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The Dear Depart-  
ing *A Frivolous Per-  
formance in One Act*  
by Leonid Andreyev  
Translated by Julius West

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The Dear Departing



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The Dear Departing *A Frivolous Performance in One Act*  
by Leonid Andreyev Translated by Julius West

LONDON: HENDERSONS  
66 CHARING CROSS ROAD

## PUBLISHERS' NOTE

THE DEAR DEPARTING appears to have been written with no intention of stage production. The characters are not described as specifically as would have been the case had the author borne this possibility in mind. The cast is divided into the following groups, the size of which is left to the imagination of the reader or the capacity of the producer :

TOURISTS (unspecified).  
PHOTOGRAPHERS.  
DRUNKARDS.  
SALVATIONISTS.

CHILDREN (mostly  
Russian).  
ENGLISH TOURISTS.  
ITALIAN MUSICIANS.

The remaining characters are :

A BLOODTHIRSTY LADY.  
THE FATHER OF A FAMILY  
(Russian).  
THE MOTHER OF ANOTHER  
FAMILY.  
A STRANGER.  
A CLERGYMAN.  
A PEDLAR.

THE LANDLORD OF A  
HOTEL AND CAFÉ.  
A SPECIAL CORRESPON-  
DENT.  
A MULE.  
AN ADVERTISEMENT.  
TWO POLICEMEN.  
WAITER.

# THE DEAR DEPARTING

A FRIVOLOUS PERFORMANCE IN ONE ACT

*A wild place in the mountains.*

*On an almost perpendicular rock, a man is perched in a dangerous and inaccessible position. It is difficult to explain how he got there—but there he is, and cannot be reached either from above or below. A short ladder, ropes and poles bear witness to fruitless attempts at rescue.*

*Apparently the stranger has already spent a considerable time in his precarious situation, for a fair-sized and variegated crowd has had time to assemble. Here are pedlars selling cooling drinks, and even a little café, all complete, around which a perspiring waiter is rushing, in the all but impossible task of supplying everybody's orders. Other pedlars are going round with cards, souvenirs, and all sorts of odds-and-ends; one of them is trying to dispose of tortoise-shell combs, which, as a matter of fact, are not made of tortoise-shell. Tourists are continually arriving, attracted by rumours of an imminent calamity. There are Englishmen, Germans, Russians, Frenchmen, Italians, etc., all showing their national peculiarities in their manners and dress. Nearly all have alpenstocks, binoculars, and cameras. They talk in several languages, which, for the benefit of our readers, we reproduce in one only.*

*At the foot of the rock, where the stranger must fall,*

*two policemen are standing, keeping away the children, and attempting to hold back the crowd by means of a piece of thin string.*

*General tumult.*

FIRST POLICEMAN. Now then, out of it, you young rascal! What'll your papa and mama say if he falls on your head?

THE BOY. Will he come down here?

FIRST POLICEMAN. Yes, here.

THE BOY. Won't he come any further?

SECOND POLICEMAN. The boy's right: he might spring up, break through the cord, and do some harm to the spectators. He can't weigh less than twelve stone.

FIRST POLICEMAN. Off you go! Where are you getting to, little girl? Is this your daughter, madam? Please remove her: the young man will drop down in a minute.

THE LADY. In a minute? Oh, mon Dieu! And my husband won't be here to see!

THE LITTLE GIRL. He's at the bar, mama.

THE LADY. (*In distress.*) Yes, yes, of course, he's always at the bar. Call him, Nelly, say he's going to drop in a minute. Quick! Quick!

VOICES. (*From the café.*) Kellner!—Waiter!—Garçon!—Beer! . . . We haven't any beer . . . What? What's that? . . . What a rotten place! . . . There'll be some in a minute. . . . Hurry up. . . . Kellner! . . . Waiter! . . . Garçon!

THE FIRST POLICEMAN. You again, young man!

THE BOY. I only wanted to take that stone away.

FIRST POLICEMAN. But why?



THE BOY. So he shouldn't hurt himself when he fell.

SECOND POLICEMAN. The kid's right: we've got to take away some stones and clear more space. Hasn't anybody any sand or sawdust?

*(Two English tourists approach. They examine the Stranger through their binoculars, and exchange observations.)*

FIRST ENGLISHMAN. He's young.

SECOND ENGLISHMAN. How old?

FIRST ENGLISHMAN. Twenty-eight.

SECOND ENGLISHMAN. Twenty-six. Looks older because he's afraid.

FIRST ENGLISHMAN. Will you bet on it?

SECOND ENGLISHMAN. Ten to one. Will you make a note of it?

FIRST ENGLISHMAN. *(Writes it down. To a Policeman.)* Can you tell me how he got there? Why don't they take him down?

POLICEMAN. They tried, but it was no good. Haven't any ladders long enough.

SECOND ENGLISHMAN. Has he been there long?

POLICEMAN. Two days.

