Frantic with despair.*) It is a lie—a lie—a lie!

(*ADA grows pale as chalk. ILIJA draws himself up suddenly, with unexpected confidence.*)

RUZA. It is a lie, Ilija, a lie!

ILIJA. (*With a bitter smile on his lips.*) RUZA! You are altogether mine?

RUZA. (*Sobbing, throws her arms round Ilija's neck.*) It's a lie! I have always been yours. . . . I have known no other man.

ILJA. (*Looks ADA straight between the eyes.*) Now speak!

(*ADA forces a laugh, but lowers his eyes.*)

RUZA. When he carried me off that time, I was frightened as never in my life, but he lies when he says that I was unconscious. I was quite conscious, quite. (*Speaks quickly.*) At first I thought it's better I should go with him than that the villain should go back and murder you with his knife. I trembled all the way to the barn, and was terrified of him as of the devil himself. I quite thought he was going to plunge his knife into my heart. But I only felt like that till we got there. Once we were in the barn I thought "living or dead, I will never be his." When he tried to embrace me, I struck him a blow on the chest that sent him staggering. When he tried again to throw himself upon me, I struck him in the face. (*To ADA.*) Did I not strike you in the face, you beast? And then he growled like a dog and brandished his knife, but I struck out and caught him a blow under the wrist, so that the knife flew out of his hand. . . . (*To ADA.*) And then, when he saw he was powerless against me, he began to growl and grind his teeth and fumble about for his knife, and then I pushed him over so that he fell head foremost into the hay. . . . Beast! Beast! Fie, fie, fie!

*Scene XIV.*

*Enter MARA.*

MARA. I am looking for you everywhere, and see my little dove has flown straight into her Ilija's arms. But what is the matter—why are you crying, my pet?

(*Catches sight of ADA.*) Be off, you devil. Be off with you at once!

(*ADA goes out sick with rage. ILIJA and RUZA sob quietly in each other's arms.*)

MARA. (*Embracing and blessing both.*) My sun and moon! My little golden stars!

(*Curtain.*)

#### ACT IV.

SALIC'S large courtyard, shaded by trees through whose spreading branches the sun strikes in places. In the shade large tables, with white cloths laid. Several peasants busy about the tables. The first course is being brought in on platters and dishes. From behind the yard where the joints are being roasted, intermittent noises, voices in conversation and screams of merriment. Part of the long wall, porch and threshold of the house are visible.

##### *Scene I.*

TWO NEIGHBOUR WIVES *busied about the tables.*

FIRST NEIGHBOUR. They say the bride is bringing home a lot of stuff.

SECOND NEIGHBOUR. She's been making ready for two years.

FIRST NEIGHBOUR. Fifteen linen gowns.

SECOND NEIGHBOUR. Fine!

FIRST NEIGHBOUR. Three of silk, the third embroidered with gold.

SECOND NEIGHBOUR. Indeed?

FIRST NEIGHBOUR. Three chests full of linen and hempen stuff.

SECOND NEIGHBOUR. That is so.

FIRST NEIGHBOUR. And kerchiefs, both coloured and white, past counting.

SECOND NEIGHBOUR. Any ducats ?

FIRST NEIGHBOUR. Two strings of great ducats.

SECOND NEIGHBOUR. (*Dropping a plate.*) My word, what it is to be rich !

### *Scene II.*

*Enter MARA.*

MARA. Make haste there, make haste. They may be back at any moment from the wedding. When your boys get married, I'll lend you a hand, too.

FIRST NEIGHBOUR. Don't worry, Cousin Mara, all will be ready in good time.

MARA. I'm all of a flutter ; I don't seem to know where to begin.

SECOND NEIGHBOUR. No wonder—so many guests.

MARA. (*Calls to the regions behind the yard.*) Mind the joints are thoroughly done !

A VOICE. They will melt in your mouth.

### *Scene III.*

*Enter a BEGGAR WOMAN with a wallet on her back.*

BEGGAR WOMAN. May every heart's joy dwell in your house ! Spare a little for a poor woman !

MARA. (*Takes bread and slices of boiled lamb from the table and gives it to her.*) You are the tenth to-day, but send all along, send everyone you know.

BEGGAR WOMAN. (*Puts the gifts in her wallet.*) May



your fields be fruitful and the kolo joyful before your house.

MARA. Shall I live to a good old age ?

BEGGAR WOMAN. A hundred years, mistress.

MARA. And my good-man ?

BEGGAR WOMAN. A year and a day longer.

MARA. Good-day to you.

BEGGAR WOMAN. Good-day to you, mistress.

FIRST NEIGHBOUR. You told her to send all and sundry. Here's one already.

*Scene IV.*

*Enter, led by a little girl, a BLIND MAN playing monotonously and dolefully upon the national fiddle, the gusla. He sings to his own accompaniment. The words are heard distinctly.*

BLIND MAN. (*Sings.*)

“ Neither sun nor moon I see :

Ah, pity me, good people !

They tell me that the sun is shining :

Ah, pity me, good people ! ”

MARA. Isn't it sad ? Enough to break one's heart. Fill his bag for him, girls.

BLIND MAN. (*Sings again in going away after the women have filled his bag.*)

“ Neither sun nor moon I see,

Yet Godward still my footsteps lead me.

They tell me that the sun is shining—

When, my God, shall I behold Thee ? ”

MARA. He just tears the soul out of one's body.

(*Exit.*)

FIRST NEIGHBOUR. Well, well, that's the way of the world. One weeps and wails, and the other sings and makes a wedding feast.

SECOND NEIGHBOUR. All in this world is tribulation.

*Scene V.*

*Re-enter MARA. Enter boys and girls arm-in-arm in a long procession. From the street you can hear them singing in brisk time :*

“ Under the hill, in the dale,  
Under the green ash tree,  
From the ash the dew is dripping.”

*They stop at the gate. Several of the girls and boys, talking together, ask of each other* “ Praised be Jesus !  
When is the kolo going to begin ? ”

TWO WOMEN. (*Call from the yard.*) The pipers will be here presently.

MARA. (*Goes to meet the girls and boys.*) Come in, dears, come in ! (*All enter.*) What will you have, wine or whiskey ?

FIRST BOY. Wine, mother.

SECOND BOY. Whiskey for me, auntie.

MARA. (*To the girls.*) And you, my little doves ?

GIRLS. Cake, please !

MARA. My sweet children !

(*Exit MARA. Enter THREE WOMEN with wine and brandy and cakes which they hand to the boys and girls.*)

FIRST BOY. (*To his girl.*) My sweet torment !

THE GIRL. (*To the boy.*) My young devil ! (*They exchange kisses.*)

SECOND BOY. (*To his girl.*) I could eat you!  
(*Gathers her to his breast.*)

THE GIRL. (*Answers.*) My blood's all on fire!  
Kolo! . . . Kolo! . . .

### Scene VI.

*Enter the wedding guests. Rumbling of wheels within, behind the courtyard. Flourish from the pipes. Enter ILARIJA in festive attire. Enter ILIJA with a tuft of feather grass in his hat, wearing gold-embroidered vest, shirt and trousers. PETAR as "eldest guest" (stari svat) wears a long feather in his cap. TUNJA as steward or herald (Tchaush) carries a horn. MIRKO, the FORESTER, the KEEPER, NOTARY, VICAR, vast crowd of GUESTS. The piper starts at once behind the table at the back and guests form up for large kolo. GUESTS sit at long tables and at once begin to feast. Food and drink in abundance is incessantly being brought in.*

MARA. (*Flies to meet her son and embraces him.*)  
Ilija, my only boy—mother's heart's delight!

VICAR. (*Shakes hands with MARA.*) Heaven's blessing has always rested upon your house, and to-day even in greater measure.

MARA. Heaven reward your Reverence.

VICAR. The wedding to-day, and next year, please God, a baptism.

MARA. Please God!

VICAR. And another each succeeding year.

MARA. Please God!

(*PETAR and TUNJA seize MARA by the hand.*)

PETAR, TUNJA. Join the kolo, mother, this is your

day! (*They carry her off. Shouts\* from the kolo dancers; the dance proceeds in very brisk rhythm.*) Yoo, yoo, yoo-yoo, yoo-yuch!

FORESTER. (*A little tipsy, rises.*) Friends, I wish to propose a health to Master Ilarija and the bridegroom, though it was a case of "chucking me out" yesterday and to-day it's a case of "come in." I love our good man, friends; he's great and wide as the forest. (*To ILARIJA.*) Master Ilarija, from to-day your son is a man. He is taking to himself a wife. You have fields, vineyards and meadows in plenty, so that you are quite the laird. You have servants and hired men to help you with the work. Wouldn't you like your son to be a gentleman?

ILARIJA. The Lord forbid, Mr. Forester!

FORESTER. Wouldn't you like to see him sporting the green felt hat with the capercailzie plume, and smart boots up to the knee and a gun on his shoulder? So that all the goodwives of the village, not forgetting his own, would crane their necks for a look at so fine a fellow?

ILARIJA. Let my son answer your question himself, sir.

ILLJA. My opanci † suit me very well, and so do my wide linen trousers with silver and gold. And I want to walk the woods a free man, and not obliged to stalk my fellow creatures.

ILARIJA. Well said, my boy!

MIRKO. Well spoken, Ilija! (*Rises.*) I raise my glass to the health of the whole house—father, mother,

\* In the kolo the dancers shout exactly as they do in the Highland reel.

† Leather shoes with pleated uppers, worn by all Southern Slav peasants.

son and daughter-in-law. I know no place where a blessing could more beautifully unite two hearts than this house, nor one where prosperity and goodness of heart prevail more perfectly in harmony. Uncle Ilarija ! I do not want to flatter you, but I will briefly say you are a man, you are a soul, you are the land, you are—Slavonia, the land of fruitfulness and plenty. You are kindly as the soil in spring, and yet secretly proud in the very greatness of your humility. 'Tis a strange thing your pride. It does not lift you up on high, but rather bows you down to the ground. Like Nature you are greatest in your agony ; you are the oak which withstands every tempest and reaches heavenward ! . . . But why should I praise you further ? I will stop, for otherwise I should have to blame you and all out of love. Well, a health to the old stock with all its branches ; a health to the guests, and to all dear ones absent and present. A health to the sun, wine and merriment, and all the great and beautiful works of God around us ! Zivio !

ALL. (*Shout.*) Zivio ! \*

ILARIJA. (*With melancholy emotion.*) Thanks, Mirko ! thanks to you next God ! There's no one knows how to express the feelings of my heart as you do, you gifted from on high !

VICAR. (*Rises.*) I would like to say a few words in praise of this house.

FORESTER. (*Pulls him down by the cassock.*) Sit down, reverend sir, sit down. You will begin to talk about incense and graves and thoroughly damp our good spirits.

\* Lit. "May they live!" corresponding to our customary "Three cheers!" (pron. *zhivio* ; *z* = *s* in treasure).



KEEPER. Have a glass of wine instead, your Reverence !

VICAR. Only two or three words !

FORESTER. Not a single one. You will start off about death and the next world, and spoil all our appetites.

NOTARY. And I have something in mind, too.

KEEPER. I'll stop your mouth with a cut off the joint.

A GUEST. The guests are not very gay.

ANOTHER. They are depressed.

FIRST GUEST. Our good host is lost in thought. Did you notice how gloomy and depressed he was in church ?

SECOND GUEST. The bridegroom doesn't seem at his ease, either.

(PETAR, TUNJA and MARA come in from the kolo.)

MARA. (*Very much out of breath.*) What an old fool I am ! My head is spinning as if I was drunk ! When did I last dance ? Twenty years ago ! Oh dear ! oh dear ! Some wine ! (*Someone at the table passes her a glass of wine which she drains at a draught.*) But why are you all so silent ? Are you listening to the funeral service ?

### Scene VII.

*Enter a MAN from the field with a leather wallet on his back.*

THE MAN. Master Ilarija, I have come from the dairy-farm.

ILARIJA. Welcome !

THE MAN. The cow has calved !

A GUEST. Ay, ay!—a good omen for a good house on the wedding day!

VICAR. Did I not say that God's blessing is increasing in this house to-day?

THE MAN. Master Ilarija, the cow has calved twins.

VOICES. (*From the table.*) Ay, ay!—these are tokens.

A GUEST. Bull calves or heifers?

THE MAN. Both bull calves.

VOICES. (*From the table.*) Ay, ay!—two bullocks for the plough.

A GUEST. (*Aside.*) It's queer, but our good host doesn't seem to care.

MARA. (*Sitting down.*) Sit, my friend, sit down to the table, and let us clink glasses. (*Helps him to a glass of wine and clinks with him.*)

THE MAN. I haven't told all my story yet.

MARA. (*Helps him to roast meat and cake.*) Eat and drink first and talk afterwards. You've come a long way.

THE MAN. Yesterday, when the sun was at its height, three swarms left your hives, I tell you—one after the other, all within the hour.

VOICES. (*From the table.*) A miracle!

THE MAN. Five of us followed them for more than an hour through the woods till they settled at last in an oak. I tell you they were a lovely sight, like little suns.

MARA. My good friend!

THE MAN. And we fetched three hives from our house, and took them all three.

A GUEST. He that hath, to him shall be given.

THE MAN. And now they're humming finely in your apiary and gathering fresh honey.

MARA. I'm deeply grateful to you.

THE MAN. Perhaps I oughtn't to have broken in on your merry-making, but I couldn't help myself. I just had to tell you.

(MARA shakes him by the hand.)

VOICES. Good omens !

PETAR. Cousin Ilarija, you look so glum. . . .

ILARIJA. I am saving up my joy for my new daughter, our bride. . . .

TUNJA. And you, Ilija, you look as black as a thunder-cloud !

ILIJA. (*Absently.*) I—I—am not rightly here just now.

(*Strained silence.*)

TUNJA. But where are you ?

ILIJA. I'm standing beside the church and watching a corpse being carried in. . . .

VOICES. (*In amazement.*) A corpse !

MARA. (*Rises with a cry of despair.*) Rise, rise, all of you ; go and fetch the bride home. Bring me joy into my house. Go !

PETAR. It isn't the usual thing, cousin ; it's too early to fetch her. It isn't nightfall yet. (*The sad monotonous voice of the blind man singing to his gusla suddenly heard from the street.*)

“ Neither sun nor moon I see,

Yet Godward still my footsteps lead me.

They tell me that the sun is shining—

When shall I, my God, behold thee ? ”

MARA. (*Still more distressed.*) Go, go, break up everything, turn the house upside down, raise fire and pestilence, but bring joy to my house ! Oh me ! I wish I was dead !

BLIND MAN. (*Within, sings.*)

“ When shall I, my God, behold Thee ? ”

(*Confusion, noise and general babel. All rise to go. For a few seconds the yard is empty.*)

*Scene VIII.*

TWO DRUNKEN MEN *come lurching from the wood shed to the centre of the stage.*

FIRST DRUNKEN MAN. (*Stumbling.*) When I'm telling you, I can't ; my feet won't carry me.

SECOND DRUNKEN MAN. And my feet want me to carry them.

FIRST DRUNKEN MAN. Our good host looked queer, but the joint was all right.

SECOND DRUNKEN MAN. So was the wine.

FIRST DRUNKEN MAN. How many quarts did you put away ?

SECOND DRUNKEN MAN. Five at the least.

FIRST DRUNKEN MAN. Devil take it, but you can carry more than I. Would you insult me ?

SECOND DRUNKEN MAN. I insult you ?

FIRST DRUNKEN MAN. Yes, you !

SECOND DRUNKEN MAN. I ?

FIRST DRUNKEN MAN. You can carry more than I. You put whiskey into my wine.

SECOND DRUNKEN MAN. Don't be an ass ; what are you thinking of ?

FIRST DRUNKEN MAN. You put whiskey into my wine, or I'd be steadier on my feet, you villain !

SECOND DRUNKEN MAN. Don't rouse me, or I'll wallop you, you jealous beast !

FIRST DRUNKEN MAN. D'you think that I'm afraid of you, you scarecrow ?

*(They seize each other and roll on the ground, the First underneath and the Second on top of him. During a short tussle the Second gives the First a few smart blows, whereupon the First calls out for help.)*

### Scene IX.

SERVANT and two other SOBER MEN arrive on the scene.

SERVANT. Look at these asses ; how they disgrace the feast !

FIRST SOBER MAN. Swine ! These people have no shame.

SECOND SOBER MAN. Let's give them a hiding.

SERVANT. No. The mistress wouldn't be pleased.

SECOND SOBER MAN. But we must trundle them away somewhere. We can't leave them here.

SERVANT. I'll fetch a horse-cloth, and we can roll them in that and throw them into the sty.

*(Exit SERVANT and returns with the blanket. All three throw themselves upon the drunken men and haul them away. The stage remains empty for a moment.)*

### Scene X.

*Shouts, noise, horn-calls, and the rumble of wheels at the back of the yard. The crowd of guests and young people of the village fills the courtyard. Girls and boys stand in line. Enter the Bridegroom leading the Bride.*



*She is dressed in silk and gold with her hair dressed after the manner of married women. The girls scatter flowers in her path. On the threshold she is met by the groom's mother, MARA, holding a pillow. Beside MARA stands the groom's father, ILARIJA. The Bride steps over the pillow, kisses the hands of her parents-in-law, and throws her arms round MARA'S neck. MARA, sobbing for joy, leads her into the house.*

FIRST GIRL. My word, but she's pretty !

SECOND GIRL. She was the prettiest girl in the parish.

FIRST GIRL. Only a bit pale.

SECOND GIRL. You don't suppose she's nervous, do you ?

FIRST GIRL. You are just an imp !

*(Bride and Bridegroom, Father and Mother-in-Law re-enter from the house two by two, and take their places at table among the guests. Fresh food and drink brought in. A large gipsy band has a table apart in the background.)*

MARA. *(To the Bride.)* Apple of my eye ! My little sunshine !

ILARIJA. *(To the Bride.)* My sweet daughter !

*(ILIJA contemplates the Bride in silence.)*

MARA. Go on, friends, don't spare the house. Eat and drink at your pleasure. My little sunshine is in our midst, my sweet little daughter-in-law ! *(To the gipsies.)* Gipsies, why are you not playing ? Play up !

ILARIJA. *(Rises.)* Just one moment ! 'Tisn't the right moment yet.

MARA. Wha—at ! Have you gone crazy again ? Our sweet daughter-in-law has been brought home. *(Shakes herself.)* What's this ? Play up !

ILARIJA. (*Stops the gipsies with a gesture.*) Our daughter-in-law is not fond of noise. She has a quiet mind.

RUZA. (*The Bride.*) As you wish, father.

ILARIJA. Everything in moderation. God does not love pride. . . .

ILIJA. Dad!

ILARIJA. What is it, my boy?

ILIJA. Gusa will not come.

ILARIJA. (*Amazed, annoyed.*) His son said he would come.

ILIJA. The villain will not come.

ILARIJA. How do you know?

ILIJA. I have my reasons.

(RUZA presses ILIJA'S hand and blushes. ILARIJA gives a hollow laugh and gloomily bows his head.)

MARA. His madness has come upon him again, dear friends.

(ILARIJA rises, looks fixedly at the crowd, then collapses gloomily once more; he looks pale and haggard.)

A VOICE. Look, look! He is feeling ill!

SEVERAL VOICES. (*Confusedly.*) He is feeling ill! He has turned quite pale; he cannot stand on his feet!

ILARIJA. (*Rises again and speaks in a gloomy, hollow, prophetic voice.*) Listen to me, sweet brothers!

VOICES FROM THE CROWD. Listen, listen!

ILARIJA. A little while and we shall no more celebrate the wedding feast.

(*Somebody asks, "What's he saying?"*)

ILARIJA. All joy will fly from us, and evil fate will devise new paths for our lives.

SOMEBODY. What does he say?

ILARIJA. Our wells will run dry and our fields and vineyards will wither.

SOMEBODY. He foretells evil.

ILARIJA. And terrible things will come to pass beneath our skies. Even the sky will shroud itself forever in black clouds and a winged fire will devour our forests, destroying all things both living and lifeless; and whither the fire cannot reach, thither the flood will penetrate and voracious locusts descend like a black tempest.

A VOICE FROM THE CROWD. He is ensnared by evil.

ANOTHER VOICE. He is inspired by heaven!

THIRD VOICE. 'Tis black magic!

ILARIJA. Our earth will groan and, like hell, grind her teeth in the face of heaven; and heaven will chastise her with lightnings and with thunders. The little stars will hide themselves for fear behind the clouds. Alas, for the gentle little stars! . . .

SOMEONE. He sees the devil by his side.

ANOTHER. He is become a prophet!

ILARIJA. And love, sweet love, will perish for ever. The seed of man will be accursed and grow puny; the roads to the churchyards will be neglected and the graves no longer hold their message of hope. And the light—the fair light that we bear within our bosoms and which beckons us forward across the valley of the shadow of death—will be quenched. . . .

SOMEONE. His utterance is terrible as from the grave!

ILARIJA. (*With difficulty, gasping.*) And men, with the brand of Cain upon their brow, will fly from one land unto another. But whither? Yonder roars the fire. . . . They fly elsewhere, tormented and terror-

stricken; . . . but yonder are rivers and seas, and the tempest has shattered every ship. . . . There in the sooty darkness sits Old Satan and revels in the sight, and then, in swarms and in hills and in mountains, they hurtle onward, gnashing their teeth and uttering curses. Whither? Ah! whither? Yonder yawns the abyss, and all the graves have become abysses. The dreadful judgment has begun. For the first time since the beginning God and the devil are walking upon the earth to divide the kingdom.

FIRST PERSON. He is mad.

SECOND PERSON. He's not mad.

THIRD PERSON. He sees all this in his own soul.

ILARIJA. (*Warding off something with his hands.*)  
Woe, woe is me, woe! woe! Mine eyes are seared with looking upon the struggle between God and the devil. Satan, avaunt!

(*A sudden unrest pervades the crowd. GUSA and ADA appear on horseback.*)

### Scene XI.

*Enter GUSA and ADA. ILARIJA, perceiving them at the gate, is first petrified with amazement; suddenly his expression changes—his face lights up with cheerfulness.*

ILARIJA. (*Triumphantly goes to meet GUSA with impassioned cries of joy.*) He has come, come . . . come . . . to our wedding, the wedding of hearts! (*To the gipsies.*) Now strike up!

(*Wild, passionate music. ILARIJA embraces GUSA, who tries to ward him off.*)

GUSA. Have I kept my word?

ILARIJA. Gusa, brother, sweet brother ! Thou man of God, brother of peace. (*To the guests.*) Rejoice, brothers, rejoice with me !

GUSA. I am black, but I keep my word.

ILARIJA. Petar and Tunja, steward and eldest guest, yonder is the cellar ; do your duty.

GUSA. (*To ILARIJA.*) Do you remember what I said to you in the field : " I only give way once in my life " ?

ILARIJA. Gusa, forgiving brother ! Oh, resurrection ! Play up, you gipsies ! (*The gipsies play fiercely and then cease.*)

GUSA. Do you remember how I said to you by the fire in your barn, " I only give way once in my life. I am Gusa " ?

ILARIJA. My brother in peace, what is mine is thine. A chair for Gusa, a place of honour, Andrija. Or—wait ! Sit here in my place.

GUSA. I have come to your wedding, but——

ILARIJA. Gusa, my brother.

GUSA. But to keep it, as I always keep my feasts. . . .

ILARIJA. (*To the servants who wait.*) In the cellar you will find a barrel of wine twenty years old, strong as the sun. Bring it here.

GUSA. (*To the guests.*) And do you know, people, with whom you are feasting ? . . .

VOICES. With whom ?

GUSA. With a coward !

VOICES. (*Several together.*) Gusa ! Gusa ! Gusa !

GUSA. With the biggest coward I ever saw in my life !

VOICES. (*Menacingly.*) Gusa ! Gusa !

ONE VOICE. Don't play with your life !

GUSA. With a coward, whom I have slain thrice—by earth, by fire, and by fear ! . . .



ADA. (*To ILIJA.*) And where is your silver knife ? Here I am. Take three drops of blood from me. . . .

ILARIJA. (*Bitterly.*) Gusa !

GUSA. With a common crawling coward !

TUNJA. Good, Gusa ! good !

PETAR. Well done, Gusa, well done—good man !

VOICES. (*Less excited persons.*) What is this ?

TUNJA. Leave them alone ! It's nobody's business !

GUSA. I have searched every fibre of his heart and every drop of his blood and humiliated them, and look how he crawls before me !

MARA. Well done, Gusa !

GUSA. Aren't you ashamed to eat bread at his table, and to drink wine out of his cellar ?

ILARIJA. (*Inarticulate.*) Pity me, friends. All is black before my eyes—support me !

(*Several guests try to approach. TUNJA and PETAR draw their knives.*)

PETAR. Let no one dare go near him ; leave him alone ; soon he will see red before his eyes. . . . Well done, Gusa ! Well done !

TUNJA. Well done, Gusa !

GUSA. The convicts whom I got to know would have thought scorn to sit at his table.

ILARIJA. (*As before.*) Pity me, support me, support me !

MARA. Yes, set him on, set him on ; let the *man* awaken in him.

TUNJA and PETAR. Set him on, set him on—Gusa, set him on !

ADA. (*To ILIJA.*) Come out with your silver knife !

SEVERAL ANGRY VOICES FROM THE CROWD. Set him on ! Set the boy on, too !

THE WHOLE CROWD. (*Worked up into fury and excitement.*) Set him on, set him on! Set on the murderer!

ILARIJA. Hold me; the blood flies to my head!

THE MADDENED CROWD. Blood, blood!

(*Whistling heard from behind the courtyard.*)

GUSA. Strike, if you are a man.

MARA. Coward! I'll part from you to-morrow, old as I am! Coward!

ILARIJA. Hold me, hold me, pity me! (*He suddenly attacks GUSA madly and they fight with their bare hands. Several persons approach to intervene; but PETAR and TUNJA brandish their knives and keep the space clear about the fighters.*)

PETAR. Not a soul is to meddle; whoever dares meddle is a dead man! 'Tis a fight between two kinds. Let us see who will whip the other.

MARA. Not a soul! Not a soul! (*She seizes a knife from the table.*)

GUSA. (*Getting the worst of it.*) Help, Ada!

(*ADA rushes upon ILARIJA, but at the same moment ILIJA attacks ADA. After a short, savage, horrible tussle, GUSA and ADA, strangled, both fall dead.*)

HUSHED VOICES FROM THE CROWD. Both dead!

(*ALL present stand away from the table; except MARA, RUZA, PETER, and TUNJA. Pale and scared the crowd retreat into the background. ILARIJA, standing R., covers his face with a kerchief. ILIJA, L., looks fixedly on the ground. Tense silence. Stillness of death.*)

(*Curtain.*)

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III

**RECONCILIATION**

**A DRAMA IN THREE ACTS**

**TO THE MEMORY OF LEO TOLSTOY**

*(Translated by J. N. Duddington)*

## DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

MARKO GAVANOVITCH, seventy years of age, looks like a prophet out of the Old Testament.

EVA, his third wife, a handsome, healthy woman of twenty-five.

ILARIA, his brother, aged sixty-five.

JOSA (the eldest)

TUNIA

MATHA

ZHAVA

Nine More

} sons of Marko.

RADE, Marko's servant.

ZHAVA RASLITCH, Marko's friend.

CAPTAIN OF POLICE.

TWO FOREMEN.

NEIGHBOURS.

A RADIANT MAN.

MARKO'S GUESTS.

THE THIRSTY ONES.

A SORCERER.

MEN WITH EMPTY GOBLETS.

A PIPER.

THREE OLD WOMEN AND A YOUTH.



DRUNKEN PEOPLE.

A GUEST FROM ANOTHER DISTRICT.

A CLERK.

FELLOW OWNERS OF THE ZADRUGA.\*

A WEEPING MAN.

TWO OLD MILITARY COMRADES OF MARKO.

BEGGARS.

A STRANGER.

TWO MEN WHO PUT UP THE CROSS.

AN ENVOY.

A WANDERING PROCESSION.

THE LEADER OF THE PROCESSION.

A MAN OF FORTY.

Various people in different clothes.

The action takes place in any country, at any time.  
The dresses may be taken from Slavonia.

\* Zadruga is a special kind of land ownership among the Horvates. The descendants of a common progenitor own the land, the house, the cattle, etc., on communal principles and form a zadruga. The oldest member of the family—the patriarch—is the head of the zadruga. There may be more than a hundred co-owners in a zadruga, and there may be several zadrugas in one village, as well as many peasants who do not belong to any zadruga at all.

## ACT I.

*A yard. Early morning. Bright sunshine. On the Right a wall of GAVANOVITCH'S huge house, the porch and one window. By the fence an old lime tree. Under it a bench ; by it a gate into the street.*

MARKO GAVANOVITCH *sits on the bench—he is evidently agitated.*

MARKO. (*Looks about him, gets up.*) No one will do anything. They all sit at home like broody hens and there's more work than we can get through. No, it won't do. (*Calls.*) Rade !

RADE. (*Enters from left.*) What do you want, grandfather ?

MARKO. Has Matha gone to fetch the wood ?

RADE. No.

MARKO. Tell him to come here. (*RADE goes out.* MARKO *alone.*) It was different in the old days—people obeyed their elders and they had a conscience, too. But now everything has gone to the dogs. . . .

(*MATHA enters, RADE stands some distance off.*)

MARKO. Why don't you put the horses in and go to the forest to get the wood ? (*Points to the Left.*) It would be a disgrace if anyone looked into our yard. All we've got are a few twisted logs, and you do nothing but lounge about at home and the horses stand idle all the day.

MATHA. But why should *I* go to the forest ? Can't someone else go ? God help me, father ! . . .

MARKO. Nay, leave God alone. When you don't want to work you always call for God's help. Be off, and be quick !

MATHA. You put everything on to me, father, as though I were a beast of burden—it's unfair.

MARKO. (*Surprised.*) What's unfair? Don't talk nonsense.

MATHA. You are unjust. I have noticed it for a long time.

MARKO. What's that? Say it again! I don't comprehend.

MATHA. Why, you're unjust. I have been wanting to tell you so to your face for a long time.

MARKO. (*Astounded, crosses himself, turns to RADE.*) Call Tunia. (*RADE goes out. MARKO to himself.*) I am unjust! (*Shakes his head.*) It's the first time I've heard that.

TUNIA. (*Coming in from the Left.*) What do you want?

MARKO. What does it all mean? You all creep into the sunshine, you do nothing all the day, you lie about stretching and yawning like sleek cats, you are incorrigibly lazy. (*Points to MATHA.*) Him there I send to the forest and he is rude to me. I am unjust! (*Turns to MATHA.*) Shameless one! (*MATHA makes a grimace. To TUNIA.*) It's a long time since the poor beasts had any salt. Go to Zapania for our share of salt.

