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**A BEAR**

*By* ANTON TCHEKHOV

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TRANSLATED BY  
Roy Temple House

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# A BEAR

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# A BEAR

(*From the Russian of Anton Tchekhov*)

## CHARACTERS

HELENE-IVANOVNA POPOVA, a young widow with dimpled cheeks, landed proprietor.

GRIGORI-STEPANOVITCH SMIRNOV, retired artillery officer, landowner, in the prime of life.

LOUKA, servant of MADAME POPOVA, an old man of sixty.

### SCENE I.

MME. POPOVA, in deep mourning, buried in the contemplation of a photograph which she holds in her hand, and LOUKA.

LOUKA. This isn't right, Madame; you will kill yourself. The chambermaid and the cook have gone to the woods to pick strawberries, everything alive is enjoying life, even the cat is rolling around in the court and running after the birds; you alone stay shut up in your room all day, as if you were in a convent. . . You haven't been away from the house for more than a year.

MME. POPOVA. And I shall never go away! Why should I? My life is over. It went down into the tomb, and I shall remain buried within these four walls. We

are dead, both of us !

LOUKA. How can you talk so, Madame? It hurts me to hear you. Nicolas-Mikhailovitch is dead. May the will of God be done, and may he sleep in peace ! You have cried so much ! Everything must have an end. You can't cry and wear mourning all your life. I lost my old wife, a long time ago. Well, what of it? I was grieved, I wept for a whole month. That was enough for her ; if I wept for her all my life, that would be more than she deserved. (*He sighs.*) You neglect all your neighbors. You never go anywhere, or receive anybody. We live like spiders, if you will allow me to say so. The mice have eaten my livery up. It might be more reasonable if we had no neighbors, but we have. At Ribvolo there is a regiment in garrison, and the officers are beautiful fellows. I never get tired of admiring them. There's a ball every Friday, and I think they have band-music on the promenade every day. Ah ! Madame, Madame, you are young and pretty ; blood and milk. All you have to do is to let yourself live ! You won't have

your beauty forever! In ten years you can put on all the airs you please before the officers, and try to dazzle them; it will be a little too late.

MME. POPOVA (*firmly*). I beg you not to talk to me like that any more. You know that since I lost my dear husband, life has no more charm for me. You think I am alive, but you are mistaken. I have sworn never to take off my mourning till I die, and never to receive a visitor again. You understand what I say? I want his spirit to see how I love him. Yes, I know that you know how unjust he often was to me, cruel and even false. But I shall be faithful to him till death, and I shall prove to him how much I can love. And when we meet in the next world, he shall find me just as he left me when he died.

LOUKA. Instead of brooding over things like that, Madame, you had better go and take a walk in the garden. Or order me to saddle Tobie, and go visit your neighbors.

MME. POPOVA. He loved Tobie so! He was his favorite horse. What a fine rider he was! How beautiful ne looked when he

held the bridle and made the horse gallop! Tobie! Tobie! Have him given a double ration of oats today.

LOUKA. Very well, Madame. (*The bell rings violently.*)

MME. POPOVA (*startled*). Who can that be? Who can be coming here? Tell him I don't see anybody.

LOUKA. You shall be obeyed, Madame. (*He goes out.*)

#### SCENE II.

MME. POPOVA alone. She studies the photograph again.

MME. POPOVA. You shall see, Nicolas, how I can love and pardon. My love shall not end till my life does, till this poor heart stops beating. (*She smiles through her tears.*) And aren't you ashamed? I am a faithful wife, I have locked myself in, and I shall be faithful to the tomb, and you, aren't you ashamed, old dear? You were false to me more than once, you quarreled with me, you left me alone for weeks at a time.

#### SCENE III.

MME. POPOVA, LOUKA.

LOUKA. (*enters, with an anxious air*). Madame! A gentleman wishes to see you. He is determined to talk with you.



MME. POPOVA. I supposed you knew enough to tell the gentleman that since my husband's death I receive no visitors.

LOUKA. I said so, madame, I repeated it; but he won't listen to me. He says he must speak to you about a matter of great importance.

MME. POPOVA. I won't see him! I won't see him!

LOUKA. I got myself out of breath telling him so, Madame. But he's a Devil broke loose from Hades. He insulted me, and he walked right in. He's in the dining-room now.

MME. POPOVA (*irritated.*) Well, send him in. What insolence! (*Louka goes out.*)

MME. POPOVA. What unbearable creatures men are! What do they want of me? Why do they come to trouble my repose? (*She sighs.*) I see I must take refuge in a convent. (*Pensively*) Yes, in a convent, in a convent.