FIRST ENGLISHMAN. Oh! He'll come down to-night.

SECOND ENGLISHMAN. Within two hours. Bet on it?

FIRST ENGLISHMAN. Note it down! *(To the Stranger, shouts.)* How do you feel? What? I can't hear.

THE STRANGER. *(Almost inaudibly.)* Rotten!

THE LADY. Oh, mon Dieu! And my husband isn't here.

LITTLE GIRL. *(Running up.)* Papa says he'll be

here quite soon; he's playing chess with another gentleman.

THE LADY. Oh, mon Dieu! Tell him, Nelly, that I insist. . . . By the way . . . will it be long before he falls, sergeant? No, Nelly, you'd better go, and I'll keep a place for father.

*(A tall, thin lady, with a peculiarly independent and bloodthirsty appearance, is quarrelling with some tourist about her place. He is a weak little man and does not know how to insist upon his rights; the lady grows fiercer.)*

THE TOURIST. But it's my place, madam; I've been here two hours.

BLOODTHIRSTY LADY. What difference does it make to me how long you've been standing here? I wish to stand here; understand? I'll see better from here; understand?

TOURIST. *(Feebly.)* But I can see better from here, too.

BLOODTHIRSTY LADY. If you please! What do you know about these things?

TOURIST. But what is there to know? The man's got to drop, and that's all.

BLOODTHIRSTY LADY. The man's got to drop, and that's all! On my word! Have you ever seen a man fall? No? I've seen it happen three times; two acrobats, a tight-rope walker, and three aviators.

TOURIST. That makes six.

BLOODTHIRSTY LADY. That makes six! What a brilliant mathematician you are, to be sure! And have *you* ever seen a tiger, in a menagerie, tear-r-r a woman to pieces before your very eyes? Eh? I thought not! I've seen it, though! If you please!

*(The tourist shrugs his shoulders as if insulted, and the thin lady spreads herself out over the stone she has won by conquest. She takes out of her reticule various handkerchiefs, peppermint drops, a little flask, and places them around her; she then takes off her gloves, and wipes the lenses of her binoculars, placidly looking round on the other spectators. She turns to the lady whose husband is in the café.)*

BLOODTHIRSTY LADY. *(Condescendingly.)* You'll make yourself so tired, darling. Why not sit down?

THE LADY. Oh, don't, please! My legs are quite stiff.

BLOODTHIRSTY LADY. Men nowadays have no manners at all. They'd never think of giving up their place to a lady. Have you any peppermint drops?

THE LADY. *(Frightened.)* No. Are they necessary?

BLOODTHIRSTY LADY. When you've been looking upwards for a long time you are bound to feel faint. And haven't you any sal ammoniac? No? Dear me, how thoughtless of you! How are we to bring you round again after he's dropped? And no ether, I suppose? Well, of course! If you're like that, what can you . . . isn't there anybody here to look after you?

THE LADY. *(Frightened.)* I'll tell my husband. He's in the café!

BLOODTHIRSTY LADY. Your husband's a scoundrel!

A POLICEMAN. Whose jacket's this? Who threw the thing down here?

THE BOY. I did. I put it there so it shouldn't hurt him so much to fall.

THE POLICEMAN. Take it away.

(Some tourists, armed with cameras, are arguing as to the best position.)

FIRST TOURIST. I wanted to stand here.

SECOND TOURIST. So you may have done, but I've got here first.

FIRST TOURIST. You've only just come, and I've been here two days.

SECOND TOURIST. Then why did you go away and not leave so much as your shadow behind?

FIRST TOURIST. Why, confound it all, do you think I want to die of hunger?

A PEDLAR. (With a comb, mysteriously.) It's real tortoise-shell.

A TOURIST. Well?

THE PEDLAR. It's real tortoise-shell.

THE TOURIST. Go to—the devil!

ONE OF THE TOURISTS. (With a camera.) For goodness' sake, madam, don't sit on my camera.

THE LADY. But where is it?

THE TOURIST. Underneath you, of course!

THE LADY. And I was so tired! And it is a rotten camera. No wonder it hurt, when I was sitting on it.

THE TOURIST. (In despair.) Madam!

THE LADY. And, you know, I thought it was a stone. I saw something lying there, and I wondered whether it really was a stone. It was so dark. And it turns out to be your camera.

THE TOURIST. (In despair.) Please, madam!

THE LADY. But why is it so big? Cameras are always little things, and this is so big. On my word, I never thought it was a camera. And can you take

me ? It would be so nice if you could take me with these mountains as a background.

THE TOURIST. But how can I take anything with you still sitting on it ?

THE LADY. (*Jumping up in terror.*) What do you mean ? Why didn't you tell me ? Has it been taking me ?

VOICES. Waiter ! Beer !—Why is there no wine ?—It's been on order a long time—What can I bring you ?—Shan't be long, sir. This minute !—Waiter !—Waiter !—A toothpick !