TUNIA. So I must go and get the salt because he doesn't want to fetch the wood! For shame, father! Let him do his work first and then I'll do mine.

MARKO. Good God, what does it mean? You refuse to work?

TUNIA. I know, of course, that work's got to be done, but it should be properly arranged. You don't know how to keep your own house in order. Give your

orders to him first and then to me. Confound it, I'm a few years older than he. But work is no disgrace. (*Ironically.*) Go and fetch the salt yourself! It's easy enough to give orders!

MARKO. By God, you'll drive me mad yet in my old age. Or are you jesting?

TUNIA. No, I'm not. It would do you good to work a little. You might rot if you do nothing.

MARKO. Tfoo! (*To his servant.*) Fetch Josa. (*Quickly turns his back to TUNIA and MATHA.*) Tfoo! Is it possible? My own flesh and blood rebel against me. Well, we shall see. I have got strength enough still to curb the lot of you!

(*JOSA and RADE enter.*)

JOSA. Who called me?

MARKO. I sent these two brothers of yours to work, but they won't go and they are not ashamed. (*Turns to them.*) I forgive you this time, but woe to you if it happens again. Go and show them how to work—shame them!

JOSA. But they may be right. They are not so stupid as all that. Why should they obey the first person that orders them about?

MARKO. Am not I your father and are not you my sons?

JOSA. (*Looks round in surprise.*) Unfortunately this is true. (*Agitated.*) It's a pity with your sharp eyes you don't see what's going on in your own home.

(*MARKO walks to and fro excited, with his hands behind him.*)

JOSA. Pera's wife stole a sack of wheat yesterday to buy ointment, and perfumed herself to sell her body more profitably. But you don't raise a finger.

MARKO. I rebuked her and she vowed that she would rather burn her right hand than steal anything again.

JOSA. (*Mocking.*) You "rebuked her"! What's the good of that?

MARKO. Do you think I ought to have stoned her?

JOSA. He rebuked her! (*Laughs.*)

MARKO. How dare you laugh in my face, you accursed one!

JOSA. How can one help laughing? You are so ridiculous, father! You ought to have had her locked up—that's what she deserves.

MARKO. Locked up? In prison? Has prison ever improved anyone? Pava Pavitch's son stole a fowl and was sent to prison. And now he steals cattle from their pasture and horses from their guards.

JOSA. A hundred evil deeds are daily performed before your eyes. Zhava's wife is still carrying on with the policeman, and you allow her to sit down at our table with us all.

MARKO. I have no right to pry into her soul.

JOSA. But her husband has a right to do so.

MARKO. No, nor has he.

JOSA. Who the devil then has the right?

MARKO. No one but herself. Sooner or later she will feel the stabs of conscience. She will not escape retribution.

JOSA. How you reason, father!

MARKO. I reason like a man.

JOSA. You excuse every vice.

MARKO. To excuse is the best way.

JOSA. And here's another shameful thing! Steva's daughter. . . .



MARKO. Poor girl!

JOSA. Ha, ha, poor girl! She gadded about until she got a big belly, and you say, "Poor girl!" Are you sorry for her?

MARKO. (*In a sad tone.*) I am very sorry for her and I'm very anxious about her.

JOSA. You are concerned most about all who are sunk in disgrace.

MARKO. I love them.

JOSA. According to the injunction of Christ?

MARKO. According to the injunction of my own heart. Whom should we love if not those who yield themselves for love?

JOSA. That's all very fine! But these women pollute our house. You ought to have driven her away. The priest has already dismissed her from the front pew of the choir—and he's a holy man.

MARKO. The priest acted like a fool. He didn't know what he was doing.

JOSA. You justify every sin.

MARKO. I neither justify nor condemn sin.

JOSA. All that you do is senseless and will bring us to perdition.

MARKO. It will bring us to salvation.

JOSA. I'm sick of your salvation. . . .

MATHA and TUNIA. So are we, so are we!

JOSA. (*Pointing to his father.*) Do you hear? Not only they, but the whole household, the hundred of them, even your darling sinners, are sick of your salvation. Your salvation is a meaningless word! You don't yourself believe in salvation or in the life to come, and you only ape the Lord God out of sheer vanity. . . . I admit your acting is admirable; but is it honest, is it

manly to pretend as you do ? This is just what I hate in you. . . . Be what you really are ; an ordinary sinful man who regards good as good and evil as evil. Our house is full of hatred, vice and thieving. There are devils among us, it's like hell, but you do not see it ! For God's sake, father ——

MARKO. There are bad times before us, men are full of blind fear in the presence of the disasters to come, and that leads to all kinds of evil. But their fear is absurd so long as the power to rule is in my hands.

JOSA. Two sisters fight each other like dogs, two brothers try to throttle one another ——

MARKO. You must see that this does not happen again. But if it does happen again you needn't lose your heads. It's nothing to wonder at if in a house where so many people live together blood should become hot sometimes and hatred should be kindled. That's why I am always saying to you : Don't sit with folded hands ; work, labour, lest ye fall into temptation. Labour purifies the soul, it calms a man and makes him more kind. But you do nothing but eat and invent new sins. . . .

JOSA. The best thing would be to have done at once with all sins.

MARKO. You speak like a true son of mine ! What is in your mind ?

JOSA. Something very good.

MARKO. Tell me quickly, my son !

JOSA. There shall be no more disputes and quarrels, each one shall receive such a blessing as he deserves.

MARKO. Bless my soul, I never thought you were so noble-minded !

JOSA. Everything shall be according to the saying :

“Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap.”

MARKO. Let each man’s conscience be his judge.

JOSA. Yes, let each man’s conscience be his judge. I think that sometimes it cannot be easy for you to look after the whole house. . . .

MARKO. Good Lord ! what I have suffered for this house ! But I never show my suffering. . . .

JOSA. But I have noticed it. Your kindness, your meekness have more than once moved me to tears. I have thought to myself : Poor father ! for whom does he labour, for whom does he spend his strength ? Is the whole house worth it ? And how do they requite him ? With hatred, with contempt, with scoffing. . . .

MARKO. (*Embraces JOSA and kisses him on the forehead.*) Thank you, my firstborn. I thank God that there is yet one soul that understands me. . . .

JOSA. Believe me, father, there is not one of your sons who knows so well what you need as your Josa. This very day I will take the whole burden of care off your shoulders.

(*MARKO endeavours to kiss his hands.*)

JOSA. Don’t, don’t, father, for God’s sake ! He wants to kiss my hands ! It’s unheard of !

MARKO. If you are really prepared to release me from my cares, if you wish to put an end to all dissension and to create love I must kiss your hands for it.

JOSA. (*With a cunning smile.*) To-day all in this house shall taste of love.

MARKO. (*Looks at him in bewilderment, then seizes his head.*) My head aches, you torment me. What have you been thinking about ? tell me !

JOSA. We wish to be free.

MARKO. What ?

JOSA. We wish to be free from your clutches ! !

MARKO. (*Looks him straight in the eyes, then pushes him away. He is breathless and speaks almost inaudibly.*) So that's what it is ? . . .

JOSA. We wish to share the zadruga.

MARKO. (*Breathless.*) So that's it, is it ? . . . (*Steps back a few paces, growls.*) No ! Never !

JOSA. You old fox ! Have I caught you ? I have stabbed you right to the heart ! We have already shared the zadruga behind your back.

MARKO. (*Trembling with emotion.*) Never ! Never !

JOSA. Zhava has already driven to Vinkovtsi to fetch the Captain of Police to perform the necessary formalities.

MARKO. (*Shouts.*) Brother !

JOSA. (*Hisses maliciously.*) Ah ! it's not easy so suddenly to lose control of the zadruga, is it ? You're choking with anger !

(MARKO *sharply turns his back upon him.*)

MATHA. Leave him alone ! The Police Captain will arrange matters.

JOSA. You blinded us, you made us your slaves. . . . You put yourself in God's place ! I'll never forgive you this as long as I live !

MARKO. (*In despairing voice.*) Brother ! Brother !

JOSA. We have suffered long enough under your yoke !

MATHA. (*Seizes JOSA by the arm.*) Josa !

TUNIA. Collect yourself !

JOSA. I thought of it for a long time before I decided to deal you this blow !

MARKO. Brother, help me ! I shall attack my own flesh and blood !

JOSA. I'm not afraid of you! Attack me if there's no shame left in you! You're afraid of me, my reproaches have touched you on a tender spot!

MARKO. (*Weeps.*) Brother, do not forsake me in my misery.

(ILARIA runs in from the Left, breathing heavily.)

MARKO. Is it true?

JOSA. He knows it better than any of us.

MARKO. Speak, brother!

(ILARIA makes a gesture of helplessness.)

MARKO. Did you know of their plan?

JOSA. Why, he was our best adviser!

MARKO. (*Shouts.*) I have always trusted you most! Now I don't believe my own eyes and ears. (*To his servant.*) Has anyone taken the horses to-day to drive to Vinkovtsi?

(RADE nods in affirmation.)

MARKO. O God! All have forsaken me! (*Sternly to his servant.*) Why didn't you tell me?

(RADE hangs his head in silence.)

MARKO. (*To ILARIA.*) Brother, why don't you speak?

ILARIA. (*With a helpless gesture sadly drops his head.*) Yes. . . .

MARKO. I must have gone mad. . . . What have I done to you? Is that your gratitude for my love? (*Weeps.*)

ILARIA. (*Takes him by the arm and makes a sign to all the others to go away.*) Calm yourself, brother!

MARKO. (*Sobbing bitterly.*) I have always given my heart to you, and you . . . you have betrayed me as Judas betrayed Christ.

ILARIA. Calm yourself, things are not as bad as you imagine.



MARKO. What is not so bad ?

ILARIA. Others have had their zadrugas shared and they have survived it.

MARKO. I cannot bear to think of it.

ILARIA. You'll get used to it.

MARKO. Never ! And nothing will make me.

ILARIA. One gets used to everything. A man may lose an arm or a leg, but he still goes on living. Why do you cling so to the zadruga ? It isn't worth an empty egg.

MARKO. Never ! Never !

ILARIA. Go to your young wife, she will calm you.

MARKO. You knew it all and you never said a word to me. I shall never——

ILARIA. You will never forgive me. . . . Oh, yes, you will. Man forgives everything in the end. We shall quarrel and forgive one another a hundred times yet.

MARKO. But why didn't you tell me ?

ILARIA. I didn't want to upset you. You were resting so happily under the lime tree, breathing the scent of the earth so greedily. . . . I thought : Why should I disturb him in his joy. It could all be done without your knowing. Why should we deal you a blow on the head every day when one decisive blow would be enough ?

MARKO. (*Pressing his temples.*) My God ! . . . So you are with them, too ?

ILARIA. About sharing the zadruga, you mean ?

MARKO. Yes.

ILARIA. (*Irresolutely.*) I am neither for nor against it. All I want is peace.

MARKO. (*Bitterly.*) So you are against me as well !

ILARIA. I ? What are you saying ?

MARKO. All I want to know is, What have I done to you ?

ILARIA. I swear by the living God I had nothing to do with it. I simply want peace.

MARKO. (*Hangs his head.*) I have done no harm to anyone, I have nothing on my conscience.

ILARIA. I swear by God, I swear on my honour. . . .

MARKO. I am innocent . . . and you will pay for it, you will pay bitterly. . . .

(*ILARIA looks long at his brother, presses his hand to his heart as though protesting, and goes away.*

*MARKO is left alone. A pause.*)

MARKO. (*Seizes his head, choking.*) My God ! I am going mad ! I have gone mad ! I shall never get my reason back, my God ! (*Covers his face with his hands, is silent, then shudders passionately.*) Ungrateful dogs ! Wolf's cubs ! I'll show you what I am. You don't know me, but you will know me now. I swear by the living God ! I swear by Heaven ! I swear by this burning sun ! (*Runs away in great agitation evidently determined to do something terrible. The stage is empty for some time.*)

(*ILARIA and EVA, MARKO's wife, come in from the Left.*)

ILARIA. He is terribly excited. Awful things may happen. The puppies do not know him. My dear, look after him !

EVA. I'll do my best, but it will be difficult.

ILARIA. You are the only one who can calm him.

EVA. No one can calm him until he calms himself.

ILARIA. You can do a great deal with him by your tender words.

EVA. At such times he is like a storm.

ILARIA. Caress his grey hairs with your dear hands.

EVA. Who can caress a whirlwind ?

ILARIA. That scoundrel Josa ! (*Shakes his head in amazement.* MATHA, *frightened, runs in from the Left.*)

MATHA. Father is going to do something dreadful.

ILARIA. What ?

MATHA. I saw him go to the barn where the guns are kept.

ILARIA. And ? . . .

MATHA. And I saw him come out grinding his teeth like a madman. He had some of that accursed stuff in his hands.

ILARIA. What stuff ?

MATHA. The stuff we blow up rocks and trees with.

ILARIA. Good God !

MATHA. Yes, and he went to the cattle shed with the stuff.

ILARIA. Eva, my dear, have pity on us !

EVA. But who would dare to go near him now ?

ILARIA. My dear !

(*TUNIA comes in.*)

TUNIA. Look out !

MATHA. What is he doing ?

TUNIA. He has got a gun.

MATHA. And where is Josa ? Is he with him ?

TUNIA. The scoundrel follows him about. He's risking his life.

MATHA. Is he keeping quiet, at any rate ?

TUNIA. He follows him about and jeers at him, but the old man is so occupied with his own thoughts that he sees and hears nothing.

MARKO'S VOICE. (*From behind the stage.*) I'll show you, you dogs!

(*ALL listen in alarm.*)

ILARIA. (*Takes hold of EVA'S arm.*) My dear, do have pity.

MARKO'S VOICE. I am master here yet!

(*JOSA'S VOICE hardly audible.*)

ILARIA. That villain, Josa, is still at him! My dear!

EVA. Heavens! (*Runs away.*)

(*A shot and JOSA'S scream is heard. ALL want to rush to the place whence the shot was fired, but are rooted to the spot with terror. A few moments of silence follow—then there is the sound of a terrific explosion.*)

EVA'S VOICE. Run! Save yourselves!

SEVERAL PEOPLE. (*Appear at the door and windows.*) What's up?

EVA'S VOICE. (*Very loud.*) He won't let me come near him, he's destroying everything; save yourselves!

(*A second explosion.*)

EVA'S VOICE. Run away! Get out of the house! He's going to destroy the house.

ILARIA. (*Shouts into the house.*) Come out! Be quick! Save yourselves!

(*A crowd of frightened men, women and children, run out of the house; some jump from the window.*)

AN OLD WOMAN. (*Shouts.*) Holy Virgin, what I have lived to see! (*Takes a little girl by the hand.*) Let us get away from here, Lizotchka, let us run to my sister's! (*Goes out with the child into the street.*)

A LAME OLD MAN. There's no peace anywhere.

Think of having to escape from one's house ! It's a shame ! (*Goes into the street.*)

(TWO WOMEN run out of the porch, fighting ; they shout.)

FIRST WOMAN. I'll give it you, you hussy.

SECOND WOMAN. You're a thief, you're a thief ! I caught you ! (*Turning to the others.*) She's a thief !

FIRST WOMAN. I surprised her with a soldier !

MEN'S VOICES. Be quiet, you hags, hold your tongues.

FIRST WOMAN. I surprised her with a soldier !

(Both WOMEN continue abusing one another and attacking one another with their fists. The men separate them and push them into the street where they continue to shout.)

ILARIA. Our house has become a regular hell ! (*Goes out.*)

TUNIA. (*To MATHA.*) Let us go after him !

(Both go away.)

FIRST MAN. What shall we do ?

SECOND MAN. Let's clear out till the police come. It's not worth risking our blood for nothing.

THIRD MAN. Shall we try and bind the old man ?

FIRST MAN. You go and do it if you're tired of life !

(A lot of inquisitive people look into the yard from the street through the fence. They whisper together.)

FIRST MAN. (*Pointing to the onlookers.*) Look, the whole village is here !

SECOND MAN. They've come to laugh at us.

THIRD MAN. (*To the people at the fence.*) What do you want ? Clear out !



FIRST MAN. Let them alone or they'll only scoff at us more.

ILARIA'S VOICE. (*Behind the stage.*) It serves you right!

(*ALL listen.*)

JOSA'S VOICE. I'll make him rue it.

ILARIA'S VOICE. Where are you running to? Do you want the whole street to see your disgrace?

JOSA'S VOICE. Let them all see it. . . .

(*ILARIA and JOSA come in. JOSA runs in first, holding up his bleeding left arm with the right.*

*ILARIA follows him.*)

ILARIA. What are you doing, you madman? The villagers don't care. . . .

JOSA. I want the whole village to know. . . .

ILARIA. It serves you right, you've been jeering at him all the time. (*Looks at the people by the fence.*) What a lot of people have collected here!

JOSA. So much the better! (*To the people.*) Listen, good people!

ILARIA. (*Seizing him by the arm.*) What are you doing!

JOSA. I'll tell you everything. (*A stir in the crowd.*) You know my father. (*A stir.*) His name is Marko Gavanovitch, and I am his eldest son, and my name is Josa—Josip Gavanovitch—and this (*Points to his arm*) is my arm. (*Movement and laughter among the crowd.*) Marko Gavanovitch fired at Josa Gavanovitch and wounded him in the arm. (*Laughter and movement among the crowd.*)

ILARIA. I see clean through you. You're as stupid as a log of wood. Your howling's in vain: they can't be your witnesses because they've seen

nothing. (*Walks to and fro with his hands behind his back.*)

JOSA. It's quite simple. I merely want to amuse them. It's meat and drink to them. (*To the people.*) He shot me in the arm because my arm wished to smash his yoke.

ILARIA. (*Beside himself with rage turns to the people in the yard.*) What are you gaping and grinning at? Get away home, you scoundrels! (*To the people.*) What do you want here? There's no carcass and you're not dogs!

(*Murmur of discontent in the crowd.*)

JOSA. Stay and revel in our disgrace!

ILARIA. Do you understand?

(*People go away, discontented.*)

ILARIA, TUNIA, MATHA, and JOSA.

ILARIA. (*To MATHA and TUNIA.*) Why didn't you stay there? Why do you follow me like rabid dogs? (*Turns his back on them.*)

MATHA. We have lost our heads—we don't know what to do. Everything's going to ruin.

ILARIA. (*Shouts.*) Why didn't you stay with him and look after him? He'll destroy everything! He'll not leave one stone on another; he'll rip the roof off the house!

TUNIA. Don't shout, uncle, it will be all right.

ILARIA. What will be all right?

TUNIA. She has gone up to him.

ILARIA. (*Sighs with relief.*) Thank God!

TUNIA. They came out of the garden together and have gone into the fields.

MATHA. It was painful to look at him.

ILARIA. And where is that stuff?

MATHA. That devilish stuff and the gun ?

ILARIA. Yes.

MATHA. God's truth ! as soon as he took Eva's hand he threw it all away.

TUNIA. The gun and the powder disappeared at once. (*Looks intently at JOSA.*)

JOSA. (*Laughs malignantly.*) I've taken good care that nothing will be lost. How it hurts ! (*Pointing to his arm.*) My arm is numbed with pain. (*Goes away.*)

(*From the street is heard the noise of a cart and cracking of whip.*)

VOICES. How he thrashes the horses !

(*The cart comes into the yard. A drunken voice is heard : "Take out the horses."*)

ILARIA. (*Listening.*) It's Zhava ; he's drunk again ! He never seems sober now.

(*ZHAVA comes in.*)

ZHAVA. Good morning, uncle ! Good morning, brothers ! What do ye think of me ?

ILARIA. You're a thorough pig ? Where's the police officer ?

ZHAVA. The Captain fell out of the cart several times on the way and every time I had to turn back and look for him. He couldn't keep his balance. Now he's either at the *Volost* or at the pub looking for the two foremen. He thinks they must be either at the one place or the other.

ILARIA. They are a lot ! Ugh !

ZHAVA. Don't be angry, uncle ; I've had a drop too much.

ILARIA. Go to the devil, you drunkard ! They send you on such an important errand and you——

ZHAVA. Nay, uncle, do listen to what happened to the Police Captain and me. . . .

ILARIA. Don't talk foolishness, you'd better go to bed!

ZHAVA. Really, I must tell you! Listen! As we drove through Brioleka we called at old Maza's inn. The Captain bet me that he would drink more than I. We drank four pints, then I said: "How will your Honour preside at our place in such a condition?" And his Honour said: "It's only after I've drunk a few pints that I can preside." So we went on drinking and finished our seventh pint and then we were quite fuddled! Then his Honour said: "Let's get up!" But none of us could get up. And kind people came and helped us into the cart. Lord, how they did laugh! It was worth while drinking seven pints just to hear them! "Drive off," says his Honour, "and stop there by the wood! We'll put ourselves to rights there!" So by the wood we got out of the cart, his Honour put his fingers down his throat, I did the same, and now we're both all right again! . . . he said only in that way could he do business.

ILARIA. Good Lord! In a case like this!

ZHAVA. Especially in a case like this, uncle. You know people always get drunk at funeral dinners. . . . And we are going to bury our father here to-day.

ILARIA. Silence, you drunken brute!

ZHAVA. Why should I be silent? If we are going to divide his property we ought to arrange a good festival and get roaring drunk!

ILARIA. It's your own funeral feast you'll arrange, you fool!

MATHA. How's that, uncle?

ILARIA. Because it will be the end of you.

ZHAVA. Here comes his Honour! (*Goes away staggering.*)

POLICE CAPTAIN, *his* CLERK *and* the two FOREMEN.

POLICE CAPTAIN. (*In a hoarse voice.*) Good-day to you, friends!

ILARIA. Our greetings to you, your Honour!

POLICE CAPTAIN. Have you got everything in order yet? And do you love order at any time? Why it's not worth asking, no one likes order in our days. Man and order is like fire and water. Fetch out a table and put it under a lime tree; we'll hold the court under the open sky.

(*ILARIA makes a sign and a table is brought out at once from the house.*)

POLICE CAPTAIN. I both like and dislike coming to divide property. On the one hand, it is always a pleasure to me to break up a solid structure, and on the other, I am sorry for the people. Human nature is very strange! Are you not ashamed that I should come to you!

ILARIA. Why should we be ashamed?

POLICE CAPTAIN. As a rule people are ashamed at my coming. And thank God they are; it shows there is still some good left in them. . . . I like it better so.

ILARIA. It's not often that any of our people are ashamed.

POLICE CAPTAIN. That's bad! Where shame ends there the law begins. Now to business! Are you all agreed? (*He sits at the table, his CLERK and the FOREMEN do the same.*)

ILARIA. Quite so, quite so.



POLICE CAPTAIN. Are you all agreed about dividing the zadruga ?

ILARIA. No, we are not.

POLICE CAPTAIN. Who does not agree ?

ILARIA. The head of the zadruga.

(*JOSA appears. His left arm is bandaged. In his right he carries the gun and the dynamite. He stops at a distance.*)

POLICE CAPTAIN. Where is he ?

ILARIA. In the fields.

POLICE CAPTAIN. Summon him here.

*JOSA and SEVERAL MEMBERS of the zadruga.*

FIRST MEMBER. (*To ILARIA.*) Martin's daughter, Yanya, has just given up her pure soul to God.

ILARIA. It's God's will ! Go and tell the priest.

THE MEMBER. Her mother is stifled with grief. Send someone to comfort her.

ILARIA. Who is able to comfort a mother who has lost her daughter ? Who has words sufficiently strong in comfort ?

THE MEMBER. Who ? . . . Marko, the head of the zadruga.

ILARIA. You have embittered his heart and he is in need of comfort himself.

POLICE CAPTAIN. I seem to have brought you death !

ILARIA. This happens every day in our house, your Honour.

POLICE CAPTAIN. It makes me sad to hear of death. Give me something to drink.

ILARIA. (*To one of the bystanders.*) Run to the cellar and bring some wine.

(*From all sides members of the zadruga assemble—*

*men, women, and children. They stand in a semicircle under the lime tree.*

*Another MEMBER of the zadruga.*

THIS MEMBER. (To ILARIA.) There's been an increase in the family!

ILARIA. Really?

THE MEMBER. Mariyan's wife has given birth to a son.

*(The man sent by ILARIA returns with a bottle of wine and sets it before the POLICE CAPTAIN.)*

POLICE CAPTAIN. Here's to life! *(Drinks and passes bottle to FIRST FOREMAN.)*

FIRST FOREMAN. The child was born before the property was divided so he too can have a share. *(Drinks and passes bottle to SECOND FOREMAN.)*

SECOND FOREMAN. But another soul has lost its share before the division. *(Drinks and passes bottle to ILARIA.)*

ILARIA. In our house it's quite like nature; one is born, another dies. *(Drinks and passes bottle to the CLERK.)*

POLICE CAPTAIN. A marvellous game between life and death.

SECOND MEMBER. The mother is writhing in agony.

ILARIA. Poor woman! But who can help her?

THE MEMBER. The newly born ought to receive a blessing.

ILARIA. Which of us is able to bless. We are all sunk in sin.

THE MEMBER. Marko, the head of the zadruga, can bestow a blessing.

ILARIA. He is grieved and angry. (To the FIRST MEMBER.) Go to the priest and tell him of the birth

and of the death. (*The FIRST goes away; to the SECOND.*) Go to the fields and find my brother. Go down on your knees before him and beg him to come and bless life and death.

POLICE CAPTAIN. Tell him also that I have come about the dividing of his property.

SECOND MEMBER. I'm afraid if I tell him this, nothing will induce him to come.

JOSA. (*Menacingly.*) Tell him, if he doesn't come I shall begin to talk here.

POLICE CAPTAIN. (*Noticing JOSA.*) Who is this ?

ILARIA. His eldest son, a savage creature ?

POLICE CAPTAIN. (*To JOSA.*) Why have you got a gun ?

JOSA. When my turn comes I will explain all to your Honour. (*Several men go up to JOSA, take him aside and reproach him about something.*)

ILARIA. Here comes his wife ! No one has such influence with him as she has !

(*EVA comes in from Left; seeing crowd, is about to run away.*)

ILARIA. My dear !  
(*EVA stops and looks at him questioningly.*)

ILARIA. What is he doing ?

(*POLICE CAPTAIN looks EVA up and down.*)

EVA. Nothing ! What is there for him to do ? He sits with his face buried in his hands thinking about something——

ILARIA. Does he say anything ?

EVA. . . . Or looking at the sky.

ILARIA. What is he thinking ? What does he say ?

EVA. He looks like a man who has quite unlearned how to speak. He explained to me with great difficulty

that I was to tie up a few of his belongings in a bundle.

ILARIA. Is he going to leave us ?

EVA. As far as I can understand it he intends to leave you for ever.

ILARIA. Good Lord ! Where will he go ?

EVA. Possibly he doesn't know himself. . . . Anywhere. . . .

ILARIA. My dear, we have no means of approach to him. Go, put both your dear arms round his old neck and bring him here !

EVA. How can you ask me to do this ?

ILARIA. My dear, there have been new happenings in the house. There has been a death and a child has been born. Go and tell him with the utmost warmth of feeling : life and death, embracing each other like two sisters, await his blessing. Not one of us yet has been put into the grave or come into the world without his blessing. Out of love for our sacred customs he must fulfil our request. Go, beg, implore him !

EVA. (*Thoughtfully.*) I will try. (*Goes out.*)

POLICE CAPTAIN. (*To ILARIA, in astonishment.*) Is that your brother's wife, Marko's, the head of the zadruga ?

ILARIA. She is his third wife. He has more than thirty children.

POLICE CAPTAIN. What a fine man he must be ! (*Drinks.*)

ILARIA. Thirteen sons are living in this house. Five daughters have been given in marriage into other villages, all of them into good families.

POLICE CAPTAIN. And these sons wish to have the property shared !

ILARIA. (*Shrugging his shoulders.*) The young men are seeking their own downfall. . . .

POLICE CAPTAIN. It's a great delight to me to crush anything great and powerful with the might and weight of the law. But believe me, whenever I have divided up the property of rich and powerful families I have always met the men afterwards as beggars or drivers on the high road. It is strange how people seem to seek destitution. . . . How many people are there in your household ?

ILARIA. More than a hundred.

POLICE CAPTAIN. And how many acres of land have you ?

ILARIA. About six hundred.

POLICE CAPTAIN. You see, so long as you live in a zadruga you are a power, but when you have divided up the property you'll be nothing. You won't be able to work even. Nowadays a man doesn't know how to work for himself alone. (*Drinks. In a different tone.*) Men look upon work as a pleasant relaxation and upon life as a sad holiday. . . . The life of your community is an endless tale which a powerful spirit has been telling for many centuries. . . . Yes, I know our men, the earth has spoiled them and there is too much sorrow in their joy and too much joy in their sorrow. . . . They love to drink and to sing on their graves. They think a great deal about God, but often they forget God altogether. . . . They are like children. . . .

ILARIA. I assure you, your Honour, I don't at all wish to divide the property. I should like to go on living in the zadruga in wealth—in prosperity. But the everlasting quarrels have worn me out ; I am tired.



. . . And since the young people are bent on their own destruction, I intend, out of spite, to help them to get their way—I have nothing against my brother, God forbid! . . .

POLICE CAPTAIN. What is your reason then for breaking up the zadruga?

ILARIA. We have a thousand reasons; the young do not obey their elders, there is quarrelling, dishonesty, theft, vice, wantonness.

*The same and ZHAVA RASLITCH.*

(ZHAVA RASLITCH, *an old man with a staff in his hand and a wallet behind his back, pushes his way to the table.*)

ILARIA. Good Lord! Zhava Raslitch! We haven't seen him in our village for ten years! Why have you come here from your farm, uncle?

ZHAVA RASLITCH. You ask? Aren't you ashamed to? I also have heard of your disgrace.

ILARIA. You seem to have dropped straight out of the sky on to our heads. His sons are determined to ruin both themselves and their father. . . .

ZHAVA RASLITCH. I think God Himself in heaven must weep with pity. . . .

ILARIA. I think so, too.

ZHAVA RASLITCH. (*To MARKO's sons.*) What right have you to break up the zadruga? How dare you divide what does not belong to you?

JOSA. (*Hiding the gun behind his back.*) That's your way of looking at it?

ZHAVA RASLITCH. Who accumulated this property, you or he?

MATHA. Much as I respect you, friend, I think you have no right to interfere in our affairs.

ZHAVA RASLITCH. Yes, I have a right because you are bent on evil, because you are about to wrong my best friend, and because I am a man.

JOSA. You had better sweep your own doorstep, friend, and let us look after our rubbish ourselves. Really, these old men!

ZHAVA RASLITCH. By yourselves you are nothing. All your power is in the zadruga, and it was he who built it up.

JOSA. One is as much a tyrant as the other!

ZHAVA RASLITCH. Aren't you ashamed to bring the police into your house? Aren't you ashamed to break up a zadruga—God's work?