#### SCENE IV.

MME. POPOVA, LOUKA, SMIRNOV.

SMIRNOV (*as he enters, to Louka.*) Don't talk so much, you fool, you long-eared donkey! (*Perceiving Mme. Popova, with*

*dignity*) Madame, I have the honor of presenting myself: Grigori-Stepanovitch Smirnov, retired artillery officer, landed proprietor. I am forced to come and trouble you about a very important matter.

MME. POPOVA. What is the matter?

SMIRNOV. Your deceased husband, whom I had the honor of knowing, still owes me twelve hundred roubles. Here are the bills. As I must pay the interest on my mortgage at the bank tomorrow, I must ask you to settle this debt today.

MME. POPOVA. Twelve hundred roubles! How does my husband happen to owe you so much?

SMIRNOV. He bought oats of me.

MME. POPOVA (*sighing*). You won't forget, Louka, to see that Tobie is given a double feed of oats. (*Louka goes out*.) If my husband owes you anything, I will certainly pay you; but I beg you to excuse me, I have no money at hand today. My manager will come back from the city the day after tomorrow, and I will order him to pay you what we owe you. In the meantime I cannot do what you ask. Besides, it is just

seven months ago today that I lost my husband, and I am not in a state of mind to consider money matters.

SMIRNOV. Well, I'm in such a state of mind that if I don't pay the interest on my mortgage at the bank tomorrow, I'm ruined, They will take my property—

MME. POPOVA. You shall receive what is due the day after tomorrow.

SMIRNOV. It isn't the day after tomorrow, but today that I need the money.

MME. POPOVA. I am very sorry, but it is impossible for me to pay you today.

SMIRNOV. And I tell you I can't wait till day after tomorrow.

MME. POPOVA. But what do you expect me to do? I have no money here today.

SMIRNOV. Then you can't pay.

MME. POPOVA. I cannot.

SMIRNOV. Hum, hum! That is your last word?

MME. POPOVA. Yes, my last word.

SMIRNOV. Your last word? You couldn't possibly change your mind?

MME. POPOVA. It is my last word.

SMIRNOV. Thanks. Thank you very

much! I'm satisfied! (*He shrugs his shoulders*)  
And they expect me to keep my temper!  
I started from home before sunrise, I made  
the rounds of all my debtors, and not one,  
not a single one, had any money to spare!  
I ran like a dog, I wore myself out; I passed  
the night the Lord knows where, in a Jew  
hotel up against a cask of brandy. Well, at  
last I came to your place, forty miles from  
home, I come for money, and in place of  
money you offer me your "state of mind."  
Do you think I can stand that?

MME. POPOVA. I told you, I think, very  
clearly, that you shall be paid when my  
manager comes back.

SMIRNOV. I didn't come to talk to your  
manager, I came to talk to you, Madame.  
Why the Devil (I beg your pardon) do you  
keep dinning your manager into my ears?

MME. POPOVA. I am not used either to  
these strange expressions or to this tone.  
I'll not listen to you a minute longer (*She  
goes out angrily.*)

SCENE V.

SMIRNOV, alone.

SMIRNOV. What do you think of that?

Madame's state of mind! She lost her husband just seven months ago! But how about me? Must I pay the interest on my mortgage, or must I not? Is that something I can do as I please about? Your husband is dead, yes—states of mind and all the rest of it. The manager has skipped out! Devil take it all, how does that help me? Shall I run off and leave my creditors? How? In a balloon, I suppose! I go to see one debtor; he is not at home; the second hides, the third has cholera and Madame has a state of mind! Not one of the rascals wants to pay. That's because I've coddled them too much. I'm a milk-sop—I treat them too well! Well, just wait, you'll learn me better! I won't stand it to be made a fool of, I tell you! I'll stay right here, and I'll not leave till she pays me! Oh, I'm crazy; I'm so angry I can't see straight! My legs are shaking, and I can't breathe. My Lord! I'm sick. (*He cries*). Hello! somebody!

## SCENE VI.

SMIRNOV, LOUKA.

LOUKA (*entering*). What do you want?

SMIRNOV. A glass of kvass or water.  
(*Exit Louka*).

SMIRNOV. What logic! She meets a man who is ruined, if he can't get his money this very day, and she refuses to pay because her "state of mind" won't permit her to think of business today! That's female logic for you! The only logic they know anything about is fashion! That is why I never liked to talk to women and never will. I'd rather walk over a powder-magazine than get into a discussion with these beautiful creatures. When I see one of the poetical beings looming up in the distance, my legs tremble with anger! B-r-r-r! The minx has put me into such a rage that I'm teverish!