(*A fat and perspiring tourist rushes in, surrounded by children.*)

THE TOURIST. Masha ! Sasha ! Peter ! Where's mother ? Oh, my God, where's Masha ?

A STUDENT. Here she is, father.

THE TOURIST. Where is she ? Masha !

A GIRL. Yes, papa.

THE TOURIST. But where are you ? (*Turns round.*) Oh, there you are ! Behind me all the time. Look, look ! Oh, my God, what are you looking at ?

THE GIRL. I don't know, papa.

THE TOURIST. No, it's impossible ! Just think, she's never once even seen lightning. She makes great eyes until they look like onions, and as soon as it flashes—she shuts them. So she's never seen it. Masha, you're yawning again. Look, can you see him ?

THE STUDENT. She can see, father.

THE TOURIST. Keep an eye on her. (*Suddenly changing to a tone of pity.*) Ah, poor young man ! No, you'd think he'd be certain to fall. Look, children, how pale he is ! see how dangerous it is to climb !

THE STUDENT. (*Dully.*) He won't drop to-day, father.

THE TOURIST. Nonsense. Who said so?

SECOND GIRL. Papa, Masha's got her eyes shut again.

THE STUDENT. Please let me sit down, father. Oh, Lord! I don't think he's going to drop to-day. The hall-porter told me so. I am tired! You simply drag us all over the place, from morning till night.

THE TOURIST. Who am I doing it for? Do you think I like it, you idiot? . . .

SECOND GIRL. Papa, Masha's doing it again.

SECOND STUDENT. And I'm sick of it too. I keep on having bad dreams. I was dreaming all night about waiters.

THE TOURIST. Peter!

FIRST STUDENT. And I'm so thin; I'm only skin and bone. I've had enough of it, father. Hand me over to a shepherd, or a swineherd. . . .

THE TOURIST. Sasha!

FIRST STUDENT. You know he won't fall, but you believe everything they tell you. Baedeker, too. Baedeker's a liar.

MASHA. (*Dully.*) Papa, he's beginning to fall.

(*The Stranger is shouting something from above. General movement. Voices: "Look, he's coming"; binoculars are raised, a few photographers move their cameras about in an agitated manner; and the policemen energetically clear a space.*)

A PHOTOGRAPHER. Confound it! Why on earth am I . . . All this beastly hurry!

SECOND POLICEMAN. Excuse me, but your lens is covered up.

THE FIRST PHOTOGRAPHER. Oh, the devil!

VOICES. Sh! He's going to fall! No, he's saying something.—No, he's falling!—Sh!

THE STRANGER. (*Feebly.*) Help!

TOURIST. Oh, poor young man! Masha! Peter! There's a tragedy for you: the sky is clear, Nature is beautiful, yet he must fall and hurt himself to death. Sasha, do you understand how awful it is?

STUDENT. (*Dully.*) I understand.

TOURIST. And do you understand, Masha? Just think, there's the sky, and there people are eating. Everything is so pleasant, but he's got to fall! What a tragedy! Peter, do you remember Hamlet?

SECOND GIRL. Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, at Elsinore.

STUDENT. Yes, I know: at Helsingfors. Why do you keep on bothering me, father?

MASHA. (*Dully.*) He was dreaming about waiters all night.

SASHA. Better order some sandwiches!

THE PEDLAR. It's real tortoise-shell.

TOURIST. (*Confidingly.*) What, has it been stolen?

THE PEDLAR. Sir!

TOURIST. (*Angrily.*) How can it be real, if it hasn't been stolen?

BLOODTHIRSTY LADY. (*Condescendingly.*) Are all these your children?

TOURIST. Yes, madam. A father's responsibilities. . . . But, as you see, madam, they rebel: the age-long struggle between father and children, madam. . . . This is such an awful tragedy, one's heart aches

from grief. . . . Masha, you're going off to sleep again!

BLOODTHIRSTY LADY. You are absolutely right: children must be hardened. But why do you call this an awful tragedy? Any man who works on a roof may have to fall a long way. But here—let's see—it can't be more than a hundred, or two hundred feet? And I've seen a man fall from the clouds.

TOURIST. (*In delight.*) What are you saying! Sasha, children, listen! From the clouds!

BLOODTHIRSTY LADY. Yes. An aviator fell down and smashed himself up on an iron roof.

TOURIST. How awful!

BLOODTHIRSTY LADY. That was really tragic! They had to dose me for two hours before I recovered my senses. Nearly drowned me, the brutes! I've carried smelling salts about with me ever since.

*(A troop of wandering Italian singers and musicians appears. The short, stout tenor has a little brown beard and large, watery, stupidly-meditative eyes: he sings with great sweetness. A thin hunchback, with a jockey cap, sings in a squeaky baritone. The bass looks like a tramp; he also plays the mandolin. A thin woman with a violin rolls her eyes to such an extent that only the whites are visible. They arrange themselves and sing: "Sul mare lucica . . . Santa Lucia, Santa Lucia. . .")*

MASHA. (*Dully.*) Papa, look! he's beginning to wave his hands about.