POLICE CAPTAIN. (*To himself.*) Didn't I say they ought to be ashamed of having appealed to the law and called me in?

JOSA. We are dividing what we ourselves have built up. . . .

ZHAVA RASLITCH. You built? Ha—ha—ha! How often you have been threatened with ruin and every time he has saved you!

JOSA. When did this happen?

TUNIA *and* MATHA. When did this happen?

ZHAVA RASLITCH. Have you so little shame that you still ask? When the forest was on fire you all lost your heads, became cowards, shrank with fear. And he—

JOSA. Indeed!!

ZHAVA RASLITCH. And he went into the meadow, turned his face to the fire and started a song to cheer the despairing ones and give them hope and courage.

JOSA. What things this old man remembers!

ZHAVA RASLITCH. And when a couple of years ago

you had cattle plague and were left without any cattle——

JOSA. What then ?

ZHAVA RASLITCH. You quite lost spirit ; you thought you were ruined.

JOSA. He's going to say something silly again.

ZHAVA RASLITCH. And he, never weary, went to other countries, found a breed of cattle more suitable for our soil and reared new herds. And you grew rich again. . . .

JOSA. Well, of course, if you count up things like that. . . .

ZHAVA RASLITCH. Your fields were all under water.

JOSA. Because there was too much snow in the winter. (*Laughs.*)

ZHAVA RASLITCH. Laugh at yourself and not at me ! In spite of the floods he gave away a hundred sacks of wheat to the poor and to beggars.

JOSA. (*To the crowd.*) Hear that ? At the time we hadn't enough ourselves he was giving away to strangers !

ZHAVA RASLITCH. And you see nothing in all this, wretched man ! You may all go to the devil for aught I care, I've enough troubles of my own.

JOSA. But what is there for me to see in all this ?

ZHAVA RASLITCH. Don't you see his heart, his great soul ?

JOSA. I see nothing but foolishness.

ZHAVA RASLITCH. You have neither shame nor conscience ! (*To the POLICE CAPTAIN.*) When the Phylloxera devoured our vineyards we became so poor that we could not make merry at christenings or

weddings. Our cellars were empty and our meals were sad. . . . But he obtained some new vines and grafted them and rejuvenated our vineyards, and soon we were able to observe our festivals. Wine sparkled and fizzed on our tables once more. He taught us to work. He got our village used to work, and other villages, too. (*After a short pause.*) He married them all to girls of the best families. He has shed glory on our house. He has shed glory on all the villages. Have you no shame ?

JOSA. He's a tyrant !

ZHAVA RASLITCH. Why ?

JOSA. Because he wants to be master here.

ZHAVA RASLITCH. Ha—ha—ha ! Now you have all heard !

JOSA. If he were God himself I'd depose him ! I have met Germans and Hungarians and men from other countries—all were free and independent men. I also want to be my own master.

ZHAVA RASLITCH. Ah, that's what has turned his head !

JOSA. He's obstinate and does everything out of pride and vanity. All these years he has never once thought of giving me, his eldest son, the keys of the house—not even for a day, not even for five minutes !

ZHAVA RASLITCH. And he accuses his father of loving power ! He would ruin the zadruga because of his wounded vanity.

JOSA. He has never once said : My son, take the keys and feel for once what it's like to be master of the whole house. . . . He has never once thought of my brothers or of me. He taught us to crawl, but he never taught us to fly !

*The same and the rest of MARKO'S Sons.*

JOSA. (*To his brothers.*) Come forward and speak out what is in your hearts !

FIRST SON. Our father is a cruel tyrant ; we want to free ourselves from him.

ZHAVA RASLITCH. (*With a bitter smile.*) They repeat his words.

ILARIA. (*To the POLICE CAPTAIN.*) You must hear a great many evil things said in the course of your duties. . . .

(POLICE CAPTAIN *drinks greedily and points to the bottle in silence.*)

JOSA. Now for the chief thing. This is what his lust of power has driven him to ! (*To the POLICE CAPTAIN.*) I accuse my father of . . . (*Points to the gun and to his bandaged arm.*)

(*Several people rush at JOSA and drag him aside.*)

POLICE CAPTAIN. (*Throws the bottle on the ground and gets up. Loudly and angrily.*) What's this ? There must be no violence in my presence. I represent the law and the power of the law. Fetch the police.

JOSA. (*In a choking voice.*) They won't let me speak !

ILARIA. It's all nonsense, your Honour ! Let us go and see the estate that we may know what we have to divide.

POLICE CAPTAIN. Very good. (*Menacingly.*) I'll show you what the law is, you ruffians ! I'll teach you what father means and what son means—and also what my power and my might are. Let us go !

(*The POLICE CAPTAIN, the CLERK, ILARIA, the FOREMEN, ZHAVA RASLITCH, MATHA and TUNIA go out.*)



JOSA. (*Goes up to the table and addresses the crowd.*) I'll show him who I am. (*Writhes with pain.*) The villains have made my wounded arm worse. He'll pay dearly for this arm. I'll show him what sort of a man Josa is, the old dog!

VOICE. (*From the crowd.*) Sh—sh! Be quiet!

NEIGHBOUR. You're only threatening yourself, brother. What will you do with your freedom when you are starving? Mercy on us!

JOSA. Don't talk nonsense! Who's going to starve?

NEIGHBOUR. You'll starve, your whole house will be full of cares, you'll not be able to sleep, you'll turn grey, and at last you'll become a beggar. And then you'll gain nothing from your freedom. . . . With the old man you lived like a half-frozen bird in a warm human hand. . . . You ought to remember that!

*The same and ILARIA who has escaped from the*  
COMMISSIONERS. *He is very excited.*

ILARIA. (*Taking JOSA apart.*) You must have gone off your head. Do you realise what madness you're up to?

JOSA. I simply wish to give him up to the police.

ILARIA. Are you quite without a heart?

JOSA. I'll serve him as he has served me. . . . With all my filial love for him I'll get him locked up in prison.

ILARIA. I am only just now realising what sort of a man you are.

JOSA. If you know him, you know me too, dear uncle. He is an old devil and I am a young one! I must do for him. Really it will be better for him. . . . You'll see. . . .

ILARIA. I thought you were a man.

JOSA. Men do all sorts of things, uncle ; everything is done out of human feeling, even crime. . . . He crushes me with his will and I will crush him with the law. I thank God that he wounded me.

ILARIA. You thank God because you can ruin him !  
Ha—ha—ha !

JOSA. Yes, glory be to God !

ILARIA. So you are bent on it.

JOSA. If he agrees to divide the property, I'll let him off—I desperately long for my freedom. But if he will not agree, then he'll have to pay for it.

ILARIA. I'm afraid you won't get any witnesses.

JOSA. I also was afraid of that. But he will himself confess. I know him.

ILARIA. Tfoo ! (*Turns away from him.*)

(*The COMMISSIONERS return.*)

POLICE CAPTAIN. The horses are splendid ; the cattle, too. The harness is admirable. The buildings excellent. It's a princely estate. What a pity that it will all be ruined ! Give me some drink. (*To ILARIA.*)  
Why did you slink away ?

ILARIA. You've not seen all, your Honour. We have also three farms with outbuildings, meadows and woods ; that is the rest of our wealth. In former days it was quite different. Immense herds of cattle roved in the woods. The cowherds were there not to guard them, but to admire them. The oxen were as big as mountains and the horses were as swift as fairies or the wind. We never knew exactly how many pigs and sheep we had. Countless numbers of them were killed and sold on market days in Vinkovtsi, Bukovar, and Esseg ; they were sold into foreign countries, too. They multiplied like locusts in famine years.

*(A new bottle of wine is placed before the POLICE CAPTAIN.)*

POLICE CAPTAIN. I drink to your downfall! *(Drinks and passes bottle to ILARIA.)*

ILARIA. I drink to our funeral! *(Drinks.)*

*(EVA, with proud gait, walks in first; MARKO follows her—he is bent and can hardly walk—a look of despair on his face.)*

EVA. *(Calls as she walks in.)* Prepare the living and the dead. The head of the zadruga is coming to bless them. *(Great commotion in the crowd.)*

POLICE CAPTAIN. *(Rising.)* What a magnificent old man! A regular Pan!

FIRST FOREMAN. *(To POLICE CAPTAIN.)* He was the handsomest, the strongest and the most powerful man in the village. Everyone respects and fears him.

SECOND FOREMAN. And what a man his father was! He begat children until he was eighty years old, and when he could no longer do it he died of grief.

FIRST NEIGHBOUR. He looks awful—he feels the disaster. . . .

SECOND NEIGHBOUR. He feels the great calamity pending!

*The same. A weeping man goes to meet MARKO. Then three men, carrying his daughter's corpse on a stretcher.*

WEeping MAN. *(Wiping away his tears.)* Here she is, grandfather! Here is my daughter. . . . *(Seizes MARKO'S hand and sobs.)*

*(The GIRL'S corpse is placed near MARKO.)*

VOICES. Poor man!

*The same. A man with radiant face brings in a baby.*

RADIANT MAN. Grandfather, here is my newly-born son, and there lies his mother. Raise your hand

over him and bless him. . . . (*He stops by the corpse on the stretcher so that MARKO sees the baby and the dead girl at the same time.*)

(MARKO raises his hands in blessing, but seeing the POLICE CAPTAIN he stops short. The CAPTAIN jumps up and approaches MARKO, puts one hand on his shoulder—in the other he holds the bottle of wine.)

POLICE CAPTAIN. God be with you, master! Bless them! Your hands and your gait were meant for it.

MARKO. Who are you?

POLICE CAPTAIN. I have come about the dividing of the property; I am the Police Captain.

MARKO. (*Drops his hands.*) I cannot bless. (*Shrieks.*) I can only curse.

(*A pause.*)

MARKO. Why have you assembled here, good people? Why do you gaze at me like this? Have I gone out of my mind?

JOSA. (*Tries to approach him, but the others push him away.*) Let me alone!

MARKO. Who am I? Is this no longer my house?

JOSA. No, it is *our* house! Do you agree to the dividing of the estate?

ILARIA. Josa!

JOSA. I ask you once more: Do you agree to the dividing of the estate?

WEEPING MAN. Grandfather, have pity and bless her!

RADIANT MAN. Grandfather, only glance at my baby—he is so small, so sweet; I implore you. . . .

WEEPING MAN. Her mother is stifled with tears. . . .

RADIANT MAN. His mother is writhing in pain and breathless with joy.

JOSA. I ask you for the last time : Do you agree ?

*(The CROWD grows. More and more people come to look on.)*

MARKO. *(To the PEOPLE.)* You have come to behold my disgrace ? Very well. *(Kneels down.)* You know me and all my sons—judge me !

*(Silence of embarrassment in the CROWD.)*

AN OLD MAN. Judge you ? *(To the PEOPLE.)* Don't any of you judge him lest you be judged yourselves !

THE PEOPLE. *(Excited, loudly.)* No one shall judge him ! *(Murmur, a strong commotion.)*

MARKO. *(Gets up and bows low to the PEOPLE.) (To the POLICE CAPTAIN.)* I and my father before me established the zadruga. I do not wish it to be divided.

POLICE CAPTAIN. *(Makes a sign to the CLERK and begins to dictate.)* "The head of the Zadruga, Marko Gavanovitch, does not wish——"

MARKO. While the world stands !

POLICE CAPTAIN. ". . . to have the property divided."

MARKO. While there is reason in the world.

POLICE CAPTAIN. On what ground ?

MARKO. *(Dropping his eyes.)* I am ashamed to let my sons become beggars.

POLICE CAPTAIN. But they wish the estate to be divided. And if they wish it ? . . .

MARKO. Still, I should be ashamed for them.

JOSA. Ashamed ! He's simply afraid.

POLICE CAPTAIN. What is he afraid of ?

JOSA. He is afraid of losing the power !

POLICE CAPTAIN. What power ?



JOSA. The power of the zadruga. (*To the PEOPLE.*)  
He won't agree simply out of pride and vanity.

(POLICE CAPTAIN *looks intently at JOSA.*)

JOSA. He's trembling with fear. . . .

MARKO. (*To the PEOPLE.*) Look into my eyes!  
(*Noise and commotion in the CROWD.*) I swear by the  
living God that I am ashamed to let them become  
beggars.

JOSA. I tell you the honest truth. (*To his  
BROTHERS.*) What do you say?

THE OTHER SONS. (*Shout rudely.*) We want the  
division! We want to free ourselves from the  
tyrant.

JOSA. (*To the PEOPLE.*) Now you have heard all!  
He won't agree; very well! (*Comes forward and falls  
on his knees.*) Behold I, his eldest son, accuse him  
before you all of a terrible crime.

(*Noise, commotion. POLICE CAPTAIN drops the  
bottle.*)

JOSA. From vanity, from fear of losing his power,  
he shot at me and wounded me in the arm. (*Lifts his  
wounded left arm with his right hand.*) All of you, behold  
our disgrace and tell it to your wives and children!  
Some buildings, the fruit of many years of toil, he has  
blown up with dynamite! Ha, ha, ha! You see what  
sort of a father he is!

(*Oppressive silence. Pause.*)

POLICE CAPTAIN. (*Looks intently at MARKO.*) Did  
you do it?

MARKO. Yes.

POLICE CAPTAIN. Why?

MARKO. Out of hatred.

POLICE CAPTAIN. Out of hatred?

JOSA. (*To the PEOPLE.*) Take note, he did it out of hatred !

(*MARKO turns pale, staggers, wants to go away.*)

JOSA. He's going away, hold him !

(*MARKO is about to say something but is silent and again tries to go away.*)

JOSA. Look, look, he wants to run away !

MARKO. (*Takes a step backward and sadly looks around him.*) Before God and men I here announce the end of my power and the end of the zadruga. . . . (*Again he tries to go away.*)

JOSA. (*Shouts.*) Hold the criminal, he wants to escape ! (*Struggles towards his father in order to seize him.*)

MARKO. (*Points to JOSA and his OTHER SONS ; speaks hoarsely.*) Listen, good people ! I renounce my own blood ! I invoke a curse on them ! May my blood be accursed everywhere—on earth, in heaven, and in hell ! Let the sun be bitter to them ! And let the moon be bitter to them ! . . . (*Staggers.*)

ILARIA. He's falling ! Support him ! (*Rushes to his BROTHER.*)

(*EVA and ZHAVA RASLITCH push their way through the CROWD and support MARKO.*)

ZHAVA RASLITCH. My old friend !

(*A pause. Rumbling of a cart and fresh voices are heard.*)

*The same, and two of MARKO's old military COMRADES.*

ZHAVA RASLITCH. (*Greatly moved.*) You see, old man : those who love you never forsake you. Here are our old friends and fellow soldiers in the Mantuan War.

(*COMRADES approach MARKO and kiss him on the forehead.*)

THE FIRST. The news about you reached our village and we immediately harnessed the horses and drove here. They are talking about you everywhere.

THE SECOND. If the ancient honesty is dead here, come to us. Choose any house and settle with anyone you like, or bestow this happiness on all of us together. . . .

MARKO. (*Sobs bitterly.*) Thank you, thank you! Soon it will be a Church holy day and my name day. . . . Come all of you to me then and be my guests. . . . You shall hear fresh tidings from me— (*Stops suddenly.*)

VOICES. (*In the CROWD. Menacingly to JOSA.*) Judas! Judas!

MARKO. (*Wishes to speak but cannot. Points to his throat, breathless.*) It's here! . . . something chokes me! . . .

(*JOSA goes to one side, hangs down his head.*)

MARKO. Something surges up from my heart and chokes me! . . . I must master it! . . . (*He suddenly pulls a knife from his pocket and tries to stab himself. Those standing near him seize his hands. EVA shrieks. There is a terrible noise. Commotion among the CROWD increases.*)

VOICES. (*In the CROWD. To JOSA.*) Judas Traitor! Stone him!

(*Curtain.*)

## ACT II.

*A Summer's Day. A Shady Orchard. Here and there the brilliant rays of the sun gleam through the branches heavily laden with ripe fruit. Under the trees are placed plain wooden seats.*

JOSA *alone.*

JOSA. They're all sitting at his table, feasting and making merry. . . . No one has come to my table or to the tables of my brothers. All our preparations have been in vain; the meat, wine and pies will all be wasted. . . . Let them be wasted! I am troubled by quite a different matter. I should like very much to know who is the older—God or the devil? If God created everything then He created the devil also. So that the devil is also His creation, His son. . . . But it's funny to think that he created His own enemy. Tfoo! And another thing troubles me: I can't get the better of the old man. I thought he would die when he lost his power. . . . For one moment it did actually seem as though he were crushed. But after his fall he rose stronger than ever. Now he sits with his friends feasting. I am quite afraid that in the end I shall have to bow my head before him. . . . And if I do this it will be worse than death to me. . . . And the trial! The wretched judges acquitted him; they said he did it in a fit of temporary insanity. . . . Hm! (*Hangs his head and becomes thoughtful.*)

JOSA, MATHA, TUNIA. ZHAVA (*slightly drunk*).

MATHA. Josa!

JOSA. Don't disturb me!

MATHA. What are you doing ?

JOSA. I'm thinking. . . .

MATHA. Listen, Josa ! We have sinned. None of the guests will have anything to do with us ; none of them will shake hands with us—they shun us like the plague or cholera.

TUNIA. It's so galling to feel oneself a beggar at a feast.

JOSA. Against whom have we sinned ?

MATHA. Against father.

JOSA. Leave me alone. I don't want to hear it.

MATHA. We have sinned against our father and we must ask his forgiveness.

TUNIA. That he might remove the curse off our souls. . . .

JOSA. What idiocy ! For shame !

MATHA. There's no shame in asking a father's forgiveness.

JOSA. It would be cowardly. . . . So this is your gratitude !

MATHA. What should we be grateful to you for ? For having ruined us ?

JOSA. I have set you free from him !

MATHA. What have we gained by this ? Not one of us has yet built himself a house. We are all still living under his roof and the wonder is that he has not driven us out of it.

JOSA. Miserable cowards ! So this is all you have to say for what I did. Do you know what freedom is ?

MATHA. Freedom ? Freedom is a costly garment, but it is not for us.

ZHAVA. (*Stuttering.*) They're right and you are right, too, Josa. And the old man is right. It's all



the same and equally silly. I shall go and drink—that's the most rational thing to do now. (*Goes away, staggering.*)

JOSA. Where's uncle ?

MATHA. Sitting at the festive board on father's right hand. . . .

JOSA. Is that the place for him ? We have broken with father. It's mean and cowardly !

MATHA. And on father's left sits his old comrade in the Mantuan War. Next to him sits a guest from another district.

JOSA. What guest ?

MATHA. He has come to express to father the respect of his district. He said to father : " Since your zadruga has been divided they have been talking about you in all the towns and districts, bewailing your fate. All the towns and districts invite you and the doors of all the wealthy houses are open to you." And father answered him with a smile : " Dear friend, I have gained and not lost by the breaking up of the zadruga. A new light has been kindled in my soul, and it tells me that I must throw off my last fetters and withdraw into solitude. In solitude I shall live alone with my God. . . . Riches and power bring nothing but misery." (*Hangs his head.*)

JOSA. What more did he say ?

MATHA. At that moment uncle advised me that we should all come and fall on our knees before father. Don't let us delay ! Let us go, Josa ! Our other brothers are already waiting there. You must be the first to ask his pardon. Uncle thinks so, too. For you have wounded father more than we all. It will be your salvation !

JOSA. Ha—ha—ha! Never!

MATHA. What?

JOSA. Nothing will induce me to go!

MATHA. (*Rushing at him.*) Villain! You have led us into temptation. Tunia, hold him!

TUNIA. (*Casting himself on JOSA.*) Satan, you have brought the wrath of God upon us!

JOSA. What's this? Do you want to kill me? But I am stronger than all of you. (*Wrenches himself free.*) You miserable cowards!

MATHA and TUNIA. (*Attacking JOSA again.*) Help, brothers! Brothers, help!

*The same.* ZHAVA and the remaining NINE SONS of MARKO.

(NINE BROTHERS attack JOSA.)

ZHAVA. It serves you right! You shouldn't have got mixed up with them!

MATHA. Don't kill him, let's drag him by force to father.

JOSA. (*Breathless.*) You vile lickspittle, let go! You won't get anything out of me! Not even God could make me bow my head. . . .

NINE BROTHERS. (*Shout.*) You villain! You blackguard! You tempted us.

FIRST OF THE NINE. You promised us mountains of gold and now we are beggars! (*They attack JOSA with their fists.*)

*The same.* ILARIA runs in from the Left.

ILARIA. What are you shouting about? Don't be swine and don't defile the holy day. (*Pointing to JOSA.*) Let him go. He, too, wishes to live.

MATHA. He doesn't want to go to father.

ILARIA. Let him go! (*To himself.*) My God!

MATHA. Uncle, what is the matter with you ? What has happened ?

ILARIA. Dear me, dear me ! The guests are beside themselves. His wife is weeping, his servant is weeping, his comrades and the guest from another district are also weeping. He made a speech . . . it was like a torrent of flame breaking loose from his heart. . . . He is going to leave his wife.

MATHA. Wha—t ? He's going to cast off Eva ?

ILARIA. He is casting her off and is going into the forest—he is going to live with the wild beasts as though they were his brothers. . . . He is tired of men. . . .

SOME OF THE SONS. And to whom is he leaving the land and the house ?

ILARIA. (*Angrily.*) You vile creatures ! At once you think of what you can gain.

SOME OF THE SONS. Dear father !

ILARIA. You vile creatures ! He'll not leave anything to anyone, he will destroy it all. . . . Property in his eyes is the greatest evil.

MATHA. What a transformation ! (*Pointing to JOSA.*) It's all his doing !

JOSA. (*Standing at a distance with a sneer.*) Yes, you must thank me for it all.

SOME OF THE SONS. Uncle, we implore you ! Allow us to kill him. (*Again they attack JOSA with their fists.*)

ILARIA. (*Listening.*) My God, he has already begun !

MARKO'S VOICE. (*From behind the stage.*) My servant, you must help me to free myself from it all.

*The same. Then the servant RADE runs in. MARKO in holy day attire, his head uncovered, follows him—he looks terrible. He is followed by his COMRADES, the GUEST FROM ANOTHER DISTRICT and by two more GUESTS.*

RADE. (*Stops.*) Your orders fall on me like blows and wound my heart sorely. . . . Have pity on me, master!

MARKO. Barter the cattle for wine, drive the dogs into the thickest forest.

RADE. The poor beasts that you have always loved so?

MARKO. (*Raising his voice.*) And if they try to follow you back, throw stones at them that they may understand that they have no master any more.

RADE. Grandfather! Master! Have pity!

ILARIA. (*Approaching him.*) Brother, have pity!

MARKO. (*Pushing him away.*) Let them all turn wild and become wolves!

HIS COMRADE. (*Taking him by his right arm.*) In the name of the light that burns within you do not curse God's creatures!

MARKO. (*Wrenching himself free.*) Take the horses out of the meadow and drive them with cruel blows to the ends of the earth, to the wild beasts and whirlwinds! Let them learn to struggle with Nature—with wolves.

GUEST. Why, friend, it's yourself you are cursing.

MARKO. (*Hoarsely and breathlessly.*) Blow up the river dam with dynamite, let the water overflow all the fields.

RADE. I'd rather be killed on the spot.

MARKO. (*Seizes his servant by the shoulders and shakes him.*) The creature has offended the Creator!

RADE. (*Trying to get free.*) Have pity! Have pity!

MARKO. (*Shaking him.*) And when everything is devastated, burned, ruined, flooded, destroyed, I will go off into the forest to my brothers.

(RADE wrenches himself free and runs away to the Left. MARKO, breathing laboriously, looks after him.)

GUEST. The fire that burns within him will consume him before it enlightens him.

FIRST GUEST. He says that he has come to know God truly to-day for the first time.

SECOND GUEST. His words are terrible.

HIS COMRADE. His words terrified me more than the meeting of a ghost in the dead of night. He said, "I used to drink too much." I asked him, "What did you drink?" He answered, "Wealth and power. I was very godless." Then I asked him, "What will you drink now, brother?" and he answered, "I shall drink God and solitude."

GUEST. You knew him before. What was he like in war?

HIS COMRADE. Most daring and desperate. He used to rush into the battle where it was hottest—just as now he is throwing himself into his faith. And he always brought some booty out of the fire.

GUEST. That's true. . . . Now he has obtained the Living God for himself. . . . In our village they speak of him as though he were a saint. They say that a look or a word from him can heal the sick, that everyone who has once heard him have had an inner light kindled in them for the rest of their life. . . . They say he stands above everything and has power over everything—except over his own blood which he cursed. What surprises me most is that, like an old oak, he is entwined with green ivy. Believe me, to conquer a handsome woman like Eva is a great glory to any man. (*Looks to the Left.*) There she is! She



is weeping ; look ! she is weeping for him. . . . Let us go ! It is not seemly to look upon her tears.

(EVA *in tears. A woman supports her.*)

THE WOMAN. Don't cry ! If it's God will, there's nothing for it. . . . You will find comfort some day. . . . (*Whispers.*) He was so old, you know.

EVA. Don't talk foolishness. . . . I don't wish to listen to you.

THE WOMAN. Perhaps you will meet another man whom you will like. . . not now, of course, but later on. . . .

EVA. You think of nothing but sin.

THE WOMAN. You can seek comfort elsewhere, too. . . . I mean in the church.

EVA. Go away, leave me ! You are as bad as the others.

THE WOMAN. Forgive me, I thought you, too, were like the others. Forgive me, we are so full of sin that the moment we open our mouths sinful thoughts slip off our tongues. . . . He was a wonderful man, quite unlike others, so that it is no wonder that you love him with an exceptional love. . . . Probably no one else could take his place.

EVA. There you're at it again.

THE WOMAN. (*Putting her finger to her lips.*) Forgive me. . . : Some day I shall burn this sinful tongue with fire. . . . It's a pleasure to see him sitting there at the table. . . . Everyone listens to him. They catch every word of his and pass it on. On all occasions he is the first and best. I think you are entirely in his hands. . . . You are to him like wax out of which he makes candles for fresh lights.

EVA. (*With her hand makes a circle round herself.*)  
He was everything to me.

THE WOMAN. Is he very dear to you ?

EVA. He was to me like a mountain. . . .

THE WOMAN. How ?

EVA. Like a mountain from which it is pleasant to behold the sun. . . . His arms were so warm to me. . . .

THE WOMAN. Yes, arms, arms. . . . You can do a great deal with arms. . . .

EVA. (*Gets a handkerchief from her bosom.*) I have been a whole year embroidering it. I wanted to make him a present. But he . . . (*Wiping her tears*) . . . when he goes away I shall not be able to think of anything but him. . . . I am so terrified. . . . My God !

THE WOMAN. There, there ! (*Puts one hand on EVA'S shoulder and with the other takes the handkerchief and examines it.*) It is beautifully embroidered !

EVA. It doesn't matter now. . . . When I was embroidering it I thought so much of him, so much.

*The same, and MARKO comes in from the Right.*

THE WOMAN. Here he comes ! (*Goes away to the Left.*)

MARKO. (*In a dull, tired voice.*) The feast is not merry without you. And new guests keep coming in. (*Looks into her eyes.*) Don't be sad. . . . It must be . . . I shall always remember you as my dear sister. . . . My soul will remain with you and with all men for ever. . . . It is only in my body that I want to be alone. I cannot endure the world any longer. . . .

EVA. Whom shall I serve now ? I have got no one whom I could serve. . . .

MARKO. Serve God. Indeed I am going away to the forest solely that I might serve Him. . . .

EVA. I have become so used to serving you that I have unlearnt to think about Him. . . . Without you I shall die of grief. . . . Let me go with you. . . .

MARKO. It's impossible! My God will not permit it. "He who wishes to serve Me must be alone." This is what He tells me in the depths of my heart.

EVA. Your God is cruel. . . .

MARKO. Do not sin! He is gracious and merciful. . . . My faith in Him is more wonderful and beautiful than I can ever tell. . . . He is here. (*Points to his heart.*) Deep down. How much I endured until I found Him! The way has been so long. . . . What you ask is contrary to Nature. You must seek God, too. . . . Seek Him in your heart! You also will find Him and will no longer have need of me, for I am a poor, ordinary man. . . .

*The same. Several MEN with empty goblets.*

THE FIRST. (*Raising his goblet.*) Grandfather, have pity!

MARKO. What is it, children?

FIRST. Guests have come to us and we poor men haven't a drop of wine to give them. You know, grandfather, what a joy it is to have a guest at your table. . . . And to those who have, the Lord will give yet more.

MARKO. (*Kisses EVA on the forehead.*) Go, dear; go, sweet one, and fill their goblets to the brim. (*To the MEN.*) Thank you, brothers, for having come to me rather than to any other neighbour. Tell everyone that is athirst for the sacred beverage to come to me. . . . I want to give away my whole heart. . . . This is my last day in the world. . . . Tell the whole street,

tell the whole village to come to my feast ! I wish you every blessing. . . .

FIRST. Grandfather, may your words rise to the throne of the Almighty ! Honey flows from your lips !

(MARKO kisses EVA once more on the forehead.

EVA goes out with the MEN to the Left.)

MARKO alone.

MARKO. (*Stands buried in thought.*) Then sinks on to his knees, kisses the ground and gets up.) My God, I tremble before Thee ! Thy hand is so strong that in it I am like a reed in the wind ! I cannot hold myself up. . . . Take me wholly unto Thyself. . . . Destroy me, blot me out of Thy book ! Burn me through and through with the fiercest heat of Thy sun ! . . . Drown me in Thy greatness ! . . .

MARKO and a STRANGER in foreign clothes.

STRANGER. Master, all the village is talking about you. . . . They say you are giving up your possessions. Won't you sell your estate to me ? I will pay anything you like.

MARKO. I cannot sell anything. I can only give. What do you want the estate for ?

*The same.* ILARIA steals up quietly and listens. He is followed by all MARKO'S Sons. JOSA follows at some distance. He is full of vindictive joy.

STRANGER. (*Continuing.*) I want to have it. You see, my great weakness is a desire to possess as much land as possible.

MARKO. That's very wrong. It will lead you into sin. . . .

STRANGER. Yes, that's a common failing : we all strive to fall into sin. Every one of us wants to possess

something. I want one thing, you another. . . . We're all afraid of being blown off the earth and so we cling securely to it, we stick to our possessions. . . .

MARKO. Do you know, I feel an extraordinary joy in my heart! What can I do that the whole village may share my joy, that all may participate in my holy day?

STRANGER. (*Laughs.*) Why, I told you that everyone wants to cling to something. The best way to get what you want is with the help of wine.

MARKO. Happy thought, with wine! If you will undertake to give the whole village so much wine that everyone may feel the highest joy I will make you a present of the yard, the kitchen garden, and this garden.