#### SCENE VII.

SMIRNOV, LOUKA.

(*Louka enters with a glass of water*).

LOUKA. Madame is ill and is not receiving visitors.

SMIRNOV. Go to the Devil! (*Exit Louka*.)

SMIRNOV. "Madame is ill and is not receiving visitors!" You needn't receive any, dear Madame. We'll arrange things. I'll

just stay here glued to this chair till I've got my money. You can be ill for a week, then I'll stay here seven days. If you're ill a year, I'll stay here twelve months. I'm going to win this game, dear Madame. You can't disarm me with veils and mourning, nor with the dimples in your cheeks. I've met dimples like that before. (*He calls out of the window*). Simon, unhitch the horses! We're not going to leave here in a hurry! I'm to stay awhile. Tell them at the stable to give your horses some oats. (*He leaves the window*). Oh, how hot it is! Nobody wants to pay his debts. After the night I passed, they offer me crepe veils and "states of mind" to appease me. Oh, how my head aches! I think I must have a little glass of brandy. Yes, yes, that's what I need. (*He calls*). Hello, somebody!

LOUKA (*enters*). What do you want?

SMIRNOV. Bring me a glass of cognac. (*Exit Louka*).

SMIRNOV. Out! (*He sits down and examines his clothing*.) I'm a sweet-looking object, there's no use talking! I'm covered with dust, my boots muddy, unwashed, my

hair unbrushed, straw on my vest. That little lady must have taken me for a brigand. (*He yawns*). It isn't exactly correct to come into a drawing-room like this! But I'm not a visitor, I'm a creditor, and there aren't any rules of etiquette for creditors.

LOUKA (*brings a glass of cognac*). You're making yourself too much at home, sir!

SMIRNOV (*angrily*). What did you say?

LOUKA. I? Nothing. I—

SMIRNOV. Do you know whom you're talking to? Not a word more!

LOUKA (*aside*). He's an imp of the Devil! (*Exit*).

SMIRNOV. It makes me furious! I feel as if I could grind the whole universe to powder! It makes me sick. (*He calls*). Hello! somebody!

#### SCENE VIII.

MME. POPOVA, SMIRNOV.

(*Enter Mme. Popova, her eyes on the floor*).

MME. POPOVA. Sir, permit me to tell you that since I have been alone I have grown entirely unused to men's big, coarse voices, and I can't stand shouting. I beg



you most earnestly to respect my repose.

SMIRNOV. Pay me your husband's debt and I'll go.

MME. POPOVA. I have told you flatly that I have no money in reach, and I beg you to be patient till the day after tomorrow.

SMIRNOV. I have also had the honor of answering you no less flatly that I need this money, not for tomorrow, but for this very day! You can't pay me the sum that is due me? (*He sits down*). Very well, I shall stay here till day after tomorrow—like this—glued to this chair. (*He grows excited*). Just tell me, must I pay the interest on my mortgage, or must I not? You seem to think I'm joking!

MME. POPOVA. Sir, I beg you not to raise your voice so. We aren't in the stable.

SMIRNOV. I didn't say anything about a stable; I asked you whether or not I must pay the interest on my mortgage tomorrow.

MME. POPOVA. You do not act as a gentleman should in the presence of a lady.

SMIRNOV. I beg your pardon, I know all about how to act in the presence of ladies.

MME. POPOVA. No you don't! You

have no breeding, you are impolite and vulgar! Well-bred men don't talk to ladies in that tone.

SMIRNOV. Well, now, that's charming! In what tone should I talk to you? (*Very angry, but with affected politeness*). Madame, pardon me. How delighted I am that you will not pay me what you owe me! I beg your pardon a thousand times for having come and disturbed you! It was such fine weather today! And you look so well in mourning! (*He bows profoundly*).

MME. POPOVA. That isn't funny—it's just coarse.