TOURIST. Can that be the influence of music?

BLOODTHIRSTY LADY. Quite possibly. All these things happen under the influence of music. But it



may make him fall before he should. Here, you musicians, you get off! Go away now, go away!

(*A tall tourist, with moustaches pointing upwards, arrives, hotly gesticulating, followed by a few sympathetic sightseers.*)

TALL TOURIST. It's disgusting! Why don't they save him? Gentlemen, didn't you hear him call out "Save me"?

THE OTHER SIGHTSEERS. (*In chorus.*) Yes, we all heard.

TALL TOURIST. There now! And I, too, heard those very words perfectly plainly: "Save me." Why don't they save him? It's disgusting! Police, police! Why don't you save him? What are you doing here?

A POLICEMAN. We are clearing a space for him to fall.

TALL TOURIST. Yes, that's quite sensible. But why don't you save him? You ought to save him. It's your duty towards humanity. When a man asks to be saved, he ought to be saved. Am I right, gentlemen?

THE SIGHTSEERS. (*In chorus.*) Right, absolutely right! He must be saved!

TALL TOURIST. (*Hotly.*) We are not heathens, we are Christians. We must love our neighbours. Since he asks for help, every measure must be made use of which lies in the power of the administration. Policemen, have you taken all these measures?

A POLICEMAN. All the lot.

TALL TOURIST. Every one? Gentlemen, they have all been taken. Young man, listen—every possible measure to save you has been taken. Do you hear?

THE STRANGER. (*Faintly.*) Help!

TALL TOURIST. (*Excitedly.*) Gentlemen, you hear: once again he is shouting for help. Policemen, did you hear?

ONE OF THE SIGHTSEERS. (*Timidly.*) In my opinion he ought to be saved.

TALL TOURIST. Exactly what I say! I've been saying so for the last two hours. Policemen, did you hear? It's disgraceful!

THE SAME SIGHTSEER. (*A little more bravely.*) In my opinion we ought to apply to the heads of the administration.

THE OTHER SIGHTSEERS. (*In chorus.*) Yes, yes, we've got to make a complaint. It's disgusting! The State should not leave its citizens in danger. We all pay our taxes. He *must* be saved.

TALL TOURIST. And what did I say? Of course we've got to go and complain. . . . Young man, listen: are you a taxpayer? What? I don't hear.

THE TOURIST. Peter, Katie, what a tragedy!—Oh, poor young man! He's got to fall in a minute and he's being asked for his inhabited house duty!

KATIE. (*A girl in spectacles, learnedly.*) But can this be called an inhabited house, papa? As I understand it, a house. . . .

PETER. (*Pinches her.*) Swank!

MASHA. (*Stupidly.*) Look, papa—he's going to fall again.

(*There is again a movement in the crowd, with some shouts and agitation among the photographers.*)

TALL TOURIST. We must make haste. Gentlemen, we must save him at all costs! Who goes with me?

SIGHTSEERS. (*In chorus.*) All of us!

*(They go away, hotly gesticulating. From the café come sounds of a growing animation; the noise of beer-mugs and the beginning of a loud German song can be heard. The waiter has now absolutely lost his bearings; he runs out, looks at the sky in despair and wipes his perspiring face with a table-napkin. Heated orders come through: "Waiter, waiter!")*

THE STRANGER. *(Fairly loudly.)* Waiter, can't you get me some soda water?

*(The waiter shakes, and looks upward in terror; he sees the Stranger, and goes away pretending to have heard nothing. Impatient voices: "Waiter! Beer!")*

WAITER. This minute! This minute!

*(Two drunken men come out of the café.)*

THE LADY. Oh, there's my husband! Here, quick, come here!

BLOODTHIRSTY LADY. What a beast!

FIRST DRUNKARD. *(Waving his hands.)* Eh, you up there—feeling bad, what?

THE STRANGER. *(Fairly loudly.)* Rotten. Tired of it.

FIRST DRUNKARD. No drinks up there?

THE STRANGER. I don't think.

SECOND DRUNKARD. What are you talking about drinks to him for? The man's got to die, and you're exciting him with all these temptations. Listen! We've been drinking your health all this time. That won't hurt you, will it?

FIRST DRUNKARD. What are you talking about; how could it hurt him? It can only do him good. Listen! We're awfully sorry for you, by God, we are!

but don't you mind that—we're going back to the café in a minute.

SECOND DRUNKARD. Look what a lot of people there are!

FIRST DRUNKARD. Come along; if he falls they may close up the café.

*(Another little batch of tourists arrives, led by a very elegant gentleman—a Special Correspondent, sent by one of the principal papers of Europe. The people who accompany him are in a state of extreme gratification; many even leave the buffet to see him, and even the waiter smiles pleasantly.)*

VOICES. The special correspondent, look!