ILARIA. (*Opposes.*) Brother, have pity, don't give away everything to a stranger, give it to your own blood, to your sons. . . . They are full of repentance, they are beating their breasts. . . . Forgive them!

(*JOSA smiles malignantly. ZHAVA mutters something incoherently.*)

STRANGER. (*To MARKO.*) I will do everything you wish.

ILARIA. Your poor sons have nowhere to lay their heads—they ask you for a home.

MARKO. To-day I cannot hate anyone, I can only love.

*All the SONS, except JOSA, kneel down and kiss their father's hand.*

ZHAVA. There is no need for me to kiss your hand, father: I have done you no wrong and have nothing to ask of you.



MARKO. (*Expecting that JOSA, too, will kiss his hand.*)  
Are you all here ?

(*JOSA stands with his head raised proudly three steps from his father. Their eyes meet, MARKO sadly lowers his head, JOSA laughs malignantly.*)

ILARIA. (*To JOSA.*) Satan !

THE SONS. Father, say one word, and we will kill him. . . .

JOSA. Ha—ha—ha ! (*Walks away.*)

MARKO. Leave him alone.

STRANGER. So you want me to turn the village into a hell of merry-making that will be worthy of your holy day.

ILARIA. Brother, give the house to your poor sons !

MARKO. (*With a strained smile.*) This house has been consecrated to God the Father.

STRANGER. You will see what I shall do with them !  
*The same. Several THIRSTY PEOPLE come in from the street.*

FIRST THIRSTY ONE. Master, there is rejoicing in your house and we are dying of thirst.

MARKO. (*With a strained smile.*) Drink water !

FIRST ONE. Water makes you feel gloomy and hate all the world. But wine ! When you have drunk well of wine you feel as though you had gained the whole of heaven.

MARKO. (*To the STRANGER.*) Let the village gain heaven, then.

ILARIA. Don't invoke the wrath of God on yourself ; don't deliver over your goods to a stranger !

MARKO. Let us go and gain heaven ! (*Runs away to the Left with the STRANGER and the THIRSTY ONES.*)

(ILARIA and the SONS.)

ILARIA. Ha, ha, ha! He's quite right! How glad I am! And you thought, you vile creatures, that he would give you the house after all that has happened! . . . Damn it! why do I stand here with you and speak for you?

MATHA. (*In alarm.*) My God, what shall we do?

ILARIA. That's no affair of mine. I rejoice that justice has triumphed. (*Grinds his teeth.*) I should like to tear you to pieces. Satan is right. He is reveling in your weakness. You fools! . . . Make haste and clear the yard for a new master! They are winning heaven! Ha—ha—ha! Let us go and win hell! (*Runs away. All follow him.*)

*The STAGE is empty for a time. TWO GUESTS come in from the Right, one young, the other old.*

YOUNG ONE. It pains me to see it. I shall go home.

OLD ONE. What's the matter?

YOUNG ONE. A hundred beggars have come in from the street and he is giving them everything that he has. He is emptying his house. I can't bear to see it. . . .

(*The joyous shouts of the BEGGARS are heard.*)

YOUNG ONE. Do you hear? They are shouting for joy!

OLD ONE. (*Laughs.*) It pains you to see it! But what would you have done if you were in his place?

YOUNG ONE. Don't! I can't bear to hear it! . . . If I were in his place my heart would have burst and my arms would have been numbed. . . . My head seems to be on fire. . . .

OLD ONE. And mine does, too. It seems to be going round and round. To be able to give with a pure heart, is the great gift of God. I won't praise

and I won't blame you. . . . I will tell you a story instead. Would you like to hear it ?

YOUNG ONE. I would. I don't want to drink any more. . . .  
(*They sit down on a seat.*)

OLD ONE. Once upon a time there lived a king. When he went out for a walk he took a lot of many-coloured stuffs with him and gave them away to all the naked people he met. It was a great joy to him. The stuffs suited excellently those to whom he gave them : a coloured rag on a naked body often looks more beautiful than a real dress. And all those who were dressed by him laughed with joy and were so radiant that the passers-by took them to be happy princes who had left their palace for a while to look at their possessions. Once the king started out carrying more materials than usual. He looked like a tree weighed down with fruit in the wind. . . . And on that day he met a great many naked people. They were hiding everywhere—in caves, and among bushes. The kind king crept into every hole and dressed them all. He thought they were ashamed of the sun and were hiding from it. And when he had given away all his stuff he felt so happy that he wanted to throw off the weight of his happiness : so he raised his hands to his shoulders on which heaven was resting, and that heaven flew up to a still higher heaven. His soul smiled gently and he said : “ My great work is done : now, O God, I shall be able to close my eyes in peace.” But then something happened which made even hell tremble. (*Shouts in the greatest excitement.*) The very men, those wretches whom he had made into happy princes, ran after him, overtook him near a high hill from which the whole world could be seen ; they grinned

like devils, seized him, threw him on the ground and shouted: "You deceived us. You gave us the worst stuff and kept the best for yourself. To punish you for that you yourself will have to go naked now. You think that you gave us presents, ha—ha—ha! It's a lie, for all these materials belonged to us before you got them!" . . . They tore off his clothes and began to beat him with their fists: "There's one for you, and there's another." . . . The poor king lost his sight and hearing from the beating. He looked around: "Where is my heaven?" But it was not there: he had made a present of it to another heaven. And so he was left without earth and without heaven. (*Looks to the Left, clasps his hands.*) Good Lord, whatever is happening? My fairy tale is coming true! Look, our host! (*Jumps up.*)

(*MARKO comes in from the Right. A crowd of of BEGGARS loaded with gifts run in after him.*)

MARKO. (*In despair.*) I have given you all I had. . . . Brothers, leave me in peace—I possess absolutely nothing more.

LAME BEGGAR. (*Seizing MARKO by his clothes from behind.*) Give me your kaftan, give me your kaftan, you old devil!

(*MARKO quickly takes off his kaftan, throws it to the BEGGAR and runs away to the Left.*)

SEVERAL BEGGARS. (*Run after him.*) Stop, you rogue! You haven't given us anything yet! (*Rush off the stage after him.*)

MARKO'S VOICE. (*Behind the stage.*) Dear people, save me, deliver me from the temptation!

VOICE. (*Behind the stage.*) No one must help him if he has gone mad! It serves him right!

OLD MAN. (*Who told the story.*) For God's sake, let us help our poor host! (*Runs away to the Left followed by the YOUNG MAN.*)

(MARKO *escaping from his pursuers appears from the Right. The BEGGARS rush in after him.*)

A TALL THIN BEGGAR. (*Catching up MARKO.*) Give me your belt! I like a good dinner, but have nothing to eat! I must tighten my waist.

MARKO. Curse you! Save me, good people.

THE BEGGAR. Give me your belt, you old rogue! I want to tighten my stomach, I want to overcome my hunger.

MARKO. (*Takes off his belt, throws it to the beggar, runs out to the Left.*)

THE BEGGAR. (*Malignantly.*) We'll show you, you old miser! He wants to keep everything for himself!

(EVA *comes in from the Right. She is weeping. With her is the same woman as before.*)

THE WOMAN. (*Holds EVA by the sleeve.*) You mustn't go away from the festive table or things will be worse than ever.

EVA. Everything has gone wrong. Our friends have turned into bitter enemies. . . . I am so weak—I tremble all over.

THE WOMAN. You think too much, that's why you're afraid. . . . You're still always thinking of the old man.

EVA. I don't know what is happening to me. . . . I think I shall go out of my mind if he forsakes me.

THE WOMAN. There, there! Go back to the table, you are needed there. They still feel some respect for your beauty. . . . It keeps the brigands in order. They don't take their eyes off you.



EVA. And the beggars ! What a disgusting lot of people ! He has given them everything, he has only his shirt and trousers left on him ! My God ! I see worse things in front of us !

THE WOMAN. Put away these thoughts and come with me. (*Both go away.*)

(*The FIRST COMRADE, rather tipsy. The GUEST FROM ANOTHER DISTRICT. They walk in arm-in-arm.*)

THE COMRADE. Where are you dragging me ? What do you want ?

GUEST. I'll tell you something. I've got a brilliant idea.

THE COMRADE. I've never seen such a feast in my life. And how splendid our host, my old comrade, is ! I love him and am therefore afraid for him. . . . Those beggars. . . .

THE GUEST. I like him very much too. It's on his account that I called you away. Do you know what ?

THE COMRADE. What ?

THE GUEST. All that he does turns to madness and holiness.

COMRADE. Yes ?

GUEST. I want to make him a saint.

COMRADE. You want to make a saint of him ? What nonsense !

GUEST. I swear by the living God ! I want to make a saint of him. Listen ! I am a member of the local court, the whole village obeys me. I will propose that he be proclaimed a saint. . . . The priest will support me. It will not be difficult to stir up the other villages, too, and you will see. . . . It's ages since we had a new saint.

COMRADE. Your words have made me quite sober.  
The devil!

GUEST. There's only one thing that troubles me.

COMRADE. What's that?

GUEST. He is going to live alone in the forest.

COMRADE. Yes, that was his wish. . . .

GUEST. I am afraid that they will all go after him.

COMRADE. I don't understand.

GUEST. I am afraid that all the villages will go to pieces when he has gone. In him there was a super-human force that held everything together.

VOICES. (*Behind the STAGE.*) Help! Help! The beggars are beating our host!

GUEST. The devils! (*Goes out quickly.*)

COMRADE. Thieves, brigands, robbers! (*Goes out.*)

(*Wild shouts and fighting behind the STAGE. The stage is empty for a few moments. Several GUESTS with a piper come in from the Right.*)

FIRST GUEST. (*Drinks out of a bottle.*) It's no affair of mine what's happening there. I want to make merry, and I don't care a hang about the rest.

SECOND GUEST. We haven't come here for nothing—we want to be merry! (*Takes the bottle from the FIRST and drinks.*)

THE PIPER. Give me the wine, I must moisten my throat! (*Drinks and passes on the bottle, plays on his pipe and sings.*)

“I rejoice and drink without stay,

It's funny my feet have not given way.”

(*He begins to dance the kolo.*)

A YOUNG PEASANT. (*Dances and sings.*)

“ My gold-embroidered trousers  
Jump and dance with me !  
Hop—hop—hop, my sweet beauty ! ”

A GIRL. (*Dances and sings.*)

“ Her heart she has given to him,  
But he desires another whim. . . . ”

YOUTHS and MAIDENS. (*Sing and beat time with their feet.*)

“ Give to him your shirt. . . . ”

VOICE. (*Behind the STAGE.*) The Master has set the house on fire !

THE PIPER. (*Stops playing.*) He has set the house on fire ?

THE DANCERS. Play, play !

THE PIPER. Didn't you hear ? The master has set the house on fire !

THE DANCERS. Play, play ! What does it matter to us about the house ? What does it matter to us about the fire ? We want to make merry.

THE PIPER. I can't play when things are happening like that. . . . My hair stands on end. . . .

(*The yard is lit up with the glow of the fire. Clouds of smoke.*)

VOICES. Fire ! Fire !

(*The whole garden is lighted up with the bright flickering light.*)

THE PIPER. (*Terrified.*) Fire ! Fire ! (*Throws away his pipe and runs.*)

TWO YOUTHS. (*Catch him, force the pipe into his mouth and brandish a bottle over his head. Savagely.*)  
Play, you cowardly cur, or we'll crack your skull.

(*THE PIPER, trembling all over, begins to play. The*

*dancers run out to the Left shouting joyfully. A Pause. MARKO, dishevelled, looking wildly about him, comes in from the Left. After him enter his COMRADE, the GUEST FROM ANOTHER DISTRICT and several GUESTS. All are excited.)*

MARKO. (*Deliriously.*) Only fire can set me free from them and from their hideous greed. . . .

SEVERAL GUESTS. (*Trying to seize him.*) Incendiary! Incendiary!

COMRADE. (*Protecting MARKO.*) Stop, you thieves and robbers! (*Snatches a knife out of his belt.*) Whoever lays a finger on him is a dead man! I was in the Mantuan War!

(*MARKO kneels down and looks at the fire with insane eyes.*)

THE GUEST. Leave him alone. This is his prayer. . . . He is praying to his God by means of these flames.

MARKO. (*Loudly addressing the fire.*) Turn to ashes every desire, all thirst for earthly riches! O fire, our holy father, our holy mother!

RADE. (*In tears, runs in from the Left.*) My heart is bursting! When I threw stones at them they all turned back to me, licked my hands and face, and thanked me for every stone I threw at them. . . . And the horses flew along the meadows straight to the blue horizon neighing so sadly. . . . The fields and crops are under water. . . . (*Sobs and clutches at his head.*)

ALL THE SONS OF MARKO. (*Except JOSA and ZHAVA who walk apart by themselves, go across the stage from the Right embracing one another, weeping and wailing.*) He has disinherited us. . . . He has ruined us for ever. . . .

JOSA. (*Drinking out of a bottle.*) He has made me a present of it all! I'll go and add a few more logs to his "prayer." Ha—ha—ha! (*Goes out.*)

ZHAVA. (*Staggeringly follows him.*) You are still dearer to me than all of them!

THE SONS. (*Clench their fists and shout, addressing the fire.*) Be accursed, accursed, accursed, because you obeyed him!

MARKO. (*In a frenzied voice, addressing the fire.*) Devour all that has begotten hatred, envy, patricide! Reduce to ashes tyranny and men who are enslaved, destroy the palaces, towns, and all that has been built on the blood and sweat of our brothers! Burn up every vile thing, everything that cringes for money, that sells and betrays human flesh, soul and honour, that extinguishes the divine flame which lights up the soul of man! . . .

SONS. (*Addressing the fire and clenching their fists.*) You are devouring our name, the honour of our house and all its glorious past.

MARKO. (*Continues.*) Wipe out the glory of conquerors, the glory that has lasted a thousand years and has been built upon vanity and ambition! Proclaim to all the world the glory of the prophets—of the sons of God and friends of man! (*Laughs fanatically.*) They built schools and railways, they built ships to sail on distant seas, but no one has yet built a ship in which to sail to the living God! (*Bares his breast and speaks more loudly still.*) Destroy in a hellish whirl of flame all that does not lead to God, all that does not seek God! . . . Destroy land and sea and reduce us to ashes, O holy fire, our father and our mother!



EVA. (*Wringing her hands runs in from the Left.*)  
Cursed is my life! Woe is me! (*Tears her clothes.*  
*A noisy drunken crowd comes in from Left and Right.*)

CROWD FROM RIGHT. We have conquered hell!

CROWD FROM LEFT. The final judgment is at hand!

THE STRANGER. (*Staggering in from the Right approaches MARKO, who is praying quietly to the fire.*)  
Marko, I have done as you wished. Hell reigns supreme in all the village. All—young and old, men and women, at once agreed to help me in creating hell. . . . When I put buckets of wine in front of the church those very men who had just been raising their eyes to heaven and saying their prayers, as soon as they smelt the wine forgot their prayers, forgot the priest and God, rushed like savages at the buckets of wine and began to drink like pigs lying on their bellies. . . . Now, you see that there really is not one man who wishes for heaven on earth. Glory and praise, then, be to you for turning your holy day into hell!

SOME OF THE CROWD. Was that our host's wish? Did he order you to make this hell?

THE STRANGER. He didn't say so openly, but his soul longed for it in silence . . . . We all of us in the depths of our soul dream of establishing hell upon earth.

MARKO. (*Wringing his hands and talking to the fire.*)  
It is only in the inner fire, when we are freed from earthly chains, that we come to know Thee, O God!

(THE STRANGER hangs his head and is buried in thought. Noise, shouting and hubbub in the yard.)

VOICES ON THE LEFT. Hell is flooding the yard, hell is threatening the master himself.

SOME DRUNKEN MEN. (*From the Right, approaching*

MARKO, *who is praying.*) We have nothing more to drink! Give us your blood!

MARKO. (*Sings loudly addressing the fire.*)

“ Men go to men,  
Men go to beasts,  
Men go to the stars,  
Men go to God. . . . ”

THREE DRUNKEN OLD WOMEN. (*Dragging a tipsy youth.*) We also want to have a taste of young flesh.

THE YOUTH. (*Struggling to get free.*) Leave me, leave me, you old harlots, it makes me sick to look at you.

ONE OF THEM. We still feel the heat within us.

VOICES. (*In the CROWD.*) Tfoo! Cursed old hags! Tfoo!

(MARKO covers his eyes with his hands.)

THE STRANGER. (*Shouts in terror.*) Satan is sitting on the belfry and his laughter is heard all over the world! I have sinned against our host: he is the only one who does not want hell upon earth! (*Goes out.*)

VOICES IN THE CROWD. Death to the old hags!

A SHOUT. (*Behind the STAGE.*) The stranger has thrown himself into the fire!

(MARKO sobs aloud.)

(*Curtain.*)

### ACT III.

*Several years have passed. A Forest. It is windy, the sky is covered with clouds. TWO MEN have just set up a big cross and are busy at the foot of it.*

FIRST. (*His sleeves are turned up and he has a spade in his hands, is stamping the ground firm round the*

cross.) We've done our job and what happens after is no business of ours. There'll be some excitement here to-day. It's no light matter suddenly to proclaim a man to be a saint! Is this old man worthy of it? What do you think?

SECOND. (*Leaning on his spade.*) Worthy to be proclaimed a saint?

FIRST. Yes.

SECOND. I think he is. But I have heard that he doesn't at all wish it and that all this is being done against his will. His brother, his sons and his friends have simply lost their heads. They are afraid that all the villages round about will rise up.

FIRST. It's strange that he should refuse such an honour.

SECOND. God only knows what's in his mind. He is intelligent and knows the people very well. Perhaps he gets more satisfaction from living in the wood than he expects to get from the honour they wish to thrust upon him. . . .

FIRST. And what will happen if he doesn't agree to be proclaimed a saint?

SECOND. (*Shrugging his shoulders.*) God knows! All I know is that there is much evil in the world. . . . I assure you, I am terrified of begetting children! I am afraid they will turn out bad. True, every man can gain happiness for himself. But that doesn't happen often; all the instances may be reckoned on the fingers of one hand. The majority of people end badly. One man said something very clever to me about it once: "Man, when he sees the light, falls into darkness. Before him are many ways, some lead to the gallows, others to a throne. But there is no one

who can show him the right way ; he walks at random and it is impossible to forecast the future." The old man too probably did not know before what awaited him in the future.

FIRST. You're a strange man ! You don't want to have any more children ?

SECOND. I don't ! I'm afraid of evil.

FIRST. But what if the evil one troubles you ?

SECOND. I have made an arrangement with my wife ! When the devil begins to make my blood hot I get out of bed and go to her. She ties my feet and hands with a rope and pours cold water over me until I have overcome the temptation. . . .

FIRST. Ha, ha, ha ! I have never heard anything like that ! (*Looks to the Right.*) See, they are coming !

*The same.* ILARIA, MARKO'S NINE SONS, *his military* COMRADE, ZHAVA RASLITCH. ILARIA and the NINE SONS *look sad.* *The SONS are poorly dressed.*

COMRADE. Good morning, neighbours !

FIRST. Good morning. We're ready.

COMRADE. That's right. Now go to the village and tell them that the ceremony may begin at once.

*(Both go out.)*

COMRADE. (*To ILARIA.*) How ever shall we do it ?

ILARIA. (*Pointing to the SONS.*) I shall go with them to him while you wait here. If we say much to him he will be upset. But we will say very little. . . .

COMRADE. Don't return without him. Tell him the friend who has prepared it all will be here soon ; the people, too, will soon assemble. Let him get ready without delay. Tell him that the inhabitants of all the

villages want it, that this is the people's will and the people's will is the same as God's will. Tell him also that we have erected a cross in his honour. . . .

ILARIA. I have a premonition of evil, but I will do all I can. . . . I have been to him ten times already and he has always refused. He says: "Men like to play and they want me to take part in their game; but I want to live properly, in God's way—I don't want to play." . . . But I will do what I can. (*To MARKO'S SONS.*) Let us go, you homeless ones!

*(They go out to the Left.)*

COMRADE. (*To RASLITCH.*) Why haven't Marko's other sons come: Matha, Zhava, and Tunia? I won't speak about Josa. That devil has nothing more to do with his father.

ZHAVA RASLITCH. Those three are dead.

COMRADE. Wha—t?

ZHAVA RASLITCH. Tunia died a natural death.

COMRADE. He was always of a quiet disposition.

ZHAVA RASLITCH. And Zhava—even now that he is in his grave it annoys me that he bore my name! He drank until he drank away his plot of land. Then he became a servant to strangers and spent all his earnings on drink. Soon he fell into such a state that no one would have him as a servant. He swindled, got into debt, drank. He sold his kaftan, his hat and his shoes for drink and went about half naked. Everyone felt disgusted to look at him, but he only laughed. At last he began to steal. . . . No one would speak to him, but he got more and more impudent. One winter evening the Lord took pity on him! There was a terrible snowstorm, he lost his way, fell on the railway and went to sleep, and a train ran over him. . . .



COMRADE. Good God, how he must have disgraced his father's grey hair !

ZHAVA RASLITCH. They say when the old man heard of his death he wept like a little child.

COMRADE. What a heart he has ! The people are right in proclaiming him a saint !

ZHAVA RASLITCH. Yes, the old man grieves for everyone.

COMRADE. And what about Matha ?

ZHAVA RASLITCH. Matha died in an unheard-of manner. He had become quite destitute and was on the edge of despair. One day he summoned his remaining strength, climbed, or rather flew on to a tall oak, slipped from the topmost branches, and was killed. He was always longing to rise up, to soar, even at the cost of death, . . . trying to experience for a moment once more the feeling he used to have in the old, united zadruga.

COMRADE. By God ! a beautiful death ! Such an end was worthy of him. And what has become of Marko's wife ?

ZHAVA RASLITCH. She became a Sister of Mercy and goes about nursing the sick.

COMRADE. Were you at Marko's last feast when he passed right through hell and went away into the forest ?

ZHAVA RASLITCH. I'm sorry to say I wasn't. It's the greatest loss of my life.

COMRADE. It was a business ! When he devastated, burned and flooded the place, and went away leaving his wife, she cursed the sun, cut off her beautiful hair, took a whip and in the eyes of all began to scourge her lovely body. . . . She dug her nails into her face

and knocked her head against the trees. . . . Then she began to destroy all her possessions as he had done. She dragged her dowry out of the house, costly silks, gold embroidered dresses, gold necklaces, and threw them all into the fire. She put on a hempen shirt and set up a howl that made our hair stand on end. . . . Only wild animals howl like that when the male and female have been separated. . . . Weeping, she followed him through hell. We were more afraid than touched by it—it was all so gloomy, so fearful.

VOICE FROM WOOD. Help! Help! Help!

COMRADE. (*Listening.*) What's that? Someone calling for help?

ZHAVA RASLITCH. Probably some peasant has put too heavy a log on his cart and stuck in the marsh. It often happens. There's somebody coming.

COMRADE. (*Looking to the Left.*) It's our friend!  
*The same.* THE GUEST FROM ANOTHER DISTRICT. A  
SORCERER.

COMRADE. (*Goes to meet the GUEST and embraces him.*) It's ages since we met. How many years?

GUEST. And I have a feeling as though it were only yesterday. (*Pointing to the SORCERER.*) My friend here is a sorcerer. He will explain a great deal to us. And who is this? (*Points to ZHAVA RASLITCH.*)

COMRADE. This is the man that fought side by side with Marko and me at Mantua. We three were in the very thick of the battle.

GUEST. And how are things going with Marko? Is he glad about what is being prepared? (*Touches the cross.*) It stands firmly and is made of good material.

COMRADE. Ilaria and his sons have gone to him to

bring his answer. Ilaria says he has been to him ten times already and that he always refuses. . . .

GUEST. Wha—t? He doesn't want! I've been slaving all these years to make him a saint and he doesn't want to be one!

COMRADE. He doesn't.

GUEST. (*Very excited.*) We shall see! We've almost finished building a church for him and he doesn't want it!

COMRADE. You've built a church for him? Where did the villagers get so much money? Latterly they've all been so poor?

GUEST. And why have they become so poor? They've only him to thank for it! For the building of the church we have given our last farthings, and I won't make a secret of it, we have stolen some of the money for the church; well, it's a good cause! It only needs the roof now.

COMRADE. And where will you get the roof from?

GUEST. We shall get it from the Jewish synagogue.

COMRADE. How do you mean?

GUEST. We shall simply unroof it and put it on our church—it's for a good cause, you know! . . . But I can't get over his not wanting to be a saint. (*Looks questioningly at the SORCERER.*)

SORCERER. I told you so. He found his God through sorrow and despair; and he who finds God in that way does not easily give Him up. Even death cannot separate him from Him. . . .

*The same.* A YOUTH, out of breath, runs in from Right.

YOUTH. Help! Help! A man with a cart has

stuck fast in the marsh and can't get out. His horses are bathed in sweat, and he foams at the mouth and lashes them more and more. Any moment he may kill the poor horses !

GUEST. Who is the man ? What's his name ?

YOUTH. Josa Gavanovitch, son of Marko who lives in the forest.

(COMRADE and ZHAVA RASLITCH *clap their hands and laugh.*)

GUEST. (*Hissing with malice.*) Let us go and drive him up to his head in the marsh. Let the dog suffocate in the marsh !

COMRADE and ZHAVA RASLITCH. Let the dog choke in the slime !

GUEST. Wait a minute ! We can't all go ! We can't leave the sacred cross without a watcher or some brute might come and . . . Let two of us go and two remain behind.

COMRADE and ZHAVA RASLITCH. We'll go, we'll go ! Allow us to have the pleasure !

COMRADE. (*Rolling up his sleeves.*) How grateful I am to Thee, O Lord, for this !

ZHAVA RASLITCH. (*Raising his eyes to heaven.*) And I thank Thee too, O Eternal Father !

(*Both go out quickly. The frightened YOUTH follows them.*)

*The GUEST and the SORCERER.*

GUEST. (*Thoughtfully.*) What shall we do if he absolutely will not allow us to proclaim him a saint ? I have thought, but I dare not utter it. . . . I think, that this one thing alone, that his enemy is stuck in the marsh, will make him a saint !

SORCERER. We shall see. Anyway, there's no need

to hurry. (*Looks to the Left.*) Look, the old women have already got wind of the new saint!

*The same.* THREE OLD WOMEN *with their aprons full of flowers come in from the Left.*

FIRST WOMAN. (*Scattering the flowers on the ground.*) How happy I am, dear Lord! He will tread on the flowers that I scatter.

SECOND WOMAN. (*Scattering her flowers.*) No Christian soul can help rejoicing at this. All the houses are bedecked with flags, all the windows and fences are hung with carpets!

THIRD WOMAN. With what delight I shall make my prayers!

FIRST WOMAN. And I too! Day and night I will kneel on my knees in his temple and kiss the cold stone pavement. . . .

SECOND WOMAN. I, too, love to kiss the stone pavement and the images of the saints. . . . At such moments a sweet tremor passes over my old body.

GUEST. Ye gods, I know these old harlots! Heigh, you there! At Marko's feast you dragged a youth into the garden! (*The THREE WOMEN are struck speechless.*) You were going to outrage him. . . . I am curious to have a good look at you. (*Approaches them.*) You were lucky not to have been torn to pieces by the crowd!

*(All three laugh and run away.)*

GUEST. Ha, ha, ha! How can one not believe in witches and vampires! Human nature is extraordinary.

SORCERER. (*Laughs, then looks to the Right.*) That must be he! Yonder venerable old man with a white beard!



GUEST. Yes, that's he. Good Lord, how changed he is! Look here, don't say a word about his enemy that is stuck in the marsh. I'll keep that for the very end as the strongest argument in case all our other arguments fail to convince him.

*The same.* MARKO in old torn clothes, with a long white beard and hair (long and white). He looks like an Old Testament prophet. ILARIA and MARKO'S NINE SONS.

ILARIA. (*As he walks.*) Brother, have pity! Submit to the will of the people! Listen to our prayer! Your sons have become beggars. . . .

THE SONS. Father, have pity! We have become beggars and are destitute. Return to the village! We will start our zadruga again and you will again be our master and our head!

(MARKO smiles sadly.)

GUEST. (*Solemnly.*) Return to the village and be lord over all the surrounding villages. The people have sunk into beggary and it is your doing!

MARKO. My doing?

GUEST. Do you recognise me?

MARKO. I do.

SORCERER. You knew how to get the sap out of the earth better than any other man. You used to cling to its breast and drink and drink, . . . and other men stood by your side and drank also. . . . You planted vineyards, you grew forests, you reared excellent cattle. You created wealth, joy, brilliance. You taught men to live and to work, the whole countryside clung to you and flourished with you. And now that you have destroyed your own happiness, you have destroyed their happiness too.

MARKO. I don't know you.

SORCERER. But I know you. You are the queen-bee ; you are the source of all rivers ; you are the heart whence flows all the love of the world ! Poor erring men are inviting you to be their leader.

MARKO. I will never leave the forest, the house of my God !

GUEST. You must return.

MARKO. Never !

GUEST. You must.

MARKO. Never !

(GUEST wishes to say something.)

SORCERER. (*Putting his hand over GUEST'S mouth.*) Wait ! Here they come ! They are burning with eagerness and hatred and will be better able to manage him.

(*The singing of the COMRADE and ZHAVA RASLITCH is heard.*)

*The same.* ZHAVA RASLITCH and the COMRADE.

COMRADE and ZHAVA RASLITCH. (*Draw nearer arm-in-arm waving their hats.*) Glory be to you, Marko ! Glory ! (*They embrace MARKO.*)

COMRADE. (*Excitedly.*) They will proclaim you a saint, but that's nothing. It would be a different matter if they proclaimed you to be God ! There by the road your enemy has stuck in the marsh. We drove him still deeper into the mire. He used formerly to boast of his strength, you know ; so now he has put a whole oak tree on his cart, and of course, he can't manage it.

ZHAVA RASLITCH. Sing, rejoice ! Josa is stuck in the marsh ! Go there and delight at his misfortune ! (*Embracing MARKO.*) Old friend, your accursed

son has stuck in the marsh, he is humiliated, hasn't strength to get out, and is very woebegone! Rejoice along with us!

ILARIA. Josa is stuck in the marsh! (*Kneels down and raises his hands to heaven.*) The devil is stuck in the marsh! (*Embraces MARKO.*) Rejoice, brother, your day has come! You are silent? You are pale? What's the matter?

ZHAVA RASLITCH. What's the matter with you? Rejoice!

THE SONS. Rejoice, father! Our tempter is stuck in the marsh!

GUEST. What's the matter with him? He seems to have fainted . . . with joy perhaps? . . . Support him! His old heart could not endure such joy, such happiness! Poor man! Glory be to him!

(*ILARIA and the SONS support MARKO.*)

JOSA'S VOICE. (*Pitifully, from the forest.*) Help! Help! Help! (*A strong gust of wind.*)

MARKO. (*Listens, in tears to his SONS.*) Go and help him!