THE LADY. Oh, mon Dieu! and my husband isn't here yet.

TOURIST. Peter, Masha, Sasha, Katie, Vassia, look!—that is a chief correspondent. You understand—the chief correspondent. What he writes is all right.

KATIE. Masha, again you're not looking.

SASHA. Why not let's have some sandwiches? I'm done up, father! One must eat. . . .

TOURIST. *(Mournfully.)* What a tragedy! Katie, don't you understand how awful it all is: such lovely weather—and the chief correspondent! Take out your note-book, Peter, your note-book.

PETER. I've lost it, father.

THE CORRESPONDENT. Where is he?

VOICES. *(Obligingly.)* There he is, there! A little higher up, still higher! No, higher than that!

CORRESPONDENT. If you please, gentlemen, I'll find him for myself. Ah, there he is! Yes, his situation—

A TOURIST. Wouldn't you like a camp-stool ?

CORRESPONDENT. Thank you. (*Sits down.*) Yes, his situation is . . . very, very interesting. (*Prepares his note-book, and says graciously to the photographers :*) Have you already taken him, gentlemen ?

FIRST PHOTOGRAPHER. Yes, rather. . . . In view of the general nature of the place——

SECOND PHOTOGRAPHER. And of the tragical situation of the young man. . . .

CORRESPONDENT. Yes ! It's very, very interesting.

TOURIST. You hear, Sasha ? There's a wise man, a chief correspondent, and he says it's interesting. And you talk about sandwiches—idiot !

SASHA. Perhaps he's had enough to eat——

CORRESPONDENT. Gentlemen, may I desire you to preserve silence ?

VOICES. Keep quiet there, in the café !

CORRESPONDENT. (*Calling upwards.*) Allow me to introduce myself as the chief correspondent of the *European Press*, sent here by the special instructions of the editor. I propose to ask you a few questions regarding your situation. What is your name ? Your social standing ? Your age ?

(*The Stranger mumbles something.*)

CORRESPONDENT. (*A little confused.*) I can't hear anything. Has he been like that all the time ?

VOICES. Yes, you can't hear a word.

CORRESPONDENT. (*Writing something down.*) That's all right. Are you a bachelor ?

(*The Stranger mumbles again.*)

CORRESPONDENT. I can't hear ! Are you married ? Say it again !

A TOURIST. He says he's a bachelor.

SECOND TOURIST. No, of course not. He's married.

CORRESPONDENT. (*Carelessly.*) You think so? We'll put him down as married. How many children have you? What? I can't hear. Did he say three? Hm . . . we'll put down five to be on the safe side.

TOURIST. What a tragedy! Five children, just think!

BLOODTHIRSTY LADY. He's a liar!

CORRESPONDENT. (*Shouts.*) How did you get into your present position? What? I don't hear. Louder! Say it again! (*To the crowd.*) What's that he's saying? He's got a dashed thin voice.

FIRST TOURIST. I thought I heard him shout that he had just lost himself.

SECOND TOURIST. He doesn't know himself how he got up there.

VOICES. He was hunting—He was climbing—He's only just a lunatic.

CORRESPONDENT. Permit me, permit me, gentlemen—at all events he didn't fall from the clouds. Still . . . (*Quickly writing down.*) "The unhappy young man . . . had been afflicted since his earliest childhood with paroxysms of insanity. . . . The bright radiance of the full moon . . . the wild rocks . . . a sleepy hotel porter . . . did not notice. . . ."

FIRST TOURIST. (*To Second Tourist, aside.*) But the moon's only in her first quarter.

SECOND TOURIST. Do you think the public cares anything about astronomy?

TOURIST. (*In delight.*) Masha! Pay attention; here you have before you a remarkable instance of the

influence of the moon upon living organisms. But what an awful tragedy: to go out for a walk on a moonlight night and to climb up to some place from which you can neither come down nor be rescued!

CORRESPONDENT. (*Shouts.*) What are your feelings? I don't hear. Louder! That's better! Yes . . . it's awkward.

THE CROWD. (*Interested.*) Listen, listen to what his feelings are. How awful it is!

CORRESPONDENT. (*Writing and repeating his words in a loud tone of voice.*) "A deathly terror enshrouds his limbs. . . . An icy horror runs down his back. . . . No hope. . . . In his mind's eye he sees pictures of his erstwhile happy family: his wife is making pastries, his five children lift up their angelic voices in blameless tenderness. . . . Their grandmother sits in an armchair smoking a pipe . . . I mean, their grandfather, while their . . . grandmother. . . . Excited by the sympathy of the crowd—he expressed a final wish that his last words should be printed in our paper. . . ."

BLOODTHIRSTY LADY. The liar!

MASHA. Look, now he's going to fall.

TOURIST. (*Angrily.*) Don't interrupt! Here is such an awful tragedy, and you . . . what are you shutting your eyes for?

CORRESPONDENT. (*Shouts.*) Hold on for just one more minute! That's it! My last question is: Have you, on the threshold of another world, any message for your fellow citizens?

THE STRANGER. (*Feebly.*) Tell them all to go to hell!

CORRESPONDENT. What? Oh yes . . . (*Writing.*)

“Deep affections . . . his last words . . . a determined opponent of negro-emancipation . . . his last hope was that never would these black-faced. . . .”

A CLERGYMAN. (*Out of breath, makes his way through the crowd.*) Where is he? Ah there! Unhappy youth! Gentlemen, has there indeed not been anybody here of my cloth? No? I thank you! So I am really first?

CORRESPONDENT. (*Writing down.*) “An affecting moment. . . . A clergyman appeared . . . deep silence . . . many were weeping. . . .”

CLERGYMAN. If you please, if you please! The departing soul wants to make its last peace with heaven. (*Shouts.*) Don't you want to make your peace with heaven, my son? Confess your sins to me, and I will give you absolution. What? I can't hear.

CORRESPONDENT. (*Writing.*) “Sobs rent the air. The representative of the Church in touching words exhorted the criminal—I mean, the unfortunate. . . . With tears in his eyes the unhappy youth gave thanks in a faint voice. . . .”

THE STRANGER. (*Faintly.*) If you don't go away, I'll fall on you. I weigh twelve stone.

(*All fall back in confusion.*)

VOICES. He's falling; he's falling!

TOURIST. (*Excited.*) Masha! Sasha! Peter!

THE POLICEMEN. (*Energetically.*) Stand back, please!

THE LADY. Nelly, quick, run and tell your father he's falling.

A PHOTOGRAPHER. (*In despair.*) Oh, good Lord, my spool's finished! (*Rushes about, looking at the*



*Stranger with distress.*) Just one minute! I've got some more there, in my overcoat. (*He steps back a little, still looking at the Stranger, and returns.*) No, I can't, but if . . . Oh Lord! It's there, in my coat. I'll be back in one minute. . . . What a fix!

CLERGYMAN. Make haste, my friend, collect your strength if only to confess your important sins. We can leave the little ones.

THE TOURIST. What a tragedy!

CORRESPONDENT. (*Writing down.*) "The criminal . . . that is, the unfortunate man, expressed general contrition . . . and unveiled some terrible mysteries. . . . The wretched man had robbed a banker and . . ."

THE TOURIST. How wicked of him!

CLERGYMAN. Firstly, have you committed murder? Secondly, have you stolen? Thirdly, have you committed adultery? . . .

THE TOURIST. Masha, Peter, Katie, Sasha, Vassia, close your ears.

CORRESPONDENT. (*Writing.*) "The horrified crowd . . . cries of indignation. . . ."

CLERGYMAN. Fourthly, have you taken the name of the Lord your God in vain? Fifthly, have you coveted your neighbour's ass, or his ox, or his maid-servant, or his wife? Sixthly. . . .

A PHOTOGRAPHER. What's that about an ass?

SECOND PHOTOGRAPHER. Where, where? I don't see any ass?

FIRST PHOTOGRAPHER. I thought I heard something, that's all.

CLERGYMAN. I congratulate you, my son, I congratulate you; you have made your peace with heaven. Now you may fearlessly. . . . Ah, God, what

do I see? The Salvation Army! Policemen, send them away!

*(A few Salvationists of both sexes, in uniform and carrying musical instruments, approach the crowd. There are only three musicians; they are armed with a drum, a fiddle, and a remarkably squeaky trumpet.)*

FIRST SALVATIONIST. *(Drumming furiously and drawling loudly through his nose.)* My brothers and sisters. . . .

CLERGYMAN. *(Tries to shout him down and yells even more strenuously through the nose.)* He has repented, brothers. Gentlemen, you were witnesses. He has repented and he has made his peace with heaven.

SECOND SALVATIONIST. *(A woman. Stands on a stone and wails.)* Like that sinner, I too, abode in the darkness and evilly indulged in alcohol, before the light of the judgment. . . .

A VOICE. She's nearly blind drunk now.

CLERGYMAN. Policemen, didn't you hear him repent and make his peace with heaven?

*(The First Salvationist drums furiously while the others attempt to sing a hymn, to the accompaniment of shouts, laughter and hoots. In the café they are also trying to sing, and are calling the waiter in several languages. A policeman is struggling frantically to release himself from the grip of the Clergyman, who is trying to get him to do something; the photographers are violently excited. A tourist Englishwoman appears on a mule which spreads out its legs, and contributes its voice to the others. Silence is at length restored, the Salvation Army*

*majestically withdraws, and the Clergyman follows it, waving his hands.)*

FIRST ENGLISH TOURIST. (*To another.*) How disgusting! This crowd has absolutely no idea of manners!

SECOND ENGLISH TOURIST. Let's go away.

FIRST ENGLISH TOURIST. Half a minute. (*Yells.*) I say, old thing, wouldn't you like to make a short job of it?