(*ALL surprised and do not know what to say. JOSA'S cry is heard again.*)

MARKO. I am too weak. Go you and help him. (*ALL look at one another in perplexity. MARKO clasps his hands prayerfully.*) I implore you—help him.

(*The SONS delay.*)

ILARIA. (*Steps forward with uplifted hands.*) I will kill the man that helps him!

ALL. (*With uplifted hands.*) We will kill that man!

MARKO. Very well! kill me, then; I am going to

help him ! He is blood of my blood and fire of my fire. . . .

(ALL drop their hands. MARKO goes away. ALL look after him in silence.)

*The same, without MARKO.*

(ILARIA drops on his knees, clasps his hands and prays quietly. All but the SORCERER follow his example.)

ALL. (To ILARIA.) Lead us in prayer !

ILARIA. Eternal God, have mercy on us !

ALL. Have mercy on us !

*(The wind howls wildly. Lightning.)*

ILARIA. We ants upon Thine earth !

ALL. We ants upon Thine earth !

ILARIA. Who are unworthy to creep about under Thy sun.

ALL. Under Thy sun !

ILARIA. Mother of God, intercede for us !

ALL. Intercede for us !

ILARIA. With Thy Son, Jesus Christ !

ALL. Jesus Christ !

ILARIA. With the Father and the Holy Spirit !

ALL. And the Holy Spirit !

ILARIA. St. George, St. Mark, bless our fields !

ALL. Bless our fields !

ILARIA. St. Medard ! bless our cattle !

ALL. Bless our cattle !

ILARIA. St. Ursula, bless our wives !

ALL. Bless our wives !

ILARIA. All ye saints !

ALL. All ye saints !

ILARIA. Help us !

ALL. Help us !

ILARIA. Drown our enemy in the marsh as he deserves !

ALL. Drown the devil in the marsh as he deserves !

ILARIA. Increase his agony !

ALL. Let him suffer a thousand deaths !

ILARIA. And when he goes to hell, torment him there also !

ALL. Torment him, torment him !

ILARIA. Amen !

ALL. (*Loudly.*) Amen ! Amen !

(ILARIA kisses the ground. ALL kiss the ground three or four times. Storm. Lightning. Thunder.)

MARKO'S VOICE (*Singing in the forest.*)

“ Men go to the stars,  
Men go to God.”

*The same.* ALL kneeling down. MARKO and JOSA with their arms round each other. JOSA has no hat, wears old dirty top-boots, his sleeves are rolled up, his clothes torn. He looks wild and dishevelled.)

JOSA. (*Sobbing.*) Thy goodness, father, torments me ; kill me, tear me in pieces !

MARKO. Thou hast shown me the way to God, thou hast shown me the way to the light. . . . (*Addressing the kneeling crowd he shouts.*) Through poverty is the way to God. Go and proclaim it in all the villages.

JOSA. (*Kneels and embraces his father's knees.*) Father ! Father ! Father !

MARKO. Get up, my son, or I must go down on my knees before thee.

*The same.* From the Left comes in an envoy with a laurel wreath in his hand.



ENVOY. (*Bowing low to MARKO.*) The villages and surrounding country call for you! To meet you they have sent a wandering procession which will solemnly conduct you into the village. All the people will greet you with waving flags and ringing of bells. They have commanded me to convey this to you: that you may demand of them anything you wish. If you still find pleasure in destruction, they will destroy the whole village. If you are thirsting for fire, they will set everything on fire. If you are thirsting for blood, they will kill every living creature as a sacrifice to you. But you must return to them. They send you this laurel wreath as a token of welcome. (*Hands the wreath to MARKO and goes away.*)

MARKO. (*Placing the wreath on JOSA's head.*) This wreath is for him! The event is his!

THE GUEST. (*Rising from his knees.*) They have sent the wandering procession here? It is just as if they had sent death! (*ALL get up from their knees.*)

ILARIA. What is a wandering procession?

GUEST. It is an assembly of the most pious people in the country. When villages and the surrounding district became impoverished they gathered together into a procession, and began to wander from one church holiday to another, from one wonder-working ikon to another, invoking God's blessing on the impoverished country. But latterly they seem to have gone quite wild. They wander like ghosts from village to village, from cross to cross, from church to church, shouting senseless prayers. They howl with the tempest and wild beasts. They no longer ask for God's blessing, but insolently demand it. . . . Their madness

has got to such a pitch that they arrange wild dances and trample under foot anyone who tries to stop them. . . . Still I will go and try to pacify them somehow. (*Goes away.*)

*The same, without the GUEST FROM ANOTHER DISTRICT.*

SORCERER. (*Taking MARKO by the arm.*) I am on your side, and I want to say something to you. You have offended them though they themselves do not know in what the offence consists. It burns in their blood ; that is why they are raving. You were formerly a tyrant to them and forced them to follow you to the summit of the mountain. When at last they had climbed there you hurled them down, and you yourself ascended to such a height whither they were unable to follow you. . . . This is how the wandering procession began to be. . . . You did not allow them to enjoy your poverty, but with the last remains of your property you turned men into swine and the village into hell. (*MARKO waves his hand. The SORCERER'S words wound him sorely.*) I know you did not wish it, that you wished something quite different, but this is what actually happened. (*With growing warmth.*) You went neither to the right nor to the left, but straight ahead into the forest by the path of hermits and saints. You feed on locusts and strawberries ; you suffer and bleed in your search for the eternal light. . . . and the eternal light is very dangerous ! Your eternal light has kindled a feeling of envy in their hearts ; they do not know it themselves, but envy is burning in their blood. . . . They envy you because you bear your poverty so proudly. Envy of another's riches and brilliance makes a man blind, but

envy of another's pride makes man a beast. . . . Even the Son of God realised this on the Cross! . . . Remember His lot, and turn this over in your mind, that to the human soul it is necessary that every thousand years someone should be crucified for all. In this way millenniums are delivered from their eternal boredom! . . . This is how men strengthen and refresh their faith which with the passage of time becomes sick and feeble! . . . Our age thirsts more than any other for a new prophet to revive its faith, and that is why they cling so to you.

JOSA. Father, man is immortal!

MARKO. (*Puts his hand on JOSA's shoulder.*) True, my son—I had a dream last night. Two visions stood before me—one light, the other very dark. My eyes met the eyes of the dark vision and struggled with them for a long time. I was exhausted with the struggle, and my heart began to shed blood. . . . I was struggling and trembling as in the agony of death when I suddenly contrived to wrench my gaze from those eyes, and then all at once I was master of myself again. And some one drew near to me.

*The same. EVA in the white dress of a sister of mercy comes in from the Left. She goes up to MARKO, kisses him on the forehead and embraces him.*

EVA. I have left my invalids to the care of the other sisters and have come to you.

MARKO. (*Looks intently at her, at last recognises her and kisses her hand.*) My dear, my radiant one! Thank you, thank you!

EVA. I heard of your return from the forest and have come that I might see you once more. I have so much for which to thank you.

MARKO. What have you to thank me for ?

EVA. All this time I have thought of nothing but you and have lived on that.

*(Cawing of frightened rooks, then the shouts and singing of the wandering procession, growing louder and louder. Clouds of the most peculiar shape scud across the sky. Tempest. Voices from the forest: "There he is! There he is!")*

*The same, and the PROCESSION. Wild, tattered, barefooted men and women, many of them carrying crosses and banners. A tall, thin old man with an evil countenance leads the PROCESSION; he carries a banner. Enormous crowd of men, women and children whom their mothers lead by the hand, mothers with babies at their breasts, little girls with flowers in their hands; these all have come from different villages and are differently dressed. They bow low to MARKO and greet him with enthusiastic shouts.*

LEADER OF PROCESSION. Our eyes are sad and dim, our hearts ache. We have seen terrible things: we have passed by burnt-up fields, by devastated forests, dried-up vineyards; we have passed through villages in which all the men had fallen under invisible blows. . . . Our hearts have been robbed of grace and strength. We are suffering. . . .

PROCESSION. *(Loudly.)* We are searching for the robber.

THE LEADER. The sick and helpless are writhing in agony and with their remaining strength raise their clenched fists to heaven and whisper curses. . . . But heaven is high and God invisible. . . .

PROCESSION. Oh, why is He invisible ?

LEADER. We have suffered and we have prayed, but have gained nothing by it. We began to lose our reason, but neither did that help. Lightning, rain and tempest fell upon us, clouds enveloped us, and we wandered about blind like the children of hell who are tired of evil and who long for heaven. Lying in wait like beasts of prey, we sought the Invisible One but found Him not. . . . Hell surrounded us on every side, sparks flew from our eyes. . . . We ate bread and meat and drank heavenly wine, all made of air. . . . Ha—ha—ha! The earth is full of our sufferings, it calls to you: "Help us! Give us bread!"

PROCESSION. (*Roars.*) Give us bread!

LEADER. The sun is full of our suffering. . . . Give us light!

PROCESSION. (*Roars.*) Give us poor people light!

LEADER. The ocean tempest calling to heaven, the moon shining over the earth, the twinkling stars—all are full of our suffering. Protect us from death!

PROCESSION. (*Roars.*) Protect us from death!

LEADER. On every side blood-stained mysteries surround us! Save us from fear!

PROCESSION. Save us from fear!

LEADER. Set us free from earth's yoke!

PROCESSION. Set us free from earth's yoke!

LEADER. We are poor children without a father. Lead us!

PROCESSION. Lead us!

ALL. Stand before us and lead us!

LEADER. Speak!

(MARKO bows his head. A pause.)

VOICES. He doesn't want to speak!



LEADER. Speak !

ALL. Speak !

MARKO. Brothers !

ALL. (*Joyfully.*) He speaks, he speaks, he will help us !

LEADER. (*Shouts.*) Hush, be quiet ! I will pluck out the tongue of anyone who stirs or interrupts him even by a single word !

MARKO. In the human heart a rich treasure is hidden ; it demands that man should worship God. But how He is to be worshipped man does not know ; that's an eternal mystery. . . . Men think that it is necessary to worship in fear ; but it is not true, that is an everlasting error. . . . The men who think in this way for the most part live in wealth and power, and therefore in anxiety and fear lest they should lose both their riches and their power. . . . Believe me, brothers, this insane fear bars their way to understanding how God should be worshipped. . . . The whole value of life, the fate and salvation of humanity, depend on this thought. . . . As soon as mankind solves this question there will be heaven upon earth !

LEADER. How then must we worship ?

MARKO. Men have always worshipped God in fear only. . . .

LEADER. How should they worship Him then ?

MARKO. Not in fear, but in beauty, must God be worshipped. In the beauty of our own soul, and in the beauty of the world-soul. In the beauty of the world-soul we must worship. . . . That is my food and my light. . . .

LEADER. But how shall we rid ourselves of this fear ?

MARKO. You will rid yourselves of it when you have got rid of all your earthly riches. (*Murmuring in the crowd. The wind howls at a distance.*) When you have nothing you will possess all things. (*In the crowd sighs, wringing of hands and whispering.*) Then you will reach the summit and will see the eternal light, and in that light you will worship the beauty of the universe. . . . All your fetters will drop off, your hearts will become temples, and you yourselves will be gods. . . .

LEADER. (*Wildly shrieks.*) Crucify him! "You yourselves will be gods!" Crucify him! We don't want to be gods, we want to worship God in fear. . . . What an awful responsibility he wants to put on us! Why does God exist? Crucify him! You could help us, but you don't want to! You are antichrist! It was always so in the world! Ha—ha—ha! We set up a cross to glorify you, but you would not have it! So we must crucify you on it. It was always so in the world. What more are you waiting for? Seize him! And not him only, but all in whom his blood flows and who bear his name, kill them on the spot. (*Many hands are stretched towards MARKO and all the GAVANOVITCH.*)

GUEST FROM ANOTHER DISTRICT. Wait! Give him five minutes for reflection; let him consider which is better: to save mankind, or to be crucified. . . . And let them also (*Points to the GAVANOVITCH*) consider which is better: to renounce the name of their father, or to die. . . . (*To the PEOPLE.*) Now go away from here, all of you, for five minutes!

LEADER. (*Makes a sign to the CROWD.*) Let us go! In the meantime we will consider the manner of death they shall die!

*(The PEOPLE and the LEADER of the PROCESSION go out to the Right.)*

MARKO, EVA, the SORCERER, ZHAVA RASLITCH, the COMRADES, the SONS, ILARIA, the GUEST FROM ANOTHER DISTRICT. JOSA at a distance.

ILARIA and MARKO'S SONS. *(Embrace MARKO.)*  
Brother! Father, dear father!

ZHAVA RASLITCH. Friend!

COMRADE. Comrade!

GUEST. Save them!

MARKO. No one can save them; they themselves only can save themselves. . . .

GUEST. The strong exist in order to support the weak.

MARKO. The weak exist in order to become strong.

GUEST. You are alone. . . .

MARKO. I will die for my God!

THE SONS. *(Except JOSA, surround MARKO, pull at his clothes.)* The five minutes have already gone!

ILARIA. The five minutes have already gone! . . .

*(MARKO turns pale, staggers, closes his eyes. EVA supports him.)*

THE SONS. A sleep has fallen on him like as before, and we are lost. *(They shake him.)* Five minutes! We are done for! Five minutes!

MARKO. *(Opens his eyes.)* Shall you betray me to them?

ILARIA. *(Trembling all over.)* I feel how every two drops of blood in me betray one another, how every two feelings in me struggle one against another! Forgive me, brother! *(Sobs.)* We are all unwilling puppets in some cruel hand. We ants love life dearly, it's only you eagles that seek danger and despise life.

Life is so dear, life is so sweet. . . . (*Clutches his head.*) My God, my God! . . .

THE SONS. (*Except JOSA.*) Father, forgive us, poor creatures that we are! It's good to live, it's so good. . . .

MARKO. (*Blessing them.*) God forgive you, my brothers!

(*ALL come on.*)

THE LEADER. If the father does not wish to stand before us and lead us, then his sons must be the first to drive him with curses to the cross. . . .

ILARIA and the SONS. (*Withdrawing from MARKO.*) Let him be accursed, accursed, accursed!

MARKO. (*Smiles and with a gesture makes them understand that he forgives them.*)

JOSA. (*Rushes to his father, throws his arms round him; points with his hand to the CROWD.*) They are all cowards and hypocrites. They want to live with you, but they do not love you. . . . They cannot love you because they are too small beside you. I know them well: I have had a great deal to do with them. I am true, I am a shadow cast by your light. . . . I love you, and I will die for you! . . .

THE LEADER. (*Shrieks wildly.*) Beat him with your crosses and your banners, tear him in pieces with your nails and teeth!

ZHAVA RASLITCH and THE COMRADE. Kill the devil—the destroyer!

(*The savage CROWD rush at JOSA and kill him on the spot. Some make menacing gestures at MARKO.*)

EVA. (*Stands beside MARKO; in despair.*) Don't kill him! Don't kill him!

SORCERER. (*Raising his hand.*) Do not kill him!

(MARKO does not take his eyes off JOSA'S body. Falls on the ground and embraces his dead son. Loses consciousness. Part of the CROWD rush at him to drag him to the cross; the other part of the CROWD are evidently opposed to this.)

SORCERER. (*Pointing to MARKO.*) He is dying! He is not dying from fear of death upon the cross, but from grief that he has not succeeded in slaying the beast in your hearts! . . . He is dying because of your dense stupidity! Now you can crucify him! (*Goes aside. The CROWD is bewildered and knows not what to do. Many throw down their banners. The number of discontented ones increases.*) Now you're afraid! Ha—ha—ha! Well, crucify him! (*ALL throw down their banners and crosses. The discontented ones pick them up.*)

A MAN OF FORTY. (*One of the discontented ones, addressing the PROCESSION.*) Prostrate yourselves before him! (*Points to MARKO. To the LEADER.*) Vile hypocrite! You are ready to hang everyone only that you might be at the head of the procession! On your knees! Prostrate yourself before him! (*To his followers.*) Make them go down on their knees!

THE DISCONTENTED. (*Brandishing their crosses.*) On your knees!

PROCESSION. (*Stands still, some bow low to MARKO.*)

THE DISCONTENTED. Bow down, all of you! (*Some more of them bow.*) All, all of you.

MARKO. (*Recovering.*) Rise from your knees!

THE DISCONTENTED. On your knees!

MARKO. Get up, raise yourselves to the light!

SORCERER. (*Shouts.*) He wants men to stand up



proudly with raised heads. He wants them to worship in beauty and not in fear.

THE DISCONTENTED. (*Roaring.*) On your knees, on your knees before him !

(PROCESSION *is ready to fall on its knees.*)

MARKO. (*Writhing with pain, collects all his strength, gets up and with clenched fists rushes at the kneeling CROWD.*) Rise ! To the light ! To heaven ! (*Falls again.*)

THE DISCONTENTED. (*Brandishing their crosses like weapons.*) On your knees ! You cursed crew !

MARKO. (*Tries to rise once more, but falls again.*) Rise up ! To the light ! To victory ! To the sun ! (*Sobs bitterly and expires.*)

EVA, ZHAVA RASLITCH and the COMRADE. (*Kneel down beside him and cover their faces with their hands. Between the two groups of the PROCESSION there begins a savage fight. They beat one another with crosses and banners. The women seize each other by the hair.*)

SORCERER. Poor, benighted men ! Your hatred is as black as ever, your enmity is as blind as of old !

(*Curtain.*)

IV

# THE INVINCIBLE SHIP

DRAMA IN FIVE ACTS

*(Translated by P. Selver)*

## DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

LUKAN, forty years old.

DOMINA, forty years old, his wife.

VICKO, twenty years old, their son.

BISSERKA, the daughter of Matic, nineteen years old.

BISSERKA'S BETROTHED, twenty years old.

THE CORPSE OF MATICK.

KIMBO.

FISHER-LADS and FISHERMEN.

FIRST PIRATE.

MEN working at the ship.

THE PRIEST.

THE PEOPLE.

THE JUDGE.

THE CLERK.

LETTER-CARRIER.

CAPTAIN OF THE PIRATES with his CREW.

TWO WOMEN.

WOMEN OF VARIOUS RACES.

GORILLA.

The action takes place by the sea and in the virginal forest.

## ACT I.

*In the background the sea lit by the setting sun. On the shore in the foreground to the right, LUKAN'S house. At the back on a level with it, the framework of a ship in building, and behind the framework a lighthouse in the sea.*

### Scene I.

DOMINA and VICKO.

VICKO. (*Looking out on to the sea.*) No trace of him. The sun is setting, and the only things to be seen now are the fishing-boats, which are sailing to Podgorush, and vanishing on the horizon.

DOMINA. It will soon be dark, and the lads have had nothing to eat yet, and nothing is ready for the voyage, O God!

VICKO. We have been behindhand for a long time now; the other fishermen will get the best places.

DOMINA. That is foolish of him. He said: "I will go over to Podgora just for an hour and try to catch a lobster." And now the whole afternoon has gone. What do you think, Vicko—would you not care to have your meal quickly with the lads, and sail to Podgorush without him?

VICKO. Father is the captain, and I am only the steersman, mother.

DOMINA. But it is a huge loss, my son—the time, the lads, the food and the money they get. And then,

there are only three more dark nights left to fish for pilchards, the moon will be shining on the fourth night.

VICKO. I won't move till father comes.

DOMINA. Oh!

VICKO. Let him take all the blame if he is so careless.

DOMINA. But, my son, years of hunger are coming, the fish are moving to a different part of the sea, and the vine is growing feeble, besides. And then you won't have a morsel; go, take your supper with the lads. Mother has cooked you a good lot of polenta and fried pilchards, as much as you like, and wine, as much as you like; only not too much, for Heaven's sake, not too much!

VICKO. It is not your wine or your polenta I want, mother. I have something else to think about. I must say, father is a woefully careless man.

DOMINA. How strangely you say that! Why do you suddenly bear such a grudge against your father?

VICKO. And not only careless, but there, there (*Points to his forehead*), he's not quite all right there!

DOMINA. Vicko!

VICKO. And I'm not the only one who says that, but all who have watched him lately.

DOMINA. Watched? But, for heaven's sake, what grudge have they against your father?

VICKO. Have you heard nothing about his boasting?

DOMINA. What boasting?

VICKO. About his ship.

DOMINA. O God! I have other things to trouble about.

VICKO. (*Points to the ship's framework.*) He wants to build it so firmly, so wonderfully that neither hurri-



canes nor the sea can do it any harm. Is it not a craze to lift up his poor wretched head like that against such dark powers which not even God—may God pardon me for saying it,—not even God Himself can restrain?

DOMINA. Leave him to his craze, what does it matter to you?

VICKO. He can walk upside down for all I care, but the people point their fingers at him and say: "What a wise father you have!" And that would be a mere nothing, but——

DOMINA. What else?

VICKO. Matic has turned his back on him and laughs at him.

DOMINA. (*Breathes deeply.*) Oh! Bisserka's father?

VICKO. And his daughter is keeping away from me.

DOMINA. Oh!

VICKO. And the most foolish thing of all is——  
(*Rubs his forehead.*)

DOMINA. Tell me, then!

VICKO. He, my father and your husband, is paying attentions to my sweetheart, seemingly as her future father-in-law, but in reality like a young wooer, so that the shame and disgrace of it are driving me mad. Bah! when I only think of it, I blush and turn pale in my soul over and over again.

DOMINA. But what are you thinking of, Vicko? Those are only your fancies. You are in love with the girl, and take your own father for a rival! Fie, for shame! If only the people don't get to hear of it.

VICKO. Say no more, mother, say no more; I have good eyes. But I durst not think any more about it, or else I get into such an evil temper that I could kill him on the spot.

DOMINA. (*Shrieking.*) Vicko! God's Holy Mother of Lissa!

VICKO. She has kept away from me for a whole week, and my heart is raging in my breast, my eyes are getting blind. A whole week! And yesterday at two in the afternoon, when the sun was burning most fiercely, your husband and the knave my father slunk down to the olive-grove. When he got there, he looked warily about him like a thief, and went to lie in wait behind a thick gnarled tree-trunk. The sun was scorching, the earth was fairly bursting, and everyone took care to stop in a shady nook, only Bisserka did not keep still. Dressed all in white, blushing to the roots of her hair, breathing heavily, she left her honest home and slunk through the vineyards, hovering towards the olive-grove. Oh, if I had only been struck by lightning when I saw them hidden behind the rock together in the olive-grove!

DOMINA. (*In desperation.*) My son!

VICKO. Her father must have fallen asleep in the garden when she slipped across to him—an honest daughter, bah!

DOMINA. Where was I all the time?

VICKO. Snoring in the house.

DOMINA. And nobody was to be seen out there?

VICKO. I saw nobody but them.

DOMINA. And what else happened in the olive-grove?

VICKO. I saw nothing else. Shame, jealousy and murderous rage rose to my head with my seething blood, and I fell to the ground as if I had been mown down.

DOMINA. And when you came to your senses

again, did you see nothing more of them in the olive-grove ?

VICKO. No.

DOMINA. How long may it have lasted ?

VICKO. I do not know.

*(The darkness deepens.)*

DOMINA. My son, that is fancy. A wild, sinful, slanderous fancy. You are burdening your soul with a great sin.

VICKO. So help me God, it is true !

DOMINA. God Almighty ! It is getting dark. *(Seizes her son by the hand.)* Stop ! *(Then calls to the left.)* Piero, Nicko, Mate, Pavle, here !

### Scene II.

*The same. The lads mentioned rush in from the left.*

PIERO. Our bowels are beginning to murmur with hunger. Mistress, what are your commands ?

DOMINA. Go into the house and eat to your heart's content. And then off to Podgorush.

PIERO. And the master ?

DOMINA. The master is fishing for a lobster somewhere. A real monster, or maybe he's got it and can't bring it home. But off to Podgorush quickly. Time and tide don't wait. Almighty, what waste !

THE LADS. It is well ! *(Exeunt.)*

DOMINA. *(To VICKO.)* You wait for me here a moment, I'll go to Matic. I must find out why you have seen nothing of Bisserka for a whole week. So many ideas are passing through my mind. And yet, my son, they are nothing but wild, sinful, slanderous fancies.

VICKO. (*Protesting in desperation.*) No, mother, no, dear, beloved mother, no. Not now. I shall perish for shame.

DOMINA. (*Drags herself away.*) I cannot see you any longer in torment. Heaven and hell, if it were really true! Oh, no, no, no, a thousand times, no!  
(*Exit.*)

(VICKO continues brooding for some time, then, sighing deeply, sits down on a stone. The light in the lighthouse is kindled, and a small bark can be seen putting in to the shore. A form rises from the bark and calls softly across: Vicko!)

VICKO. (*Gives a sudden start, gets up and looks over.*) Who is it?

THE VOICE. I, Kimbo.

(VICKO goes up to him.)

KIMBO. (*Nervously.*) Your father is pursuing me with a rifle, or else it is my fear of him that is pursuing me. (*Steps on to the beach and gradually comes forward.*)

### Scene III.

VICKO. Where did you see him?

KIMBO. Near the island of Lohin.

VICKO. He sailed to Podgora.

KIMBO. (*Sighing.*) It was near Lohin I saw him. But I must go.

VICKO. Your eyes are wild and unsteady, your mouth is distorted. What is amiss with you? Speak!

KIMBO. It is passion and fear. (*Looks timidly round.*) But if your father catches me, he'll shoot me dead on the spot.

VICKO. (*Seizes his hand.*) What was the matter? Speak!

KIMBO. You are crushing my hand, you are out of your mind!

VICKO. Speak!

KIMBO. (*In a feeble voice.*) To-day at noon I ate too much fish and drank too much wine and felt very ill at ease.

VICKO. Oh, whatever are you talking about?

KIMBO. And I thought the best way for me to digest it would be to sail in my bark out into the sea and the mistral, right out, a long way.

(*VICKO rubs his forehead impatiently.*)

KIMBO. And then I raced off as far as Podgora and did not meet a living soul, only right in the distance I saw a few Italian sailing-vessels that were sailing to Spalato with their lemons and oranges.

VICKO. Cut a long story short!

KIMBO. Wait, man, I am in a fearfully mad hurry as well, but it can't be told at once. (*Looks timidly round again.*) If only he hasn't caught sight of me here and is lying in wait behind a rock, rifle in hand! (*More quickly.*) From Podgora I raced over to Lohin. The sun was blazing in a mass of dry gold, the sea was dancing, and the mistral was playing a delicate muffled mandoline, and so I reached Lohin.

VICKO. Quick, quick, the ground is burning beneath my feet. You've no idea how——

KIMBO. Still no signs of a living soul, only the sea and myself. I was getting quite vexed not to find anybody; everything seemed dead in the heat of the sun; only the sea was breathing.

VICKO. You are making me sweat a death-sweat.



KIMBO. I went in the direction towards the blue grotto. But by cliff of Rsan I came to a sudden standstill. The tiller jerked itself out of my hand, the bark nearly capsized. Five yards away from me sat your father with her in his boat in the shadow of the cliff. Her head was leaning against his breast, and he was wildly kissing her.

VICKO. That's enough, I know all about it now. (*Trembles.*)

KIMBO. My blood froze in my veins, my brain grew dim and misty, and like a beast of prey that sniffs blood and sex, I was about to dash forward to drag the girl to myself. I clenched my teeth, and yet my mouth uttered some dim and growling sound : a, a, a !

VICKO. Enough, enough, I am cold. It is making the very stones cry aloud !

KIMBO. They started up, their mouths were all awry with fright. He stared at me, gave a quiet smile and drew his rifle out of the bark. I uttered a deadly shriek, pushed the bark off from the cliff with all my might and wildly, without looking round, I raced on and on.

VICKO. (*Struggles with himself tremblingly.*) It leaves me quite cold. Only I am ashamed that this knave was my father.

KIMBO. When I came to myself again, I looked round. The white of the waves was playing round the blue grotto, the sky was colouring itself red, the shadows were falling into the sea, and through the shadows their boat was slipping into the blue grotto. And Satan darted into my blood and into my soul again, and I hastened up to the blue grotto. Oh, if

I had had gunpowder, or if I had been the sea or the storm, I would have blasted, shattered, crushed, swallowed the grotto and them with it.

VICKO. And you tell me that as a friend, bah !

KIMBO. I love truth and only wanted to tell you what a brute our lust makes of us. And in telling you of this revolting thing, I also wanted to ask your pardon in my own name. Sex knows neither friendship nor kinship.

VICKO. Well, wallow in filth, if it pleases you.

KIMBO. Nobody is free from that, not even you. For an hour I had been struggling with myself as to whether I should go into the grotto or not, when I was overwhelmed again. Drunken, blind, in a rigid embrace, with lewdness still oozing from their lips, I saw them dart towards me.

VICKO. (*Plunges his nails into his hair. In a hollow voice.*) Ha, ha, ha !

KIMBO. Quick as lightning I turned round, but oh, dear ! the mistral had already abated. A shot tore the stillness, and a bullet whistled past my ear. A deadly fear got the better of me and I began to ply the oars. My breast was surging, my muscles grew taut, and I turned into a mere raging machine. Then the second shot fell and soon afterwards the third, but each one farther away from me. "Ah ! your hand is trembling too much from the flame of love," I laughed to myself.

VICKO. I have a great many things of my own to see to. Let us take leave of each other.

KIMBO. Only one thing more. Do you know whom I met afterwards ?

VICKO. Who ?

KIMBO. Matic, her father. But, gracious Heaven, what a sight he looked !

VICKO. How ?

KIMBO. Savage and broken at the same time, enraged and yet resigned to fate. You could see at once by his miserable chalk-white face the kind of sorrowful search he was starting on.

VICKO. Had he weapons by him ?

KIMBO. The barrel of a rifle lay across the edge of his boat.

VICKO. (*Horried.*) Then there will be an encounter !

KIMBO. How pale you have turned ! (*Seizes his hand.*) Whom are you frightened about ? About her, your father, your mother, or yourself ?

VICKO. (*With trembling lips.*) I do not know, I only feel how madness is raging through my brain, and my heart seems as if it were burnt out. Did you say anything to him ?

KIMBO. I gave a broad sweep with my hat and saluted him as I have never yet saluted a man, he seemed to me so mysterious and big with fate ; and I said to him : " I suppose you are going to shoot sea-hounds, sir." At that his murderous look seized me like a pair of tongs, and he hissed out : " Yes, yes, to shoot *the* sea-hound ! "

VICKO. By that he clearly meant that knave, my father.

KIMBO. Yes. But now I must go. Fear is trickling through my marrow the whole time. Your father is somewhere in the darkness taking aim at my poor head.

VICKO. (*Seizes his hands.*) Only a moment,

till I am myself again. (*Struggles with himself. Pause.*)

KIMBO. It is quite late, I must go.