SECOND ENGLISH TOURIST. What are you saying, Sir William?

FIRST ENGLISH TOURIST. (*Yells.*) Don't you see it's what they are all waiting for? It's your duty as a gentleman to grant them that, and to save yourself from the loss of dignity involved in suffering in public—before this mob.

SECOND ENGLISH TOURIST. Sir William!

TOURIST. (*In delight.*) He's right, he's right! Sasha, Peter, listen, he's right! What a tragedy!

FIRST ENGLISH TOURIST. (*Pushing him aside.*) Come on down quickly, do you hear? If you haven't the nerve, I can send along a shot to help you. Yes or no?

VOICES. That devil in brown has gone mad!

POLICEMAN. (*Seizing the English Tourist by the arm.*) You have no right to do that. I arrest you.

A TOURIST. A nation of savages.

*(The Stranger shouts something. Excitement below.)*

VOICES. Listen, listen!

THE STRANGER. (*Loudly.*) Take that idiot off to the devil; he wants to shoot me. And tell the landlord I'm fed up.

VOICES. What's that? What landlord? He's going mad, poor thing!

TOURIST. Sasha, Masha, this is a picture of insanity. Peter, quick! remember Hamlet?

THE STRANGER. (*Angrily.*) Tell him my waist's nearly broken in two.

MASHA. (*Dully.*) Papa, he's waving his legs about.

KATIE. Is that what they call convulsions, papa?

TOURIST. (*Depressed.*) I don't know. I suppose so! What a tragedy!

SASHA. (*Mournfully.*) Katie is a fool! She goes to school and all that, and wears spectacles, and doesn't know it's the death agony. I'm tired out, papa.

TOURIST. Just think, children, here's a man just going to be dashed to pieces, and what does he think about? His waist!

(*A noise is heard. A few infuriated tourists drag in an extremely frightened man who wears a white waistcoat. He is smiling, he bows to all sides, he waves his hands, and so on. He attempts an escape, but he is caught again and mobbed.*)

VOICES. Filthy swindler! Disgraceful! Police! police! He's got to have a lesson!

OTHER VOICES. What's the matter? What's the swindle? What is it? They've caught a thief.

THE MAN. Gentlemen, it's all a joke, I assure you; really, gentlemen! Just a joke! Visitors get so bored, and I wanted to amuse them.

THE STRANGER. (*Loudly.*) Landlord!

THE MAN. Just a minute, just a minute.

THE STRANGER. Do you think I'm going to stay here till Doomsday? You said till twelve o'clock, and what's it now?

TALL TOURIST. (*Almost mad with indignation.*) Do

you hear, gentlemen? It means that that rascal, that fellow in the white waistcoat, has hired another rascal and just tied him up to the rock.

VOICES. Is he tied on?

TALL TOURIST. Of course he is, and he can't fall. And here we all are, getting excited and waiting for him to drop, and he can't!

THE STRANGER. I should say so! Think I'm going to break my back for two pounds ten! Landlord, I've had enough. Some idiot's been wanting to shoot me for two hours—it's more than we agreed on.

SASHA. Papa said that Baedeker's a liar, but he believes anything people tell him and drags us all over the place.

THE LANDLORD. People get so bored. . . . My only wish was to amuse the honourable public.

BLOODTHIRSTY LADY. What's that? I don't understand. Why won't he fall? If he isn't going to fall, then who is?

TOURIST. I don't understand either. Of course, he's got to fall.

PETER. You never understand anything you're told, papa. You've been told that he's tied on.

SASHA. Do you think you're going to convince him? He'll believe any old Baedeker sooner than his own children.

PETER. Our father, too!

TOURIST. Silence!

BLOODTHIRSTY LADY. What's that? He's got to fall!

TALL TOURIST. But, just think, what a swindle! You've jolly well got to explain the meaning of this, sir.

LANDLORD. The public wants to be amused. You must forgive me, gentlemen. But the desire to please . . . to provide a few hours of healthy excitement . . . to thrill the nerves . . . to evoke altruistic sentiments. . . .

AN ENGLISHMAN. Is that café yours ?

LANDLORD. Yes.

ENGLISHMAN. And is the hotel down below yours ?

LANDLORD. Yes ; the public gets. . . .

THE SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT. (*Writes.*) "A wicked swindle. . . . A hotelkeeper, in his desire to increase his profits from the sale of spirituous liquors, exploits the finest feelings of humanity. . . . The indignation of the public. . . ."

THE STRANGER. (*Hotly.*) Are you going to let me down or not, landlord ?

LANDLORD. What have you got to complain of ? Do we bring you down every night, or don't we ?

THE STRANGER. If it isn't just about the limit, to talk of leaving me hanging here all night.

LANDLORD. Can't you wait just a few minutes ? They're getting tired of it. . . .

TALL TOURIST. Now, do you understand what you've done, you wretch ! For the sake of your filthy gains, you have wickedly exploited our love for our neighbours. You have forced us to undergo terror and sympathy ; you have poisoned our hearts with sorrow—and what does it all amount to ? It comes to this, that that villain, your wretched accomplice, is tied on to the rock and not only will not fall, as we all expected, but couldn't if he wanted to.

THE BLOODTHIRSTY LADY. What's that ? He's got to fall !

TOURIST. Police ! Police !

*(The Clergyman reappears, out of breath.)*

CLERGYMAN. Hullo ! still alive ? Ah, there he is ! What charlatans these Salvation Army people are !

VOICES. You haven't heard ; he can't let go.

CLERGYMAN. What ? Let go of what ? We are all attached to life, until death releases us. But whether he's fastened up there or not, at any rate I've made him make his peace with heaven, so that's all to the good anyway ! And those charlatans——

TOURIST. Police ! Police ! You've got to draw up an official report.

BLOODTHIRSTY LADY. *(Insultingly to the Landlord.)* I can't allow you to swindle me like this. I've seen an aviator fall out of the clouds and dash himself to pieces on a roof. I've seen a tiger tear a woman. . . .

A PHOTOGRAPHER. I've wasted three plates, taking that scoundrel. You will answer to me for that, my dear sir.

TOURIST. An official report, an official report ! How beastly ! Masha, Peter, Sasha, Vassia, call the police !

LANDLORD. *(In despair.)* But I can't make him fall if he doesn't want to. I've done all I could. Gentlemen, gentlemen !

BLOODTHIRSTY LADY. I won't let you !

LANDLORD. Allow me, gentlemen. On my word, he'll fall the next time, but he doesn't want to just now.

THE STRANGER. What's that about next time ?

LANDLORD. Do shut up !

THE STRANGER. For two pounds ten ?

CLERGYMAN. This is indeed deplorable! Only just this minute I reconciled him with heaven at the risk of my own life—you heard him threaten to fall on my head? And he's still unhappy. Adulterer! Thief! Murderer! Coveter of his neighbour's ass! . . .

A PHOTOGRAPHER. Gentlemen, an ass!

SECOND PHOTOGRAPHER. Where's an ass? I don't see one.

FIRST PHOTOGRAPHER. (*Cooling down.*) I thought I heard something—

THIRD PHOTOGRAPHER. You're an ass! My eyes are squinting on your account.

MASHA. (*Dully.*) Papa, look, here's a policeman.

(*There is movement and noise. On one side of the stage the policeman is mobbed, on the other side, the landlord; both are shouting: "By your leave, by your leave!"*)

TOURIST. Policeman, officer! Here's this swindler, this thief. . . .

CLERGYMAN. Policeman! Here's the adulterer, thief, murderer, who covets his neighbour's ass. . . .

POLICEMAN. Permit me, permit me, gentlemen, we'll soon make him know where he is and sorry for himself.

LANDLORD. But I can't make him fall if he doesn't want to!

POLICEMAN. Hullo, young man, you up there! just tell us whether you can fall or whether you can't?

THE STRANGER. (*Surlily.*) I don't want to fall.

VOICES. Aha! He has confessed! What a wretch!

TALL TOURIST. Take this down, policeman:—  
"Desiring . . . for the sake of profit . . . to exploit



the emotion of love for one's neighbour . . . a sacred instinct. . . ."

TOURIST. Listen, children, they're making out the report. What expressiveness !

TALL TOURIST. "A sacred instinct which. . . ."

POLICEMAN. (*Dutifully writing, with his tongue in his cheek.*) "Love for one's neighbour . . . a sacred instinct which. . . ."

MASHA. (*Dully.*) Papa, look ! here's an advertisement coming.

(*A few musicians arrive, carrying drums and trumpets. In front of them is an individual who carries on a long pole an enormous poster showing a desperately long-haired man inscribed : "I used to be bald."*)

THE STRANGER. You're too late ! They're drawing up the official report here now, old son ! You'd better hop it, quick !

ADVERTISEMENT CARRIER. (*Stops and speaks in a loud voice.*) I was bald from the day of my birth and for a long time after. The scanty growth which covered my cranium by the time I had reached my tenth year resembled wool rather than hair. On my marriage, my skull was as bare as a cushion and the young bride ! . . .

TOURIST. What a tragedy ! Just married and such a head—children, do you understand how awful it is ?

(*They all listen with interest, even the policeman attends, pen in hand.*)

ADVERTISEMENT CARRIER. (*With inspiration.*) And a moment at last came about when the happiness of my wife was literally hanging on a hair. All

the methods for restoring hair recommended by quacks. . . .

TOURIST. Take out your note-book, Peter.

BLOODTHIRSTY LADY. But when is he going to drop ?

LANDLORD. (*Obligingly.*) Next time, madam, next time. . . . I won't tie him on so firmly . . . you see ?

(*Curtain.*)

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