VICKO. But what shall I do, then? . . . Oh, I am lamed, I can do nothing, and my soul is in a storm of blood! . . . (*Shakes KIMBO'S hands.*) Friend and devil, God and brute, what shall I do?

KIMBO. Fate has already stepped in, and where fate has taken charge of things, men must withdraw. What ever can have given your father courage for this foolhardy crime?

VICKO. (*With trembling lips.*) His boastful craze.

KIMBO. His boastful craze?

VICKO. The ship.

KIMBO. I've heard about that,—now everything is clear to me. Farewell! (*Quickly across the beach into the boat and exit. Pause.*)

#### Scene IV.

VICKO. DOMINA.

DOMINA. Have the lads sailed for Podgorush?

(*VICKO says nothing and stares in front of him.*)

DOMINA. (*Looking into his face.*) Heavenly Virgin! you look as if your soul had been torn into pieces. But calm yourself, calm yourself, I bring you good news, happy, blessed news. (*Hastily.*) Listen! I went to Matic, and nobody was at home there. Bisserka went yesterday evening to her aunt at Lohin, and Matic started off this afternoon to hunt sea-hounds. The only strange thing is, that he has not returned home yet. The darkness keeps getting deeper and thicker.

I went to see the sister of Matic and heard about everything there. But do not tremble. Now comes the blessed news. Bisserka's love for you is without bounds, but, alas! on her mother's deathbed she was promised to a rich fisherman's son; I think he is called Logrincevic. There has been a bond between the two families for centuries, ever since the time when their ancestors conquered the islands and settled down there. But on an island in the middle of our ocean there is a marvelously beautiful girl whom nobody has yet seen, and she is a thousand times lovelier and wiser than Bisserka. She has grown up beneath golden oranges and lemons and amid myrtle thickets.

VICKO. Listen!

DOMINA. What is it?

VICKO. The two are struggling together.

DOMINA. Who?

VICKO. My father laden with shame, and the crazed ravisher of girls.

DOMINA. (*Looking into his eyes.*) Are you——

VICKO. Do you not hear their hissing and gnashing of teeth and panting.

(DOMINA takes his head in her hands.)

VICKO. (*Drags himself away, shouting.*) Matic, your cause is just, and God's justice shall help you.

DOMINA. Stop, you are filling me with horror.

VICKO. (*Madly.*) Bisserka! Hide your face, that the stars may not see it. Hide it in the waves, in the depths. And, ye nymphs of the ocean, drag the pearls from her neck and the chaplet from her head.

DOMINA. (*Presses his head to her breast, despairingly.*) Son, son, son!



(VICKO'S whole body shakes; a low sobbing is heard. Pause. From the sea can be heard men's voices which come nearer and nearer.)

Scene V.

In the patch of light from the lighthouse a boat is seen arriving. Four MEN lift a corpse from the boat and carry it on to the beach. DOMINA and VICKO start with terror.

FIRST MAN. Not a voice to be heard. It is quite still; the island is sleeping.

SECOND. And does not dream that a dead man has arrived.

(A dog begins to bark.)

SECOND. A dog is greeting us, a dog is beginning to bark.

THIRD. Dogs can scent the dead.

SECOND. Birds can trace the dead, too.

FOURTH. (Catches sight of DOMINA and VICKO.) There are two people. Hi, make way!

(DOMINA and VICKO move back to the opposite side so that the corpse is carried between them in the patch of light and disappears to the left. Both see the face of MATIC. DOMINA hides her face. VICKO remains cool and pale.)

VICKO. (Takes DOMINA'S hands from her eyes.) Did you see it?

(DOMINA hides her eyes again.)

VICKO. Did you see it? The just man has been defeated. Ha, ha, ha! Bah! Farewell!

(DOMINA clings to him.)

VICKO. From now I must hide my face from daylight and the world, and like a screech-owl live only by night. Oh, cursed be the moment when I came into the world! (*Exit.*)

DOMINA. (*Stares after him and follows him, so that the stage remains empty; calls to him despairingly; voice behind the stage.*) Do not leave me, I have nobody else but you. . . . (*Stops for a moment.*) It was I who bore you and suckled you with my milk . . . . (*Short pause; then somewhat farther away.*) It was on my lap you grew up. (*Farther and farther away. A despairing cry.*) Son!

### Scene VI.

*Pause. Tolling of bells. Single voices can be heard in the distance, then an uproar which gets louder and nearer, till at last a crowd of islanders awakened from sleep, bare-footed, without hats (among them frightened women and children) rushes in from the right with burning pine-wood in their hands.*

AN OLD MAN. Put out to sea! After him! A dreadful murder has been committed! Matic has been killed. That just man, the brother and friend of all! Push the boats out to sea, and off! Justice is calling, the justice of God!

VOICES. Death to the murderer! Away!

THE OLD MAN. (*In a feeble voice, exhausted.*) If the crime is not avenged, God's punishment will come upon us. Cholera and plague, blight on the grapes and the wine, scarcity of fish, cyclones, years of famine, earthquakes, the last judgment! Away!

THE CROWD. (*Shouting.*) Off to sea, and death to the murderer!

(*ALL disappear in the background.*)

(*Curtain.*)

## ACT II.

*As in the First Act. A day in summer.*

### Scene I.

*A few WORKMEN on the right are painting the ship. LUKAN on the left in conversation with a pirate.*

LUKAN. (*To the workman.*) Shall I be able to put out to sea to-day?

ONE OF THE WORKMEN. Yes, master.

SECOND WORKMAN. Yes, sir.

THIRD WORKMAN. (*Aside.*) Yes, murderer!

LUKAN. Pray bestir yourselves, the ground is burning beneath my feet. (*Softly continues his conversation with the pirate.*)

THIRD. (*Aside, turned towards the workman.*) If you had not shot Matic and outraged his daughter, the ground would not burn beneath your feet. And so burns hell beneath your murderer's feet and it will soon swallow you up, too.

SECOND. You are always chattering about that.

FIRST. Judge not, that you be not judged.

SECOND. (*To the THIRD.*) Man, nothing has been proved, nobody saw it, nothing is known.

THIRD. (*Indignantly.*) Nothing is known? Why, the very sparrows on the roofs are beginning to chirp about it.

SECOND. Yes, all the islands are talking about it, and yet nobody saw it. And only the eyes are witnesses.

THIRD. But still, there is a man who saw something.

SECOND. But even he did not see the deed, but something else altogether.

THIRD. The outrage on his daughter.

SECOND. Not even that was seen, so the story goes.

THIRD. By working at this ship, the ship of a criminal, and so helping him, we are committing a deadly sin.

FIRST *and* SECOND. Hahaha!

SECOND. We are working in these hard times for our wages, and if he were Satan himself it is no affair of ours.

FIRST. (*To the THIRD.*) We haven't a morsel, you fool. And I see no signs that the Lord God looks upon it as his affair, while Lukan gives us plenty to feed on.

LUKAN. (*Calls across to the WORKMEN.*) Before I put out to sea, I'll give you enough wine to bathe in.

SECOND. Merciful heaven! He's giving us wine, too! (*To LUKAN.*) Long live Lukan! Have no fear, before darkness falls, your ocean vulture will fly forth into the open sea. Oh, what a piece of work. I am still trembling with reverence for your plan of the ship. Oh, it is no ship; it is a living being that yearns for distant light and endless space!

FIRST. Heaven and hell approach each other peaceably in your ship and kiss and recoil again violently from each other.

THIRD. (*Aside.*) Knavish hirelings!

LUKAN. (*Excitedly to the pirate.*) I am offended by your captain's notions, he is crazy; and I am sober.

PIRATE. Don't get excited; he esteems and admires you greatly.

LUKAN. I did not build the ship to go seeking robbery and murder.

PIRATE. In the first place alone, he esteems and admires you greatly because of your glorious father, now in God's keeping. It is said that while he held sway over the ocean as a knight of plunder, your father so favoured by God, together with his comrades, despoiled over twenty Italian galleys heavily laden with valuables and many, many ducats, and then sent them to the bottom of the sea. And at such an exploit my captain bows down in reverence, as the Turk in prayer before his God.

LUKAN. Do not speak about it, that is irksome to me. I will have nothing to do with my father's footsteps.

PIRATE. My captain would share everything with you.

LUKAN. Do not speak about it, or else——

PIRATE. When he heard that you were building a ship, an invincible ship, a mysterious and uncanny ship, he fell into a transport of drunken frenzy, and before the dark countenance of ocean he drank wine from the evening star to the early dawn, and we sang and played the mandolines to his delight.

LUKAN. Hahaha!

PIRATE. What message shall I take him?

LUKAN. Tell him, I love all that is bold, venturesome, remote, scornful of the world, eager for glory,



fond of freedom, distance and radiance, but that I am one who never serves other men's purposes.

PIRATE. And if he asks me what your purposes are ?

LUKAN. My soul has awakened, bleeding and rebellious within me; the beauty and wisdom of a chaste damsel have awakened it, and I will search out my soul, the radiance and boundless space,—those are my purposes . . . but we are talking too much. I am just awaiting her; she is coming to look at the ship, her work, before it puts out to sea.

PIRATE. She is coming to look at the ship ?

LUKAN. Yes.

PIRATE. May I not see her ?

LUKAN. Yes, if you want to die.

PIRATE. When is she coming ?

LUKAN. Towards dusk.

PIRATE. That is the damsel whose father was shot.

LUKAN. Yes.

PIRATE. And whose death casts a shadow upon you.

LUKAN: Base suspicion, God is my witness that I am guiltless.

PIRATE. My captain and I have been asking questions—all the islands are murmuring against you with this suspicion.

LUKAN. I am a free spirit and do not flinch from any deed, but where I am guiltless— (*Clenches his fist.*) Bah !

PIRATE. And we have discovered besides, that they are summoning justice against you, that they will try you in court.

LUKAN. I am afraid of nobody.

PIRATE. But if the gendarmes come for you ?

LUKAN. Of nobody, nobody. I take my own part utterly and alone.

PIRATE. But it would be a grievous pity and a crime of crimes if such a man as you were to rot away in prison.

LUKAN. Deuce take it, if it is my fate.

PIRATE. My captain and I will see to it that it shall not be your fate. And that is the chief reason why I came to you, rather than to win you over for our labour in common. We all admire you, and in all our deeds we utter your name: "Thus would great Lukan think and act!"

(LUKAN feels flattered and smiles.)

PIRATE. Now I will ask you whether you agree that in case of need and danger we should save you.

LUKAN. If it were my fate, I could not defend myself against it.

PIRATE. Oh! it will be your fate, for all threaten and hate you; gloomy clouds are gathering above your head and chafing against the lightning as they lie in wait for you. . . . The sun is sinking towards the west. Now I must hasten. Farewell, Lukan!

LUKAN. (*Presses his hand.*) Farewell!

PIRATE. How proud shall earth and ocean be of you! (*Exit.*)

### Scene II.

LUKAN. (*To himself.*) If only those foolish clouds do not send the lightning before she comes. I asked her to look at the ship before it puts out to sea. It is her work, she created it. . . . But it is my intention to take her with me. . . . for what can I do, lonely and

deserted amid the shorelessness in the jaws of ocean and hurricanes? How can I, lonely and deserted there, search out my soul, the radiance and boundless space? . . . (*Looks out on to the sea.*) The first silken threads of darkness are weaving the dusk. Come, O Bisserka, come! I am perishing. . . . Come, thou radiance, thou soul of all things! the boundless spaces are calling us! (*To the WORKMEN.*) Well, lads, are you making headway with it?

FIRST. Only the finishing touches now, master, and it is ready. The sun has dried everything marvellously.

SECOND. Ah! we are looking forward to the wine most eagerly.

LUKAN. I will reward you as a prince his subjects.

FIRST. (*Looks towards the Left, sees the PRIEST, and a small crowd of PEOPLE; seizes hold of himself and begins to wail.*) O-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o!

LUKAN. What's amiss, what's amiss? Why are you bleating as if you were haunted by a ghost at midnight, or as if the devil were skinning you alive?

SECOND. Look round, Lukan, and you will see at once why he is bleating.

(*LUKAN looks round and sees the PRIEST with a crucifix in his hand; a small crowd of PEOPLE is about to follow him, but he keeps them back with a wave of his hand, as if it were too soon yet for the people.*)

LUKAN. (*Spitting.*) Satan, the plague, a goat would be more welcome to me. I fear the clouds are gathering together above my head.

## Scene III.

*The same.* The PRIEST.

THE PRIEST. Praised be Jesus Christ !

LUKAN. (*Wrathfully.*) Good-day, your Reverence.  
(*Both look each other straight in the face for a time.*)

LUKAN. How fares it with you ?

PRIEST. How is it, Lukan, that for a long time you have been keeping away from my abode, as if it were something unworthy, and have not been coming to church ?

LUKAN. I had no time, your Reverence ; I have been working day and night at the plan of my ship.

PRIEST. (*Smiling compassionately.*) But the ship does not come before God.

LUKAN. But it may be that God is in the ship——

PRIEST. Oh ! Before Easter all the people, young and old alike, came to confession and received the sacred host. You were the only one who did not confess.

LUKAN. At that time I was so absorbed by many things of this world that I heard no voices outside me.

PRIEST. Where is your son ?

(LUKAN *shrugs his shoulders.*)

PRIEST. Where is your wife ?

LUKAN. Perhaps at Lohin with her relatives.

PRIEST. Why do you not trouble about them ?

LUKAN. Because they do not trouble about me.

PRIEST. Your son has run quite wild and is living in the caves among the rocks like a poor timid animal. By day he flees the sun, and by night the moon, and it is only now and then by night in a storm that some

fisherman or other sees him wringing his hands despairingly across the ocean and wailing his grief in company with the storm into the ocean. You must have transgressed very grievously against him and crushed something very tender in his soul.

LUKAN. Instead of wailing into the ocean with the storm he ought rather to be at Podgorush and learn fishing. He does not even know yet how to draw the nets.

PRIEST. And your wife—so I am told by people from Lohin—has put on black as if she were a widow, and is weeping day and night at what has befallen her.

LUKAN. What a mummery !

PRIEST. You must have something very grievous and dark upon your soul, something at which even God weeps and man shudders. . . . (*Stops, lifts up the crucifix.*) As your brother in Christ, as the envoy of God, I call upon you to confess to me.

LUKAN. (*Trifling.*) When does your Reverence desire it ?

PRIEST. It would be best now at once.

LUKAN. Here ?

PRIEST. Yes.

LUKAN. Could your Reverence not have patience until to-morrow ?

PRIEST. Delay means a heavier burden on your soul.

(*The PEOPLE can be seen to the left at a respectful distance.*)

LUKAN. My soul is strong ; it has a stout hide.

PRIEST. It must be done at once, for it is not only my wish, but the fervent wish of all the people. The people came rushing into my abode imploring me to



demand the confession from you. They fear that the punishment of God will come upon the island.

*(The PEOPLE to the left raise an outcry.)*

PRIEST. Do you hear it? And the voice of the people is the voice of God.

LUKAN. *(To the PEOPLE.)* Senseless clouds! *(To the*

PRIEST.) I will tell your Reverence something.

PRIEST. What?

LUKAN. From now on I will commit my soul only to Nature, to the ocean, the storm and the sun. An ordinary man can be but an ill judge and redeemer.

PRIEST. The murderer of Matic!

LUKAN. Pious knave!

PRIEST. The soul of the murdered man is clamouring to heaven for justice, and here are you doting carelessly upon your folly. *(Turns towards the enraged PEOPLE.)* The murderer will not go to confession, my Christian people, he will wait until the gendarmes drag it from him with rifle-butts and bayonets, and until the witness shouts the truth into his face.

*(The PEOPLE again become enraged and shout.)*

PRIEST. *(To the WORKMEN.)* And you ignorant men yonder, cease to share in a work of the devil, that the punishment of God may not come upon you.

FIRST and SECOND. The ship is finished.

LUKAN. The ship is finished. I will fetch the wine and we will celebrate the festival. *(Looking towards the PRIEST and the PEOPLE, to himself.)* Oh, unhappy human soul, what filth it is that clings to you!

VOICES OF THE ENRAGED PEOPLE. Let us destroy the ship! Let us slay the murderer! Let us set his house on fire! Down with him! Come! *(Rush forward in a frenzied wave.)*

THE PRIEST. (*Gives an agile leap in front of them, lifts up the crucifix and his other hand.*) Stop, stop! You will ruin everything, you wild herd! We must not rob justice of him. What is a pale wretched death at your hands compared with the solemn gallows of justice, where he will hang with outstretched tongue! Away from here! Let him celebrate the festival—it is the festival of one condemned to death, celebrated before the sentence is carried out; it is a trembling, teeth-chattering festival of death. (*He presses them back with his hands.*) Back! back! calm and composure! (*All draw back and disappear together with the priest.*)

#### Scene IV.

*The WORKMEN descend from the ship. LUKAN brings a few bottles of wine in a basket. Keeps two bottles for himself and gives all the rest to the WORKMEN.*

THE WORKMEN. (*All drink greedily except the THIRD one.*) Hurra for Lukan! Hurra!

LUKAN. (*Turns towards the ship.*) Oh, how I longed for your completion, and now you are there, firmly jointed, beautiful and ready for flight! Like a bird of prey you long for far places, azure and radiance. My ship, you were born in love and despair,—be, then, invincible. Nature desires to subjugate the soul and make it a wretched slave, but now it rebels from the depths of the ocean up to the abysses of heaven; it desires to be free and to hold sway eternally amid radiance. My ship, be invincible. Let cyclones lay waste ocean and earth, volcanoes spit horror and death from their smoking, seething chaos; be unterrified, be courageous, stubborn and big with fate,—my s ip,

be invincible. In the drunken raptures of victory, in your flight through the azure distances, in your swoop upon the enemy, be a sea-vulture. And when the ages and grey eternities like the monsters and monstrosities in the dark beginnings of the ages, dart forth upon you with icy-cold pinions and gnash their long venomous teeth of destruction and decay at you, laugh murderously at them, and say: "Away from me, icy-cold monsters; it was eternal creative love that fashioned me. I know naught of time. I begat myself. I am God and fate unto myself!" (*Drinks and then pours the wine over the ship.*) Drink, my ship, drink! let us seek ecstasy above the wretchedness of existence, and be invincible. (*Looks out across the sea.*) Ah! there she comes, there she hovers onwards and heaven and ocean enwrap her in their purple!

FIRST WORKMAN. Where will your first voyage be, Lukan?

LUKAN. Somewhere to the virginal forest. Something prompts me to search out man's origins and the soul in its first sorrowful hell. The soul, my friends, bleeds for an ever more glorious hell. What is our poor stinking flesh! But away with you from here! She is approaching, she—the soul and the radiance. . . . There, your wages. (*Throws them a purse with ducats. Exeunt all.*) And I must go quickly into the house. I must fetch my rifle to protect her from the eyes of all. No strange shadow may fall upon her.

(*Exit into the house. Pause. The stage remains empty for a time.*)

## Scene V.

TWO GENDARMES *come creeping up with fixed bayonets from behind the house on the right and take their stand, one to the left, the other to the right, with their rifles ready.*

THE GENDARME ON THE LEFT. Shift back a little, so that he can't see us from the room, for if he does, we're settled—he'll shoot a few of us down at once. The devil doesn't know what fear is.

THE GENDARME ON THE RIGHT. My poor comrade, how can he shoot down a few of us, when there are only two of us altogether ?

THE ONE ON THE LEFT. (*With shaking knees.*) Pardon me, I made a mistake in counting.

THE ONE ON THE RIGHT. Ah, comrade! this is an unpleasant task ; your knees are shaking. . . .

THE ONE ON THE LEFT. Never mind, comrade, it is good for the digestion. . . .

THE ONE ON THE RIGHT. In your fear——

(*The JUDGE comes creeping along with his head well down, the CLERK with a small bundle of documents under his arm, and the witness KIMBO.*)

THE JUDGE. (*To the GENDARMES.*) Well, sirs ?

THE ONE ON THE LEFT. We are standing our ground bravely, your Worship.

JUDGE. What about the criminal ?

THE ONE ON THE RIGHT. He has not come out yet. But I fear my comrade will fall ill by the time he shows himself. His stomach is out of order.

THE ONE ON THE LEFT. Oh ! I have arrested worse men than him without evil results.

JUDGE. Stand up smart and alert. (*To KIMBO.*)  
And you will speak the truth to his face.

KIMBO. I'd rather the devil would take it all;  
still, if it must be, I shall have to put up with it.  
But look, your Worship!

(BISSERKA, *in beautiful national costume comes rowing up from the left in a small boat, sees who is present, and begins to struggle with her terror.*)

JUDGE. Good Lord, what a splendid girl! Who does she belong to? Could anything be managed about it? But why is she so frightened of us? I suppose it is the gendarmes—she has never seen gendarmes before. . . . Splendid, splendid, splendid! . . .

KIMBO. There she is.

JUDGE. Who is she?

KIMBO. Bisserka, the daughter of the murdered man.

BISSERKA. (*Overcome with terror, calls softly and trembles.*) Lukan!

JUDGE. Good Lord, she is calling Lukan.

(*THE GENDARMES alter the position of their feet and grip their rifles more tightly. A few red gleams encircle BISSERKA in the boat.*)

JUDGE. Good Lord! How splendidly the purple colours her red lips as she stands there in the boat! Good Lord! . . .

BISSERKA. (*Lamenting like a child.*) Lukan!

(*THE GENDARMES move again.*)

JUDGE. Good Lord! I wish I was a wave and could clutch her boat and clutch her, too, and carry her and carry her farther and farther into the eddy, good Lord! into the eddy.



BISSERKA. (*In loud despair.*) Lukan !

LUKAN. (*Rushes out with his rifle.*)

THE GENDARMES. Halt !

(BISSERKA utters a despairing cry.)

LUKAN. (*Towards her.*) Bisserka! My Bisserka, how I thank you !

JUDGE. Put the handcuffs on him. (*It is done.*)

LUKAN. Bah, how base! I am not a brute beast to be set upon and bound.

JUDGE. There is a suspicion of murder resting on you. (*Pointing to KIMBO.*) Do you know this fellow ?

LUKAN. I know many odd creatures of one sort or another.

JUDGE. Do you plead guilty to the death of Matic ?

LUKAN. Perhaps I share the guilt, but I did not kill him.

JUDGE. (*To KIMBO.*) We will hear the witness whom you pursued on the fatal afternoon and at whom you fired three times.

KIMBO. When I think of that day again, the fright still races through my marrow. God's wonder that I escaped death. On the nights when I dream about that day, you are chasing behind me in your boat and firing at me.

JUDGE. (*To KIMBO.*) Tell him to his face that he shot Matic !

KIMBO. (*To LUKAN.*) I did not see you fire at Matic ; indeed, for sheer fright I could not even see you firing at me , and yet from all that I did see . . . ah, Lukan ! don't struggle ; cross yourself and cast yourself into the dust for justice to see. . . . Even the gallows will be too small a thing to punish you for that day

—a thousand gallows are too small a thing for that day. . . . Paradise and eternity is too small a price to pay for your entry into the blue grotto. . . .

LUKAN. (*Laughs.*) You calf!

KIMBO. Ever since that day I have been ailing and crazed, Lukan; and not only I, but your son and the whole parish as well.

LUKAN. Hahaha!

JUDGE. He laughs, he confesses, God be thanked!

FIRST GENDARME. God be thanked, we do not need to drag the truth out of him with the butts of our rifles!

SECOND GENDARME. And with our bayonets, God be thanked!

JUDGE. (*To LUKAN.*) Where did you spend the following night?

LUKAN. At Podgorush.

JUDGE. Did you sleep well that night?

LUKAN. That night with my lads I caught a million pilchards.

JUDGE. What a catch after such a bloody deed!

LUKAN. What bloody deed? I confess nothing. . . .

JUDGE. (*Chagrined.*) You do not confess——

(*Signs of chagrin among those present. Pause.*)

The PEOPLE raise an uproar and appear on the left. In front the PRIEST, assuaging them.)

JUDGE. (*Pointing to the left.*) What is that?

KIMBO. Those are all the witnesses and the desperate people who are clamouring for justice.

(*The PRIEST leaves the PEOPLE on the left and hurries towards the JUDGE.*)

PRIEST. Your Worship!

JUDGE. Your Reverence!

PRIEST. (*Pointing to LUKAN.*) Is the deed confessed ?

JUDGE. No !

PRIEST. And yet it is clear as day ! The criminal fears neither the justice of God nor of the earth !

JUDGE. Hm, yes !

VOICES OF THE PEOPLE. (*In uproar.*) Sentence him, or we will sentence him.

THE OLD MAN. (*From the close of the First Act.*) Cholera and plague will come upon us. Cyclones will lay waste our ocean. Years of famine, earthquakes, murrain, scarcity of fish, the last judgment !

THE CROWD. (*In a fury.*) Death to the murderer !

PRIEST. Like a towering ocean they are threatening to rush upon the murderer and sentence him.

LUKAN. And I am not afraid. Who dares to sentence me ? What are you ? Sand, blades of grass, ants !

JUDGE. And you ?

LUKAN. I hear the bellowing of the lion in the virginal forest.

(JUDGE *drawing the* PRIEST'S *attention to* LUKAN, *as if* LUKAN *were not in his right mind,* PRIEST *assents with a nod of his head. The darkness descends.*)

LUKAN. Listen ! listen ! (*Listens himself.*) A sweetly fruited pearl has tenderly closed its shell.

JUDGE. It is getting dark.

PRIEST. As in the human soul.

JUDGE. And it would be downright dangerous to continue the examination. I hear that this place teems with pirates whose greatest pleasure it is to make away with a man out of the hands of justice.

ONE OF THE GENDARMES. Twenty such men have so far been made away with.

JUDGE. Ha ! Away from here as speedily as possible ! (*Gathers up the documents. To the CLERK.*) Is everything noted down ?

CLERK. Yes, your Worship.

JUDGE. (*Drawing the attention of the GENDARMES to LUKAN.*) We will take this fellow with us. He will be the biggest knave in our prisons. (*To the PRIEST.*) Farewell, your Reverence.

PRIEST. Will your Worship not first of all do my pious home the honour, and drink a glass of good old wine ?

JUDGE. With all my heart, your Reverence. I am already drinking it in thought, but it is too late and I am really very much afraid. (*Presses the PRIEST'S hand, beckons to the PEOPLE.*) Farewell, people !

ONE OF THE CROWD. (*Pointing to LUKAN.*) Tortures, first, your Reverence, tortures first. (*In a tearful voice.*) First of all give him a thrashing on the heels, let him hang over a fire, and then with boiling oil——

BISSERKA. (*Rushes up to the GENDARMES and LUKAN.*) I am guilty of everything. I flung myself into his arms (*Pointing to LUKAN*), and made away with my father.

JUDGE. Let her go and gather shells !

PRIEST. The poor unhappy girl is telling herself lies : he has bewitched her.

BISSERKA. After we left the grotto, my father fired at us, and when he did not hit us, he shot himself for grief. That is the truth. God is my witness. Let him go ! . . .

JUDGE. (*Sighs.*) Come!

(*The PEOPLE begin to stir. Shouts.*)

JUDGE. (*To the GENDARMES.*) What are you waiting for?

THE GENDARMES. (*Point to the PEOPLE.*) The people!

JUDGE. What about the people?

(*The PEOPLE point to the sea.*)

PRIEST. They are pointing to the sea . . . and they are all overcome with fear and horror. Alas, a disaster is approaching us!

JUDGE. The cyclone?

A PANIC-STRICKEN VOICE. Pirates!

### Scene VI.

*The same. An armed band of PIRATES, the CAPTAIN at their head. A few PIRATES surprise the GENDARMES and cover them with rifles.*

PIRATE CAPTAIN. Let nobody move and let nobody speak a word. Not a drop of blood shall be shed; we have only come to help you and to make clear what is just. We are men of a higher breed. Nobility! You want to try Lukan and do not know who Lukan is. You can only try your equals. Lukan is a higher, nobler creature, and you are ordinary men. But we must not waste time with words—we are men of action. We only want to separate the wolf from the sheep and goats, the lion from the swine. (*To his MEN.*) Put the ship out to sea! (*To LUKAN.*) Oh, long indeed has time waited for you to seek your eyrie and return back to your earliest home, the universe!  
 . . . How late, how late, how late!



LUKAN. Captain, what has been neglected shall be made up for. Bisserka, come with us.

BISSERKA. No, Lukan, no. I must atone for my sweet sin, that is my only reward.

LUKAN. Bisserka !

BISSERKA. I must marry the rich fisherman's son, it was settled for me at my mother's death-bed. . . . But come to my wedding. A year from to-day.

LUKAN. Dead or alive I will come to your wedding, Bisserka !

BISSERKA. Farewell, Lukan !

LUKAN. Farewell, Bisserka !

*(The ship, together with LUKAN and the band of PIRATES, puts out to sea.)*

*(Curtain.)*

### ACT III.

*Virginal forest. In the background the sea. For a time the stage remains empty.*

#### *Scene I.*

*The PIRATE CAPTAIN is seen surrounded by half his men, who are carrying various treasures as plunder, and advancing at their head. They are followed by women of various races, including negresses, escorted by the other half of the men.*

CAPTAIN. *(In front at the head, in the centre of the stage.)* Pitch the tent quickly and light a fire ; I must lie down, I am dead tired !

FIRST MAN. (*From the Second Act.*) No wonder, Captain, after such an exploit!

SECOND MAN. Captain, I feel uneasy about our camping place here. May I speak?

CAPTAIN. Speak!

SECOND MAN. (*Waves his hand in a circle.*) It teems here with beasts of prey, and the great gorilla ape is also a denizen of this forest.

CAPTAIN. Well?

SECOND. Pardon! If you do not fear them, we must not fear them, either.

(*The tent is pitched, a carpet spread out beneath it. The fire flickers in front of the tent.*)

CAPTAIN. What are your rifles and your hands for? Let none among you ever dare speak of fear, whether of men or of animals. If any man is afraid, I will have him hanged on the nearest branch.

(*The ROBBERS whisper among themselves and silently rebuke the SECOND MAN.*)

CAPTAIN. (*Lies down on the carpet.*) My head is too low.

(*The ROBBERS look at each other perplexed. FIRST takes a woman by the hand and leads her up to the CAPTAIN.*)

CAPTAIN. (*Lays his head on her lap, is about to settle down to sleep, but again half raises his body.*) Where is Lukan?

FIRST. He has washed the blood from his ship and has sunk into gloomy brooding.

CAPTAIN. Lukan is a lofty star, but keep watch on him. At every deed we committed his eyes started out of their sockets, bloodshot with amazement. His soul is too thin, too fine and boundless. Our deeds

may become repulsive to him and make him leave us together with the ship. That is the only fear.

FIRST. Have no care, Captain, we will keep watch on the lofty star. (*Exit.*)

CAPTAIN. As soon as Lukan sets foot on this ground here, wake me and we will share the plunder and the women. (*Lies down, falls asleep and begins to snore softly.*)

(*The WOMEN stir in alarm. Some of the MEN sit down in front and begin to relate their deeds. Some gather round the WOMEN to talk with them.*)

FIRST. What is the island of the natives called ?

SECOND. I do not know. I only know that the men of this tribe fought like lions.

THIRD. And we showed no mercy.

SECOND. If we were to show mercy, we should not come into possession of their treasures and their women.

THIRD. I am sorry for so powerful a race.

SECOND. Surely you do not expect us to fight with worms !

FOURTH. I shall never be able to forget a poor old man to whom I was a brute in the savagery of my blood. . . . His fingers outstretched like claws, his mouth awry and his rolling eyes . . . brr ! . . . those grey eyes of his still make me blind.

FIRST. The Captain has let us have no rest since that uncanny ship put out to sea—he wants to avenge Lukan, he says. Hahaha !

SECOND. (*Whispers to the FIRST.*) He wanted to appease his consuming pangs of greed for other men's treasures and other men's lives.

FIRST. The first victims were the two ships of the

marine with the gendarmes who were hunting for us. The poor wretches had no inkling of the secret power of Lukan's vulture.

THIRD. That moment I shall never forget.

FOURTH. For a whole afternoon it played with them, and when the sun was sinking in the sea it attacked them as a falcon might attack two hens, pecking with its beak first at one, then at the other, and mortally dazing them, till they foundered and all were drowned.

THIRD. And then it took to flight towards the Black Sea.

FOURTH. Every wild thing must flee, even though it is a thousand times stronger.

ALL. That is true !

FOURTH. In the Black Sea the hurricane broke out in the night, far away from the shore, far from God, and far from the haven.

THIRD. The hurricane is the scourge of God for pirates.

FOURTH. In all hearts are kindled prayers like silent oil lamps in the small lonely chapels, whose golden cups and silver we stole. We are powerful, but fear is uncanny. We turn our glances towards Lukan as though towards our God, and Lukan laughs with murderous scorn upon the hurricane, strokes the helm and shouts : " My ship was begotten in love and despair. My ship is invincible."

THIRD. Oh, it was a hellish night !

FOURTH. And for two nights and two days the sea-vulture strove with the hurricane. . . . The ocean looked as if hell were combing it with its flarings ; on the third evening the hurricane collapsed exhausted

the hell that was combing the ocean faded . . . and our Captain fell upon Lukan's neck and, in the end, at his feet. . . .

SECOND. From that day we have prayed in our despair and distress to his ship instead of to God. . . .

*(A few lie down again. A few watch the other group of MEN and WOMEN. The fire crackles.)*

A MAN. *(To a WOMAN in the other group.)* Come, let us go deeper into the forest and pick small flowers.

THE WOMAN. What, go with you and pick flowers? You knave, you are the one who killed my husband.

THE MAN. He was no good in the world, and if I killed him, that was only part of my trade.

THE WOMAN. Leave me alone in my sorrow that I may lament over my fate like a widowed bird.

THE MAN. You do not need to lament, you will have all your losses made good. *(Attempts to kiss her, but she strikes him in the face. He is about to rush at her, when the others call to him: "Steady, sh! the Captain is asleep!")*

A GIRL. *(Lamenting.)* I have vowed eternal fidelity to my betrothed.

SECOND MAN. *(Sitting next to her.)* Do not trouble about that—I will release you from your vow.

GIRL. May a poisonous serpent twine itself about your neck!

SECOND. You might very easily be that serpent.

*(The other WOMEN also show themselves on the defence against their wooers.)*

CAPTAIN. *(Dreaming.)* Do not defend yourselves, do not struggle, you must die at some time or other. . . . You only live that you may die, and how and through whom does not matter. . . . When God kills,



He hides His face and gathers power from the boundless distance, but we are open hangmen. . . . Your goods, hahaha! Your goods are as much yours as ours. Nobody yet established a claim to his goods for ever, only as long as they did not become somebody else's. . . . Your goods, hahaha!

(*ALL listen in suspense.*)

CAPTAIN. (*After a short pause.*) We rob! Hahaha! What? Things gained in sweat and blood? Hahaha! And we do not sweat and shed no blood. You sit in comfort on your treasure and we are exposed to a thousand dangers.

SECOND. (*To the THIRD.*) That's how he argued with a merchant on his galley in the Adriatic before he robbed and killed him.

CAPTAIN. The wind robs, the sea robs, time robs us of our lives—all is robbery. But why so much talk and explanation? There is an explanation for you—my knife, ho! (*Panting.*)

THIRD. He is panting fearfully hard!

SECOND. He is straining himself in his dream as much as if he were really killing a living man. . . .

CAPTAIN. (*Shouts in his sleep.*) At them, lads, at them, like tigers, like lions! (*Panting.*)

## Scene II.

*The same. The FIRST MAN comes from the ship.*

FIRST. He will not speak a word, he broods and broods and broods, as if he wanted to brood out the whole world; and the ship is sunning itself, quietly on the watch, with blue tides, sky and unbounded spaces proudly flowing round it.

SECOND. And our Captain is panting, panting and panting, as if he had to pant out his own soul. He is struggling with the dead. Just look! He is beginning to foam at the mouth!

FIRST. Ah! the dead are getting stronger and stronger—let us wake him.

SECOND. But he said, only when Lukan sets foot here.

CAPTAIN. (*Clenches his fist desperately in his sleep and shouts.*) Help, help, help!

(*A dim inarticulate shout from the virginal forest.*)

FIRST. Who gave answer then?

SECOND. Who gave answer then?

(*ALL look at each other in alarm.*)

THIRD. It came out of the forest.

CAPTAIN. (*Wakes up, breathing heavily, rubs his eyes.*) Is Lukan there? Who woke me?

FIRST. Captain, Lukan is not here yet, and what woke you was a dim shout from the forest.

CAPTAIN. That shout plunged deep into my soul and tore it open. Go and see what it was, while some remain with me.

(*A few go into the forest.*)

FIRST. Captain, what is amiss with you?

CAPTAIN. Did you ever hear the like? I dreamed that I was wrestling with a corpse that was half decayed and yet could speak; and just imagine!—the filthy thing was trying to do for me in a way that set the fear shaking through the marrow in all my bones. . . . It is the first time in my life that I have known what fear is, and if it were reality, I should be ashamed to call myself Captain and would rather fling myself into the sea. (*To the FIRST MAN.*) Pray go and tell

Lukan to come. I implore him to explain this accursed dream to me.

(FIRST *exit.*)

CAPTAIN. (*To the WOMAN.*) And you lay your hand on my heart so that the hot stream of your blood may turn my thoughts to quite different things. . . .

(*The WOMAN does so. For a while they continue in this position.*)

### Scene III.

*The same.* LUKAN *with the* FIRST MAN.

CAPTAIN. (*Stands up and bows before LUKAN.*)

LUKAN. Good-day, Captain !

CAPTAIN. Pray sit down, and we will stand.

LUKAN. You wanted something of me, Captain. You dreamed a dreadful dream.

CAPTAIN. (*Pointing to the FIRST MAN.*) Did he tell you ?

LUKAN. Yes.

CAPTAIN. And what do you say to it, conqueror of the hurricane ?

LUKAN. I do not know what fear is, either in dream or reality.

CAPTAIN. Nor I, either.

LUKAN. But the dead have lamed your soul.

CAPTAIN. It was here.

LUKAN. You see, man is not afraid of thoughts, but only of forms. If the forms of the murders you have committed had been good, you would never have known in dream what fear is. Murder as Nature murders : slowly and delicately, piecemeal and cruelly, and no corpse will ever lame your soul.

CAPTAIN. How does Nature murder ?

LUKAN. Let us take an ass. As long as it is young, it plays, grazes, and mates. The whole green world and all females belong to him. He is a delight to himself. But then he gets old, his teeth fall out ; he becomes blind and prays for death. But Nature lets him go on living to her own delight. Blind, without teeth, wheezy, unable to walk, he must still drag loads and wallow in muck up to his belly, and the whip rains down blows upon him, until blind and lamed he comes to an end in the muck. And nobody is haunted by his ghost because of his death.

CAPTAIN. A wretched fate !

LUKAN. Or else do murder for some sacred cause. Take a flag in one hand and a dagger in the other, and while the blood is flowing, shout : " For light and the faith ! "

CAPTAIN. Lukan !

LUKAN. That is how they did murder throughout all history, and were not called to account.

CAPTAIN. And we ?

LUKAN. Your nobility murders in a stupid, senseless feeble manner, only to gather in the spoil and to pass the time away.

CAPTAIN. And how would you murder ?

LUKAN. I cannot murder because I love, and if I were to murder, I would love by means of the murder.

*(The dim inarticulate cry from the forest is repeated.)*

LUKAN. *(Starts up.)* Did you hear it ?

CAPTAIN. For the second time. I sent the men to search.

*(The MEN come rushing in out of the forest.)*

*Scene IV.**The same. The MEN from the forest.*

FIRST MAN. Captain, it is a huge animal, brown as the brown bear, and he goes on his hind legs.

SECOND. There is an evil light in his eyes and his shape is very much like a man's.

THIRD. It is the great gorilla ape. He has scented the women here, and is allured by sex.

CAPTAIN. Deuce take him ! I just wanted to set about sharing and he will disturb us. How far away from us is he ?

THIRD. About half a mile. He comes nearer and then moves back again.

CAPTAIN. And the brute can scent sex as far off as that ! Almighty, what nostrils ! But hand over the gold quickly.

*(A filled sack is brought.)*

CAPTAIN. *(Opens it and the ducats cast a golden sparkle.)* Lukan, I will not extol your wisdom, your ship and yourself here. For that I should need no end of time, cymbals, drums and clarionets and thousands of other instruments, to sing your praises up to the heavens. Let it be said briefly. *(Pointing to the gold.)* Take as much as you like and we can have what is left. Take all !

LUKAN. *(In a trembling voice.)* Thank you, Captain, I gave up all my share at the very outset.

CAPTAIN. Do you feel no magic in gold ?

LUKAN. No.

CAPTAIN. And I long for it to blinding point. Come ! Here are women of various races, ripened as fruits in the red glow of the sun, with fragrant souls and fragrant



flesh, bearing great likeness to tropical fruits and magic moons of gold: for me and my comrades they are the highest reward for bloody deeds and the requital of paradise for the hell to come. Seek out (like flowers) from amongst them those which will give you greatest delight, and we can have what is left. Or take them all as a high reward and, like a sultan, found an entrancing harem, and let us pine away in our cravings.

LUKAN. (*In a trembling voice.*) Thank you, Captain. I gave up all my share at the very outset.

CAPTAIN. Why do your lips tremble and why are you deadly pale?

LUKAN. It is sudden joy, Captain, at the longing I feel for the forest and the gorilla. Captain, let this man-like creature come near to us—that will be my highest reward.

THE MEN. If we let him come here, he will tear us to pieces.

LUKAN. Then I will let my ship fly towards the open sea. You had the wish to go forth in search for spoil and I refused.

CAPTAIN. (*Turns pale.*) It makes me more than happy that for you I can——

LUKAN. When the animal comes near to us, nobody may lift his rifle.

CAPTAIN. If anybody does so, we will throw him in front of the animal to be mauled to pieces. . . .

(*The MEN and WOMEN stare into the forest. The WOMEN move closer together in alarm.*)

VOICES. He is coming, he is coming!

LUKAN. (*Jumps up, goes forward, catches sight of him, and his face is radiant; stretching out his hands.*) How shall I greet you, brother!

ONE OF THE MEN. He is coming nearer and nearer, he is lying in wait, he is going to pounce on the women.

(ALL move back. LUKAN remains where he is. The CAPTAIN stands behind him. The MEN and WOMEN stand in a crowd on the left. The GORILLA appears from the right.)

Scene V.

The same. The GORILLA, savage, somewhat in fright, shows himself and disappears at once.

LUKAN. (To the GORILLA.) I gaze into the mirror of ages and shudder at abysses. Oh, how sad was the path from you to us! How sad the light and the God which we discovered! Oh, why did we not remain with you in the depths of the forest?

SECOND MAN. He is pondering and will approach afresh.

THIRD. He does things cunningly like an artful man.

LUKAN. (Talking on.) Why did Nature commit the crime of kindling the evil light of conscience in the human soul?

THIRD. Captain, now he is coming up in leaps and his mouth is foaming with rage; now he will maul.

CAPTAIN. (Watches.) Fire a few shots in the air!  
(They do so.)

LUKAN. (Turns round.) Captain!

CAPTAIN. Your safety is at stake and I must alter my resolve.

(LUKAN goes to the right. ALL watch in suspense and listen.)

LUKAN'S VOICE. From that time the earth has

tasted harsh to us, and the sun bitter, for we know that it shines only a moment upon us, to vanish for ever. . . .

MEN. What courage !

CAPTAIN. And these uncanny words ! They are like words of Moses.

LUKAN. (*Comes from the right.*) Captain, which woman belongs to me ?

CAPTAIN. All.

LUKAN. It is only one I want. (*Goes up to one.*)

CAPTAIN. But, Lukan, what will you do with the woman here in your gloomy agitation. Let us rather go on to the ship. . . . I am alarmed about you.

LUKAN. I will give her to my brother.

(*The WOMAN utters a cry of terror.*)

A MAN. (*Comes up.*) Captain, I will die before that is done—I love this woman.

(*Pause. ALL look at each other in perplexity.*)

LUKAN. (*To the WOMAN, pointing to the right.*) I will give you to the ape out of pity for you. He will only tear you in pieces, and perhaps not even that,—the animal has delicate impulses. And he (*Pointing to the MAN*)—he will beat you on the heels, let you hang head downwards over a fire, he will beat you, hang you, torment you, damage your soul and body. Come !

(*The WOMAN defends herself desperately.*)

CAPTAIN. Lukan, the gorilla has got right away.

MEN. (*Looking to the right.*) There is not a trace of him left.

LUKAN. (*Looks to the right and listens.*) You have gone without taking my gift. Were we not loathsome to you, did you not scent the crimes with which we have been laden since the beginning of all

things, and so you hid yourself terrified in the distance and the depths of the forest? Oh, what a mournful taste this encounter has left in my soul, and what bloody yearning it arouses within me! . . . Oh, a thousand, a hundred thousand times would I rather be a gorilla than a Lukan. . . . (*Aloud.*) Captain! My legs are trembling beneath me, and all my soul is as if stirred up by a storm. . . . The glimmer of light in my soul torments me and lashes my blood. Let us forget the dead and the living and arise to action. To daze our senses afresh. To daze our senses and daze them again, that is our only aim in life.

ALL. Arise, to action!

LUKAN. It is autumn, Bisserka is marrying, a year has passed like a moment, and I must go to her wedding.

CAPTAIN. Shall we not first make for the Great Ocean, to fish there?

LUKAN. First to the wedding, and then——

CAPTAIN. So be it! To the wedding, to the rejoicings! Lukan, the eternal master, will marry, although Satan, the gallows are lying in wait for us in our own country, and a voyage to the Great Ocean would be a hundred times better—it would be a hundred times better and more profitable. But no more of words! Off to the wedding! Long live Lukan!

THE MEN. Long live Lukan!

(*Curtain.*)

## ACT IV.

LUKAN'S home, the island. Afternoon sun in autumn. By the shore a chapel: in front of the chapel a large crucifix, before which DOMINA is kneeling with folded hands and praying softly.

## Scene I.

DOMINA is kneeling and praying, then comes the LETTER-CARRIER from the right with the post in his hands.

LETTER-CARRIER. (*Looks round and catches sight of DOMINA.*) Hi, Domina!

(DOMINA gives a sudden start and looks at him fixedly.)

LETTER-CARRIER. Pardon me for disturbing you in front of the cross, but I have just distributed to the priest and to some of the fishermen very important letters and papers that came from the distant ocean.

DOMINA. (*Ends her prayer, crosses herself and stands up.*) What about the letters and papers?

LETTER-CARRIER. Lukan has appeared in our seas. Fishermen are said to have come upon him by the Italian coast.

(DOMINA crosses herself.)

LETTER-CARRIER. You are quite right to cross yourself at this news, as if against a devil. The fishermen at once quitted their stations and are fleeing now as wildly as fish away from a shark.

DOMINA. What does the priest and our fishermen say to it?



LETTER-CARRIER. They are all afraid and have lost their heads. For it is curious that the monster should be lurking about just when the daughter of Matic—God rest his soul!—is going to be married.

DOMINA. Bisserka is going to be married?

LETTER-CARRIER. Her wedding will be to-day in this very chapel where you have been praying.

(DOMINA gives a deep sigh.)

LETTER-CARRIER. Why, where can you have been living, not to know anything about it?

DOMINA. Ah, God! Have I been living at all, since I have no longer dared to look the world in the face?

LETTER-CARRIER. To-day Bisserka is marrying the rich fisherman's son—you know Logrincevic of Lohin.

DOMINA. Ah God, Logrincevic! What a good man you are, master, to tell me all that, and indeed, to speak to me at all!

LETTER-CARRIER. What are you thinking of? You are a Christian woman, and why should I not speak to you?

DOMINA. I only mean . . . I am very, very grateful to you, master. (*Weeps.*)

LETTER-CARRIER. Mistress Domina, for heaven's sake! . . . I cannot bear to see it. . . . You are guiltless, you share no guilt in the monster's shame. . . . He is no man and no Christian; his days as a man are ended for ever, he roves about with pirates.

DOMINA. I thank you, master, I will always thank you for it; never shall I be able to forget your kindness. . . . Farewell! I must not stop here any longer, people will be passing by.

LETTER-CARRIER. Stay where you are, Domina, why are you afraid of the people ? It is all folly.

DOMINA. Oh, master, what a noble-minded man you are ! But I durst not, it would be insolence, blasphemy. Those who are marked must hide their faces. (*Is about to go.*)

LETTER-CARRIER. Mistress, pray be reasonable. There is something else I must tell you. I have seen your son.

DOMINA. (*Struggles with herself to stifle her feelings, puts her hand over her mouth ; the sound issues feebly from her throat.*) Where did you see him ?

LETTER-CARRIER. Near the cliff of Rsan before sunset, as I was fishing.

DOMINA. How did he look ?

LETTER-CARRIER. Very wretched and very unhappy, Domina : his body was clad in rags and quite wasted away—skin and bones. Is it a long time since you saw him ?

DOMINA. I have not seen him since the day of shame.

LETTER-CARRIER. Why does he keep away from you ?

DOMINA. He, my son, is very wise and just. My child is very wise and just, he wishes to punish me for having given him birth. And he is right. Why did I give him birth ?

LETTER-CARRIER. Eternal God, what things you say !

DOMINA. And yet that is all too little, master.

LETTER-CARRIER. What is too little ?

DOMINA. The penance.

LETTER-CARRIER. What need have you of penance ?

DOMINA. What need ? Because the sun shines upon me.

LETTER-CARRIER. By God, you are——

DOMINA. Perhaps it is not everyone who is worthy of it.

LETTER-CARRIER. Oh, sacred cross !

DOMINA. And must requite it.

LETTER-CARRIER. Woman !

DOMINA ! O God ! what are our petty woes against all that ? (*Moves her hand in a circle.*) Against heaven and sun. Oh, the sun, the sun, the sun, it is so bitterly dear ! (*Quivers and bursts out into bitter sobbing.*)

LETTER-CARRIER. (*Takes her by the hands.*) Oh, you good, noble, Christian soul ! Do you wish me to bring you home ? (*Takes her by the arm.*)

DOMINA. Yes, master, have pity on me and bring me home, but not this way where the people go, but aside yonder where the animals go. (*Looks towards the right.*) But quickly, quickly, a woman is coming !

LETTER-CARRIER. (*About to lead her away, looks towards the right.*) Can you not recognise her ?

DOMINA. (*Looks.*) My eyes have become weak of late. Who is it ?

LETTER-CARRIER. But what can she want here, while yonder the wedding guests——

DOMINA. Who is it ?

LETTER-CARRIER. Bisserka.

DOMINA. (*Terrified.*) Who ?

LETTER-CARRIER. Bisserka.

DOMINA. Mercy, mercy ! bring me quickly away, quickly, quickly !

LETTER-CARRIER. Too late, she is coming speedily right up to us.

*Scene II.*

*The same.* BISSERKA.

BISSERKA. (*To DOMINA.*) I have left the bridegroom and the wedding guests and have been searching for you.

DOMINA. What do you want of me ?

BISSERKA. Can you forgive me ?

DOMINA. I forgive you ? You forgive me ! You have taken so much upon your weak shoulders without breaking down.

LETTER-CARRIER. I must take the rest of the post round. (*Exit.*)

BISSERKA. After the death of my father I wanted to plunge a knife into my heart. . . but the steel will not enter my body. . . .

DOMINA. You are too young.

BISSERKA. I climbed on to the rock to throw myself into the ocean, but the waves of the ocean will not receive me.

DOMINA. You are too young and Nature loves you.

BISSERKA. I went out before the people and cried : " Behold me ! I flung myself into Lukan's arms and brought about my father's death ; spit upon me and trample me underfoot." But they smiled pityingly and said : " You are an innocent angel. Lukan is a monster, he has bewitched you, wronged you, and slain your father."

DOMINA. You poor, outraged child !

BISSERKA. Do not speak so to me. I have turned your son into a poor senseless thing.

DOMINA. God willed it so, my daughter.

BISSERKA. I said to my bridegroom : "I cannot be your wife ; it is the devil I love." . . . But he flung himself at my feet and licked the dust from them with his mouth.

DOMINA. You precious, beloved, radiant child !

BISSERKA. Lukan said I had aroused within him the slumbering light that searches for eternity, and I feel as witless as a rock.

DOMINA. Oh, you know all things, and can do all things ! You are a magic fairy !

BISSERKA. I set myself naked, at the mercy of Nature for her to lash, maul and scorch me with her storms and lightnings, but she sends me fondling winds of fragrance and gentle kissing sunrays. . . .

(DOMINA *kisses her.*)

BISSERKA. I am an orphan and have grown up wild as a cypress in the storm, take me in your protection, be my mother.

DOMINA. Yes, I will be your mother, my poor child.

BISSERKA. And when he comes, clasp me firmly, clasp me firmly.

DOMINA. Who will come ?

BISSERKA. Lukan the uncanny . . . he will come to fetch me. . . . There is a rumour that he is approaching like a storm of ocean, but even without a rumour I should know it, for he promised to come to my wedding. . . . And as long as I do not see him, I hate him like Satan, but as soon as he is before my eyes, he comes upon me like a sweetly destroying nightmare. . . . For your son I have pity. . . . For my bridegroom I have a pitying smile. . . . But Lukan is all things, he is the devil and the hero. He is the foe and the trans-



gressor against Nature, he wrestles with her, he builds the ship that plays with ocean and hurricane. . . . (*Pale, trembling.*) And yet, what am I saying, what is befalling me! Away from me, Lukan, unhallowed man, away! . . . I cannot kill myself because my life will not have it so, but I will confess, atone and marry. I will cleanse the linen, bake bread, plant herbs and be a faithful wife to my husband. I am an orphan, I have grown up wild and sad like a cypress in the storm. Be my mother and bless me.

DOMINA. (*Sobbing.*) God bless you, my child!

*Scene III.*

*The same.* TWO WOMEN.

(THE WOMEN, *seeing* BISSERKA *together with* DOMINA, *cross themselves in wonder and admiration.*)

FIRST. Where have we not sought for you, and to think that we have found you here!

(*Both bow in silence before DOMINA.*)

BISSERKA. Is the wedding procession ready to set off for the church?

FIRST. All, all, and all are in a fever of sorrow and fear where you can have gone.

SECOND. The bridegroom is weeping and searching for you among all the bays.

BISSERKA. Poor lad! Is he very handsome?

FIRST. Everything about him is shining and gleaming.

SECOND. He is handsome and fair as a lover of the moon.

BISSERKA. Has he prepared rich presents for me ?

SECOND. Gold and pearls to your heart's desire.

BISSERKA. And it is easy to see that he loves me, is it not so ?

SECOND. He is consuming his heart and soul in tears for you.

BISSERKA. Poor lad ! (*Throws herself down, kisses DOMINA'S foot and goes out.*)

(*The TWO WOMEN bow down low before DOMINA and go out. DOMINA approaches the cross, crosses herself and is about to go out.*)

*Scene IV.*

DOMINA. VICKO, *in rags and wasted away, comes from behind a rock.*

DOMINA. (*Starts in horror at the sight of VICKO.*)  
Vicko, son !

VICKO. (*Feebly.*) Mother, I have come to her wedding. Alas, my feet are sore ! (*Staggers.*)

DOMINA. (*Holds him up.*) Come back to your mother's breast, come to your home—you are weak and ill.

VICKO. I have come to her wedding, dear, precious mother.

DOMINA. I have just blessed her. But the wedding procession is going to the church not now, but afterwards. Come to your home. And soon we will journey to the middle of our ocean, where on the strange island the radiantly beautiful maiden under the laurels and oranges and myrtle bushes—

VICKO. (*Smiling feebly, bitterly.*) I cannot come to my home.

DOMINA. Why not ?

VICKO. On the threshold of our house lies the corpse of Matic, and spies and watches, and I should go mad. . . . They set him upon our threshold, did you not perceive it? . . . And the chapel bell and her cry keeps haunting me, mother!

*(A noise can be heard.)*

VICKO. *(Timidly.)* Do you hear it, do you hear it?

DOMINA. *(Looks towards the right.)* They are coming, they are coming! Come swiftly! *(Takes him by the arm.)*

VICKO. Mother, let us flee into the mountains, into the cave; let us hide away from men.

*(Both in a sad embrace, depart unsteadily and quickly.)*

### Scene V.

THREE of the PEOPLE appear with letters in their hands.

FIRST. I shall go mad. *(Points to the letter.)*

SECOND. I have read it for the tenth time and cannot understand it, or rather, I can understand it, but my heart is working so violently that my mind cannot conceive it. It is as though I were wrestling with a living devil in a horrible dream.

THIRD. The time is passing and the mischief is drawing near. Set the bells tolling that the people may assemble, and I will go and fetch the priest from his dwelling. *(Exit.)*

SECOND. Let us set the bells tolling and call upon God and man for help.

*(Both draw near the chapel, seize the rope and pull it so desperately that they fling the bell upwards. The bell tolls. The PEOPLE assemble, first singly, then in a crowd.)*

A VOICE. What is it, what is it ?

SECOND. Lukan is coming down upon us. The pirates have deserted him.

FIRST. Together with the Captain, and in mad fear have fled into a seaport. (*To the SECOND.*) Read the letter.

ONE. From whom is the letter ?

FIRST. From a pirate.

A VOICE. Read the letter.

SECOND. (*Reads.*) "On the way, as we left the forest, he went raving mad, ceased to be a man, but became more savage, black and violent than Satan and the hurricane. In a seaport he obtained gunpowder, and wherever he went began to destroy everything with it. He destroyed more than five islands so that not a living soul was left upon them. And why all this raving madness ? He wants to take his revenge on Nature because he was born. Of those who were left alive, a large frigate was manned and began to pursue him, but he fled for three days and three nights until a gloomy, violent storm arose and neither ocean nor heaven could be seen. And amid this horror he attacked his pursuers with his magic ship, which is possessed of a huge secret power, and sank them all. After this battle half my poor comrades went mad and jumped into the sea ; the Captain's reason is still hovering between light and darkness. I hope he will go mad too. And as soon as we reached land, shivering, quaking and half swooning, we left his fatal ship. Rather face justice and the gallows than keep with him any longer. Eternal God, to think of what a man can become if he has too much understanding, and

Lukan has too much understanding." Have you heard it ?

*(All sigh heavily.)*

*Scene VI.*

*The same. The PRIEST bearing a crucifix in his hand.*

ALL. Holy father !

THE PRIEST. *(Raises the crucifix.)* Calm ! I know all.

FIRST. Holy father, how far does your power reach ?

PRIEST. *(With a pitying smile.)* How far does my power reach ? I have no power. Ask rather how far reaches the power of God, and my answer to you will at once be : " It has no end."

FIRST. And you ?

PRIEST. And I am God's envoy.

FIRST. Holy father, can you deliver us from Lukan ?

PRIEST. If the Almighty will, I can, but if the Almighty desires to put you to the test, because he loves you, then Lukan will come down upon you.

FIRST. How does this accord with God's kindness and justice ?

PRIEST. See, there are times when cholera and plague break out upon countries and lay low every living thing. There are times when volcanoes break out upon countries and with glowing ashes overwhelm plants and human creatures, that is, all that is guiltless, that is guilty of no sin against heaven. But that is the jest of the elements, and God's mercy is above this jest. The Almighty breathed into man an immortal soul which overcomes every



such jest. Lukan is also a jest of the elements, he comes upon us instead of cholera and plague and the volcano, but the human soul will outlive him. He can harm our bodies, but our souls never. Then do not lament, but down on your knees and pray. I must return at once. For among the wedding guests, too, there is lamenting and sorrow. If I come this way with the wedding procession, show courage and joy, and cheer the others up. The marriage must be ended quickly, for if the monster comes over here, as the letters say, he must find the bride already wedded; perhaps he will be awed by the seventh holy sacrament. (*Exit.*)

(*ALL kneel and pray with folded hands. A storm rises on the sea. Through the storm comes sighing and lamenting of some of the PEOPLE: "Deliver us from Lukan and his ship, Lord God!"*)

ALL. (*Louder.*) "Deliver us from Lukan and his ship, Lord God!"

FIRST. Woe to us and our prayer, the storm is the herald of his arrival.

SECOND. Ay!

(*ALL grow silent. The storm is renewed with greater violence.*)

ALL. (*Louder.*) "Deliver us from Lukan and his ship, Lord God!" (*Continue praying in silence.*)

FIRST. There is chillness in my soul.

SECOND. I see a fiery dragon flying, to whom every night the island must sacrifice a maiden.

(*The storm bursts forth. Singing and rejoicing of the WEDDING PROCESSION: "Haha! Hurrah! hurrah!"*)

## Scene VII.

*The same. The WEDDING PROCESSION. At the head, the priest with the crucifix. He is followed by BISSERKA with the handsome BRIDEGROOM. The PROCESSION walks once round and then remains standing in front of the chapel. The KNEELERS stand up and welcome the PROCESSION with shouts of: "Long live the bride! Long live the bridegroom." The PROCESSION bursts into the cry: "Long live the bride! Long live the bridegroom!"*

FIRST KNEELER. (*Trembling and with shaking knees.*) Bring wine, it is fine weather and we must be merry.

OTHERS. (*Pointing to the sky.*) Very fine weather! This storm and the clouds!

SECOND. The sky looks as if it would swallow us up.

FIRST. Bring wine.

(A WEDDING GUEST *hands the FIRST MAN a bottle with wine.*)

FIRST. (*Drinks, pointing to the bridal couple.*) May they be blessed and multiply!

ALL. Hurrah!

THE PRIEST. (*Raises his hand.*) Let there be stillness!

(*Silence.*)

THE PRIEST. The heaven is enfolding itself in black clouds, the storm is beginning to comb the ocean, and we must proceed quickly to the holy sacrament. But before the bridal couple crosses the threshold of God's house, I will first question them before the angry

countenance of Nature and before you all. (*To BISSERKA.*) Bisserka, you proud, wise and beautiful maiden, you fairest pearl and nymph of our ocean, do you realise what is before you ?

BISSERKA. I know all.

PRIEST. Do you love this honest and worthy lad ?

BISSERKA. I love him as myself. I love him as my brother, my father who is with God, and as my friend, (*hesitantly*), and yet——

PRIEST. Yet what——

BISSERKA. He will not be happy with me.

PRIEST. (*Astonished.*) Why ?

BISSERKA. I love him and yet—I am thinking of Lukan.

(*Stupefaction, stirring, whispering among the PEOPLE.*)

BISSERKA. I will serve him as his slave, watch over him when he sleeps weary with toil, I will bestow sweet words and my body upon him for his solace, and yet my soul will always be with Lukan, for it is Lukan's plunder.

PRIEST. Then you do not love him, unhappy girl ?

BISSERKA. (*Pale, trembling.*) I love God and think of Satan.

PRIEST. Then a marriage is out of the question.

BRIDEGROOM. (*Desperately.*) Holy father, wed us !

PRIEST. (*To the BRIDEGROOM.*) Do you love her ?

BRIDEGROOM. (*Kneels down at BISSERKA'S feet.*) Oh, how I hate her for loving Lukan ! And yet she is my divinity and my fate and I am her servant and bondsman. (*Desperately.*) Holy father, wed us !

PRIEST. (*To the PEOPLE.*) What do you say to it ?

(*Uproar among the PEOPLE.*)

PRIEST. Shall I wed them ?

BRIDEGROOM. I cannot live without her. What was once ocean, sunset, father and mother to me—she has taken it all in her hand and holds it as if by a magic thread. If you do not wed me to her I must kill myself.

PRIEST. (*To the PEOPLE.*) Well ?

A VOICE. Do not wed them.

BRIDEGROOM. (*With folded hands to the people.*)  
Compassion and mercy !

VOICES. Wed them !

BRIDEGROOM. (*With folded hands to the PEOPLE.*)  
I will be an honest man and sailor.

THE PEOPLE. (*Bursting into a roar.*) Wed them !

(PRIEST *steps in front, the PROCESSION after him, into the chapel. Wailing and piping of the storm from the distance, first muffled, and then louder and louder. Pause.*)

### Scene VIII.

DOMINA *comes creeping up with VICKO. The mother is holding her son by the hand.*

DOMINA. Where do you want to go, then ? Oh, unhappy me !

VICKO. I want to see her only once more, a single time more, mother. There is still something there. (*Points to his breast.*) It glimmers and flickers like—

DOMINA. She is already in front of the altar with her bridegroom, and you must forget her, forget her for ever, my son.

VICKO. Oh, if something would only happen, if lightning would only strike the church! . . .

DOMINA. My son !

VICKO. And would burn up everybody, mother, everybody—us as well!

DOMINA. Calm yourself, my son, calm yourself; death and oblivion will come upon all.

VICKO. That would be a release. (*Looks absently out to sea, and gives a sudden start.*) Mother, do you see it? (*Points.*)

DOMINA. A ship!

VICKO. A strange ship!

DOMINA. (*Puts her hand above her forehead and looks out.*) It is coming this way so swiftly, in spite of the storm and the roaring ocean.

(*VICKO goes towards the shore, cowers down and looks out to sea. DOMINA follows him in alarm.*)

VICKO. It is coming here like mad, it is flying, mother!

DOMINA. (*Strains her eyes towards the distance.*) Do you know what, Vicko? (*Gradually becomes joyfully excited.*)

VICKO. What, mother?

DOMINA. That is he!

VICKO. Who?

DOMINA. Your father!

VICKO. (*Overwhelmed with joy.*) My father! Daddy!

DOMINA. (*Still watching.*) It is he, assuredly. Only his ship can fly like that, in spite of the storm and the roaring ocean. So the sailors declare.

VICKO. It is he, mother, he! (*His face beams with delight.*)

DOMINA. (*Stares out enthralled.*) Have you already caught sight of him?

VICKO. (*Stares out enthralled.*) Yes, on deck. Oh, how wonderful he looks! Such radiance in his eyes



and his face! Mother, he is flying here from Podgorush. He must have caught a huge amount of fish.

DOMINA. Yes, yes, he has caught thousands and thousands of pilchards and mackerel.

VICKO. And a big lobster for me.

DOMINA. And a big lobster for you.

VICKO. (*Shouts out to sea.*) Father!

DOMINA. (*Shouts out to sea.*) My husband, my young life, my all! (*Both stretch out their arms towards the sea.*)

### Scene IX.

*The same. The splendid magic ship appears from the right. LUKAN on deck.*

DOMINA. Oh, how long, how long, how long you have kept us waiting for you! . . . The supper is ready, the polenta is steaming, the lads are waiting for you. You must make for Podgorush with all speed; there are only three more dark nights in all, the moon will be shining on the fourth, and you are squandering time. For shame!

VICKO. Father, have you brought me a lobster?

(*LUKAN stares at them.*)

DOMINA. You do nothing but dream dark dreams and play the prodigal instead of setting about things in earnest. . . . The vines are wasting and all our vineyards are in decay, the storm passes through them with a hollow wail. . . . Have you come from Podgorush? Where did you leave the lads?

VICKO. Papa! Daddy! Show me the lobster!

LUKAN. (*Steps ashore and struggles with himself.*) Yes, I have come from Podgorush; the lads have stopped in the fisherman's hut in the bay to patch the nets.

Oh, there was rough work last night! A shark, a monster, got into the net, devoured the fish we had caught and then tore the net. Just imagine the damage and the maddening fruitless labour! The lads are in very low spirits; we did not catch enough fish to keep them for a day.

DOMINA. (*About to embrace him, mournfully.*) My poor husband!

VICKO. (*About to kiss his hand.*) My dear, precious Daddy!

LUKAN. (*Moves aside in alarm, shouts.*) Am I dreaming or am I mad? Time is flying before my eyes like storm-clouds! Oh, months, days, and hard, untoward, pitchy nights! . . . Yes, wife, it would have been better if I had stayed at Podgorush and looked after the nets and vineyards and proper clothing for this poor wretch. . . . But I could not resist. In my heart strength was roused—she aroused it. . . . The forest clamoured for me, God clenched His fist menacingly above me and forced me into the track of time and of meekness; but my soul rebelled and defended itself desperately with its own radiance and its love, and then I fashioned the ship that fled from God and time, and (*sighing*)—but why these stories? (*Listens.*)

(*A hymn is heard being sung in the church:*

“ Praised, praised be  
 God the Lord:  
 Praised, praised be  
 He in the heights!  
 And peace, peace  
 Be unto men in the places below!”

DOMINA. (*Embracing his knees.*) Think of God and leave us no more!

VICKO. Daddy, my lobster !

LUKAN. (*Listening, enthralled by what is taking place in the church.*) I see, they are about to exchange rings, hahaha ! How solemn, this wedding festival ! (*Shouts towards the church.*) Bisserka !

DOMINA. (*Imploringly.*) Husband !

VICKO. Daddy !

LUKAN. (*Shakes them aside.*) Touch me no more, there is nothing human about me. I have murdered my conscience and murdered my love from now onwards. . . . (*Listens.*) I believe she has heard my voice.

(*The hymn that was being murmured in the meanwhile stops suddenly.*)

LUKAN. (*Listening.*) Ah, the hymn has stopped, the church is taken aback and listens !—How often as a child have I prayed there to the painted God !—Ah, they surmised my arrival ! . . . Hahaha ! (*Creeps up to the door of the church.*) I hear the throbbing pulse-beat of fear. I see the blood running cold in their veins. . . . The mute nightmare is stifling them all. . . . But mercy on them ! (*Listens at the door, then pushes it open and steps into the church.*) Bisserka, I have come to your wedding ! (*Remains standing there with a satanic smile on his face. In the church, cries of terror, tumult and noise, panic. BISSERKA rushes out in fright. LUKAN takes her in his arms and flees with her on to the ship.*)

LUKAN. To the ship, to the ship, to our eternity !

(*The ship departs. Wedding guests rush out of the church. Noise. Shouting. Tumult, tolling of bells, roaring of the storm.*)

(*Curtain.*)

## ACT V.

*Scene I.*

*The blue grotto in the sea. Rocks in front. Near the grotto LUKAN'S ship in the evening glow. On deck, LUKAN and BISSERKA. Sunset.*

BISSERKA. (*Absently.*) Nobody can see us now ?

LUKAN. (*Takes her into his arms.*) Nobody !

BISSERKA. And nobody is pursuing us ?

LUKAN. (*Kisses her forehead and her hair.*) Nobody !

BISSERKA. What is the weather like ?

LUKAN. (*Kneels and embraces her knees.*) Heaven and ocean are reconciled and heaven is caressing ocean with his purple. (*Strokes her hand.*)

BISSERKA. I feel so afraid.

LUKAN. Why feel afraid when you are with me ? (*Kisses her hand.*)

BISSERKA. (*Bewildered.*) I do not know. . . . Where are we ?

LUKAN. Do you not see ? . . . By the blue grotto.

BISSERKA. (*Recollecting.*) By the blue grotto ! (*Absorbed in thought.*) Oh, how grievously the bridegroom shouted, as if a knife had pierced his heart, and the wedding guests were seized with horror, as if they had suddenly beheld the plague in a living form !

LUKAN. That was their fear of me. Did you hear my voice in the church ?

BISSERKA. I was just about to receive the sacred Host as your voice penetrated into the church.

LUKAN. And you recognised it at once ? (*Strokes her hand.*)

BISSERKA. It entered my heart like the voice of fate and dragged me away from the altar.

LUKAN. Do you feel happy now ?

BISSERKA. Yes.

LUKAN. Do you see how the grotto glows ? . . . just as before. The sunset, the ocean and the caressing air—all is as before, and in my veins the blood is seething, my soul is melting in sweet throes. Come, let us mount into the boat and enter the blue grotto ! (*Points to a boat which is moored to a jagged peak of rock.*)

BISSERKA. No, I durst not. I was before the altar only just now.

LUKAN. (*Coaxingly.*) All is as before, my heart.

BISSERKA. (*Pointing with her hand.*) And yonder glows Lohin in flames as before, and the cliff of Rsan, and it was from between those sharp threatening rocks that my father—God rest his soul—appeared in his boat.

LUKAN. (*Uneasy.*) Do not mention him.

BISSERKA. In his eyes glowed a fire of sorrows and his soul darkened as the night.

LUKAN. Do not speak of it, forget it. It will mar the joy you will have in entering the grotto.

BISSERKA. Horror seized me, through and through. I trembled, a grievous cry was about to wrench itself from my breast, but you choked it with your heavy kisses.

LUKAN. Come, let us enter the grotto ! (*Takes her by the hand.*)

BISSERKA. No, I durst not.

LUKAN. Why not ?

BISSERKA. I am afraid that my father might again appear from between the rocks.

LUKAN. You are mad, my heart ; your father is dead.



BISSERKA. Yes, dead, but the dead are often stubborn and often haunt the places where disaster befell them. Have you no fear ?

LUKAN. Yes, now you are thrusting it upon me. Yet of old, I strove with the hurricane and men in overpowering numbers and never did fear penetrate my heart, but victory. I knew not fear, either of the forest depths or of the untamed brute.

BISSERKA. (*Trembles.*) Do you see ?—my body is already trembling and my soul is struggling with horror. . . . I durst not look round. From all sides my sins and transgressions are watching and lying in wait for me. Lukan ! Lukan ! Why did you corrupt me ? (*Weeps softly.*)

LUKAN. Hahaha ! I corrupted you ? . . . I strove with you to gain eternity and you say I corrupted you !

BISSERKA. You have destroyed my soul.

LUKAN. (*Reproachingly.*) Bisserka, Bisserka, how sad are your reproaches !

BISSERKA. I have taken upon my soul the death of my father and the unhappy destiny of your wife, your son, and my bridegroom.

LUKAN. Without unhappy destinies there can be no greatness. It was therefore the "Invincible Ship" was fashioned and every loss has its gain. You must not think of what is lost, but of what is gained.

BISSERKA. What is gained ?

LUKAN. The ship.

BISSERKA. The ship. . . .

LUKAN. And through the ship everything. You see how beauty and youth pass away, people grow old and ugly and dull-witted, and I have striven against Nature to preserve your youth and beauty for all times.

BISSERKA. And have you preserved it ?

LUKAN. For all eternity. As in a glittering treasury of the ages it lies here immured in the ship.

BISSERKA. Is it ?

LUKAN. And not only that.

BISSERKA. What else ?

LUKAN. The immortality of our lives is also preserved.

BISSERKA. The immortality ?

LUKAN. Our bodies will perhaps perish, but our souls never. They will hover and bask eternally upon this ship, above the azure sky and the gently foaming mistral sea. They will scoff at Nature as at a shallow miracle and defy her wearisome laws. For this ship will be their span of time, their span of time and their eternity.

BISSERKA. Ah, Lukan ! All that is too little compared with the transgressions we have committed.

LUKAN. Hahaha ! Our transgressions are as the smile of an innocent babe compared with the transgressions that Nature commits against us.

BISSERKA. The transgressions that Nature commits ?

LUKAN. What are we born for ? That we may die in so short a time.

BISSERKA. Lukan, you are struggling against God.

LUKAN. Yes, I am struggling against God. And why is a conscience given us that we may conceive our wretchedness and misery, and that day and night we may be plagued by conscience for being alive ? Bah !

BISSERKA. But the beyond, Lukan, the beyond ?

LUKAN. The beyond is for fools who discover new worlds a couple of yards off, and they can be discovered everywhere. . . . But why are we talking so long ?

Is that the reward for my torments? Is that the reward for your sorrow and shame, Bisserka? Within me there is stirring something new, great, boundless, that has not its like upon this world, and I must create, I must, I must! My blood clamours, my soul has become a vampire and is stretching forth its talons in challenge to God—it is challenging Him to the fiercest of all fierce contests. I must create a new heavens, a new earth and a new universe. Bisserka! You nymph, you divinity, you most luscious fruit and angel, come into the grotto, into the blue magic grotto, come, come swiftly, or the sun will vanish from our sight! The night is surging from the east towards the magic grotto. (*Folds his hands.*) Bisserka!

BISSERKA. Lukan, my precious! I durst not. My father will arise, he will cast the grave aside and arise; he is becoming more and more alive. In my soul I see him already, and I am becoming weaker and weaker before him. I am becoming a tiny docile child before him. (*Stops and listens.*) Alas! I already hear his words and his steps, and his gloomy eyes are burning their way into my soul like two glowing caves. (*Dazed, infirm, lamenting and cowering as if at the blows of a rod.*) Father, dear father, I am guiltless, I am guiltless, I am guiltless! . . . (*Her whole body shaking.*) Alas, alas, alas! . . .

LUKAN. (*Presses her undismayed to his breast and overwhelms her with kisses.*) Bisserka, come to yourself! Come to your senses!

(BISSERKA *drags herself away, struggles with herself and finally collapses.*)

LUKAN. (*Bends over her, in despair.*) Bisserka, do

not desert me! Do not desert my despairing God!  
(*Lifts her up.*)

BISSERKA. (*Still reeling, gradually recovers consciousness.*) Did you see him?

LUKAN. (*Terrified.*) Who?

BISSERKA. My father!

LUKAN. Bisserka!

BISSERKA. First I saw him as he was when I was quite a little child when he used to punish me for disobedience; and then on the day of sin he was going in his boat to Lohin amid the blazing flames, but at Lohin he changed his mind and started off towards Rsan.

LUKAN. Morbid fancies, Bisserka! Your own ideas and nothing else!

(BISSERKA *looks out to sea and again utters a cry of terror.*)

LUKAN. What is it?

BISSERKA. (*Clinging nervously to his breast.*) He again!

LUKAN. (*In a hollow tone.*) Hahaha! (*Steps up to the edge of the ship and speaks out to sea.*) If it is really you, come upon me as a higher power and overwhelm me—it will be my happiness. I shall be delivered from my torment and my deadly terror. I shall then believe in the beyond and destroy the “Invincible Ship.” Ah! Then I can be nothing—a mouse, a grain of sand, a tuft of grass, a water bubble; but if you do not come upon me, then I must be God and fate unto myself.

(*Short pause.*)

BISSERKA. (*Terrified.*) Away from here!

LUKAN. Away from here, in the boundless ocean there are other places for love, and love is as boundless

as the ocean. Oh, magic grotto ! You pearl-shell of our first love ! How you enwrap yourself in the hue of sorrow !

*(The dusk falls. The ship sails towards the left. Pause.)*

*Scene II.*

THE PRIEST, *the crucifix in his hand, with a small crowd of PEOPLE in the boat from the right.*

THE PRIEST. *(To the PEOPLE.)* Did you overhear it ?

FIRST. Yes.

SECOND. I was being stifled the whole time by a devouring dread that he might discover us in our hiding-place behind the rocks and we should all go to God or the devil——

PRIEST. To God, you dolt.

THIRD. All my hair is still standing on end. . . . There is a weird power that comes from him upon you, so that against your own will you feel drawn towards him. You have to curse him, and yet, at the same time, be proud of him.

FOURTH. And his ship is in truth invincible. No wonder that he ruled the hurricane and the ocean and won battles which mock at all miracles.

THIRD. And the girl is blindly devoted to him. The poor bridegroom is a widower before he was married.

FOURTH. Eternal God, to think of what happened before the altar ! Well, holy father, you did not succeed in uniting the bridal couple. Lukan's voice tore them apart beforehand. That will harm the dignity of the Church for ever, and reduce your power among the people.

PRIEST. Poor dolts ! But did you not perceive, did you not hear, you rascals and pirates, how in this very



spot, the dead father awoke in the girl's soul, so that she even saw the dead man in the glowing flames by Lohin ; did you not hear her cries of horror and did you not perceive how Lukan also trembled and shook, and that God's justice is closer behind their heels, you dolts, than we are ?

FOURTH. He wanted to force her into the grotto with him.

PRIEST. Yes, but the dead father defended the unhappy girl from it in her rash frenzy.

FOURTH. When Lukan, the real bridegroom, was urging the girl that they should enter the grotto for the sweet sin, you were trembling all over, and the blood rose to your head so, that I was afraid you would have a stroke, holy father,—you were very excited and jealous of Lukan, holy father !

PRIEST. You are lying, despicable knave ! I was as calm as the rock.

THIRD. But a sinful flame did disfigure your countenance—I saw it, holy father ; but it is no matter, the sinful flesh seduced you.

SECOND. You are not made of stone, either, holy father, but of flesh and blood. . . .

FIRST. The Lord God will forgive you for it, holy father.

PRIEST. By the eternal God, by heaven, by my soul, by all the saints, I was not excited ! How could I, since I bear nothing in my soul but prayer, the name of God and the chiming of bells. It may have been by an unhappy chance that I was red, but that was because the sun was blazing into my face.

SECOND. Your face was in the shadow, holy father.

PRIEST. Eternal God ! Well, it may have been that

by an unhappy chance I drank a glass of wine before my departure.

THIRD. You told me, holy father, that you had drunk much water and upset your stomach and were in danger during the pursuit.

PRIEST. (*Exasperated.*) You drive me mad, you knaves—me, the envoy of God! Was that the object of our journey? Oh, oh! Just come once more into the church, and the church will collapse above you. I shall return. What a herd! Or I will pursue Lukan alone, to see how God's justice exerts its authority over him.

FOURTH. Forgive us!

ALL. Forgive us!

(*It gets dark.*)

PRIEST. It is getting dark. Swiftly onwards! The unhallowed man is already far removed. (*Looks far out.*) Oh, oh! He is already on the horizon with his ship. Oh, oh! I cannot deny that it is weirdly beautiful.

ALL. (*Look out and show signs of admiration.*) Oh, oh! Ah, ah!

FIRST. (*Pointing.*) It is like Something that is passing through the gates of paradise.

SECOND. It flies and flies and flies!

THIRD. It exults as it bathes in the sun. Golden flares are arising from it.

FOURTH. It looks boundlessly proud.

FIFTH. Oh, oh! Just to sail once on that ship, and then die straightway! (*Looking out.*) Lukan, how great and uncanny you are!

PRIEST. (*Looking out.*) And yet God's punishment will not miss you.

ALL. (*Looking out.*) And yet God's punishment will not miss you.

PRIEST. Away!

ALL. Away!

*(Exit the boat to the left. Pause. The rustling and screaming of flying cranes can be heard.)*

*Scene III.*

DOMINA and VICKO in a little boat. As soon as the boat stops, VICKO throws a line into the sea.

VICKO. It must be somewhere yonder, mother, that Daddy caught the giant lobster.

DOMINA. What are you thinking of, my son, to start fishing now that it is dark?

VICKO. I must catch a giant lobster, I must.

DOMINA. *(Laughs.)* But lobsters are not caught with a line.

VICKO. Oh, they will come right enough! I will catch a giant and give it to Daddy.

DOMINA. It will be a good thing if you only catch an ordinary small fish, for you have eaten nothing for a long, long time.

VICKO. And you will fry it over the fire for me.

DOMINA. Yes, I will fry it over the fire for you.

VICKO. And pour a little oil on it. *(Greedily.)* To give it a nice colour when it is fried.

DOMINA. Yes, to give it a nice colour when it is fried.

VICKO. *(Stops.)* Mother, it is pulling.

DOMINA. *(Frightened.)* It is pulling.

VICKO. *(Feeling it.)* Now it has bitten, now, now I have it.

DOMINA. Pull it out, then!

VICKO. *(Exerting himself.)* Oh, it is a great big

fish, it is hugely great, it is laming my hand and yet I will pull it out !

DOMINA. Pull it out !

VICKO. (*Pulls with tremendous exertion and brings up the empty line : in dismay.*) Mother !

DOMINA. (*Comforts him.*) It is too dark to catch fish with the line, my son.

VICKO. Mother, what a disappointment !

DOMINA. Life is just the same, my son. You are always thinking you will catch big and heavy fish, but you only catch sorrow and misery. . . .

VICKO. Mother, I am dead tired. My soul is quite exhausted. . . .

DOMINA. Then lie down in your mother's lap and dream happily as you used to do when you stretched out your little hand towards the stars.

VICKO. (*Lies down in his mother's lap. It gets darker gradually. Screaming of cranes.*)

VICKO. Are those cranes, mother ?

DOMINA. They are cranes, my son. It is autumn, and they are journeying to new lands of eternal sunshine. (*Pause.*)

DOMINA. (*Bends over her son and looks into his face.*) He has fallen asleep, O good and merciful heavens ! (*Rocks him in her lap and sings softly and monotonously.*)

“ The ocean is watching—

Sleep, O sleep, my son !

The breezes are resting,

The heaven is resting—

Sleep, O sleep, my son !

But as soon as tempests arise,

You will leave your mother's lap—

Sleep, O sleep, my son ! ”

*(Kisses him on the forehead, bows her head down to his and falls asleep. Pause. Screaming of cranes. The red full moon rises and the sea gleams in the new magic light.)*

Scene IV.

*The invincible ship with LUKAN and BISSERKA.*

BISSERKA. *(Dazed, despairingly.)* He is pursuing us unceasingly, there he is . . . there . . . *(turns round timidly)* there, there, whichever way I turn! . . . And not only he, but the whole world with him . . . he has called the whole world and even the birds to his help!

*(Screaming of cranes.)*

BISSERKA. *(Startled.)* Do you hear it, do you hear it? And in huge swarms they are flying around me and screaming forth my shame into all the heavens; and how shall I save myself from them, my God! How shall I save myself from them?

LUKAN. *(Gives a bitter laugh.)* Ocean, be accursed that you cannot lull her frenzy and bestow upon me a place of love! Accursed be the moon and its magic light!

BISSERKA. Heaven and ocean are teeming with them, the heaven with the stars and birds that curse, and the ocean with the ships and men that threaten, and I am alone, quite alone in my misery!

LUKAN. I created for myself the ship and eternity, but what avail me the ship and eternity, if she in her madness goes from me? My soul bleeds, my heart is being crushed, my brain is bursting with anguish. I desire to keep her for myself in strength, freshness and



beauty. And yet weakness slinks thievishly into her soul, and makes her feeble and wavering, disfigures her face and dims the glorious lustre and the sunshine that reveal the wisdom and fondness in her eyes, and steals her from my body and my soul. Oh, accursed be I who cannot defend her against it! Oh, my ship and my eternity, you are becoming an icy-cold hissing serpent that coils itself about my soul. And yet I will not yield. (*Attempts to embrace her, she resists.*) BISSERKA, do you see the moon, and its silvery magic light, how gently it flows around us and our ship, and the whole ocean and the peaks that have surged nearer are ablaze in their festive garb . . . and the ocean and the heaven are teeming with wedding guests? Even though it is amid frenzied sorrows and torments, a lofty bridal couple have been wedded to-day and they are celebrating their marriage. Man has vanquished himself, murdered his conscience and conquered eternity. He refuses to be the fool who upholds the universe. For the first time he is laughing at Nature amid icy eternity. . . . (*Again attempts to embrace her, but she resists still more desperately.*) Ah, it was a piece of madness! Why did we seek the blue grotto, why did we seek through the endless ocean for our love? Let us descend into the ship. There we are free to enter, and men and time are forbidden to approach. Come!

(*The moon shines upon the faces of DOMINA and VICKO.*)

BISSERKA. (*Looks out and gives a frenzied laugh.*) Your wife and your son have also made away with themselves.

LUKAN. (*Catches sight of them.*) And even though

the whole world were dead—but they are sleeping.  
Come !!

*(Voices can be heard.)*

BISSERKA. *(Looks round.)* And yonder are the wedding guests, the priest and the bridegroom. *(Hastily.)* Yonder the birds, yonder the whole world, yonder my father.

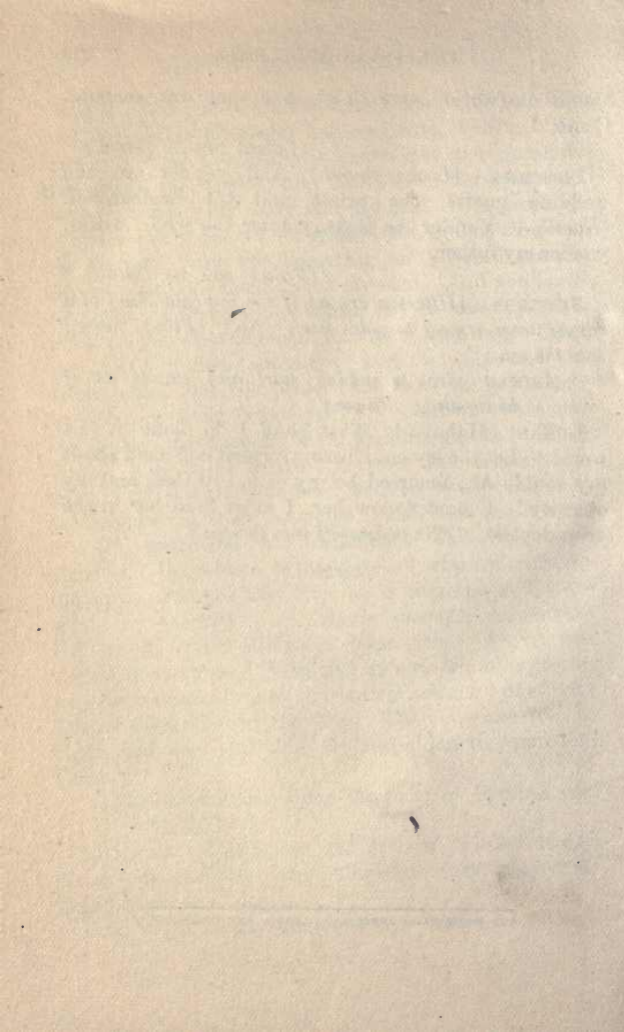
*(Voices can be heard.)*

BISSERKA. *(Utters a cry as if the icy-cold hand of a corpse were trying to seize her.)* Ah! *(Flings herself into the sea.)*

*(LUKAN gives a sudden start and stands as if benumbed. Pause.)*

LUKAN. Hahaha! What shall I do alone in this world? Let the icy-cold hissing serpent coil itself about my soul! Ah, accursed be my ship, my God, and my eternity! I must follow her, I must love her in the grim depths. *(Flings himself into the sea.)*

*(Curtain.)*





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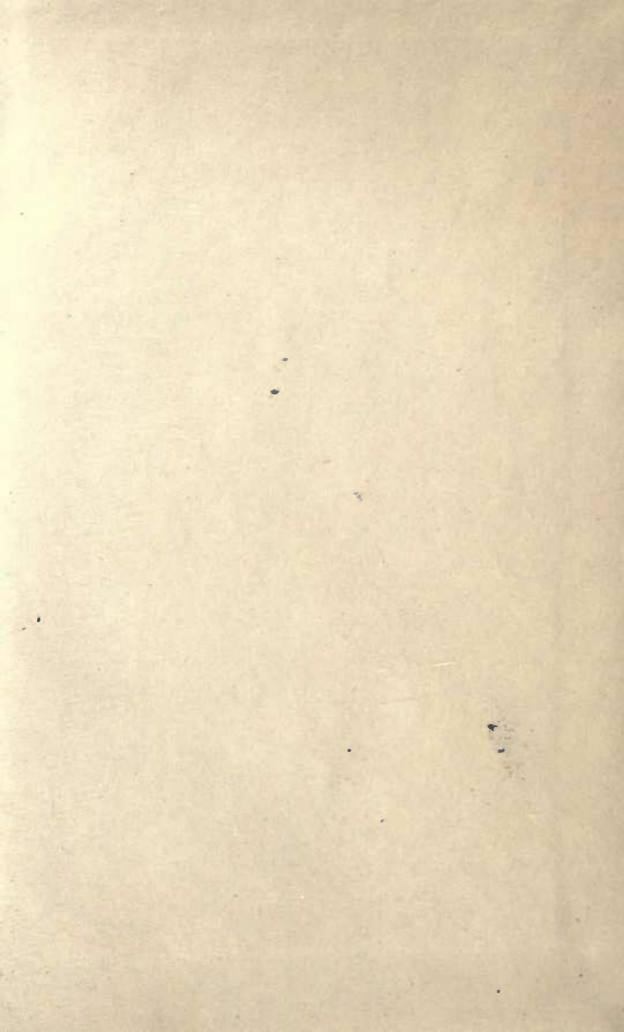
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