SMIRNOV (*imitating her*). That isn't funny—it's just coarse! I don't know how to act in the company of ladies! I've known more women in my life than you ever saw sparrows! I've had three duels over women; I've abandoned twelve women, and nine have abandoned me! Yes, Madame, certainly! I've made a fool of myself like all the rest, I've talked imbecility, I've put on airs, I've bowed and scraped. I have loved, I have suffered, I have sighed in the moonlight, I have pined and languished! I have

loved passionately, I have loved furiously! I have loved so often that love has no more secrets for me. I've preached in season and out of season for female emancipation; I've lost half of my fortune in affairs of the heart. But I've had enough of it. It's all over! Black eyes, fiery glances, red lips, dimpled cheeks, moonlight, rustling of leaves, tender sighs. I wouldn't give a cent for all of that any more, Madame! I am not speaking of present company; but all women, from the first to the last, are grimacing, affected, foolish, lying, vain, mean little souls, heartless, illogical, and as for this (*he strikes his forehead*) you will excuse my frankness, but a sparrow could show more gray matter than ten philosophers in skirts! Take the most poetical, the most ethereal, the most perfect of them all, and look at her. She's a goddess in satin! You fall into ecstasy! You reach her soul, and she's a crocodile! (*He seizes a chair by the back and breaks it in two*). But the most disgusting thing is that this crocodile imagines itself the masterpiece of creation, and considers love its monopoly, its privilege

A thousand devils! Hang me head down! Can a woman ever love anything but her little dog? In love a woman can do nothing but weep and moan—while the man suffers and sacrifices. The woman can do nothing but play with the end of her fan and lead a man around by the end of the nose! You are so unfortunate, Madame, as to be a woman; so that you know better than I do what the creatures are worth. Well, tell me now, frankly, on your soul and conscience, did you ever know a woman to be faithful and devoted? You never did, did you? There are no faithful and devoted women, but old ones and ugly ones! It is easier to find a cat with horns or a white blackbird than a true woman.

MME. POPOVA. Well, who do you think is faithful in love, then? The men?

SMIRNOV. Yes, the men.

MME. POPOVA. The men! (*with a wicked laugh*). The men are faithful and constant in love! Thank you for the discovery. I should never have suspected it. (*Excitedly*) But what right have you to say that? Men faithful and constant! Since that is the case,

I will tell you that of all the men I ever knew, the best was my dead husband—I loved him passionately, with all my soul, as only a young, intelligent woman can love. I gave him my youth, my happiness, my life, my fortune. I lived for him alone, I idolized him. Very well! this best of all men deceived me in the most shameful fashion, and after his death I found a drawer in his desk crammed full of letters from women. And while he was alive—oh, how hard it is to remember!—he left me all alone for weeks at a time, he paid court to other women right before me, he deceived me, he squandered my money, he insulted my love! And in spite of all that, I loved him and remained faithful to him . . . He's dead, and I am still faithful to him. I have buried myself in these four walls for the rest of my life, and I shall never leave off my mourning.

SMIRNOV (*with a mocking laugh*). Mourning! What do you take me for? Do you think I don't know why you wear that black domino and why you have buried yourself within these four walls? It is so poetical, so

mysterious! A young officer or a long-haired poet will pass in front of the house, will look up at your window and say: "Here dwells the mysterious lady who, for love of her husband, has buried herself alive within these four walls." We all know these tricks!

MME. POPOVA (*offended*). What do you mean? How do you dare to talk to me like that?

SMIRNOV. You've buried yourself alive, that is true. But you haven't forgotten to put on your rice-powder!

MME. POPOVA. How do you dare to speak to me like this?

SMIRNOV. Don't get angry, I beg you. I am not your manager. I like to call things by their right names. I am not a woman, and I am in the habit of saying frankly what I think. I beg you not to make a scene—

MME. POPOVA. It isn't I that am making a scene, it's you. Be so kind as to leave me in peace.

SMIRNOV. Pay me what you owe me and I will go at once.

MME. POPOVA. I shall not pay you.

SMIRNOV. I beg your pardon; you shall.

MME. POPOVA. No sir! To punish you, you shall not receive a cent! You might as well go and leave me.

SMIRNOV. I have not the pleasure of being your husband or your intended, and you needn't bother to play a part for me. (*He sits down*). I have no love for scenes.

MME. POPOVA (*suffocated with anger*). You're sitting down!

SMIRNOV. I'm making myself comfortable.

MME. POPOVA. I beg you to go away.

SMIRNOV. Pay me what you owe me. (*Aside*) Oh, how angry I'm getting!

MME. POPOVA. I will have nothing to do with insulting brutes like you. I beg you to withdraw. (*A pause*). You won't go?

SMIRNOV. No!

MME. POPOVA. You won't?

SMIRNOV. No!

MME. POPOVA. Very well. (*She rings*).

SCENE IX.

(*Enter Louka*)

MME. POPOVA. Louka! show this person the door.

LOUKA (*approaching Smirnov*). Sir, please go away, since Madame wishes it. Sir, sir—

SMIRNOV (*jumping to his feet*). Shut up! Who are you talking to? I'll knock you flatter than a pancake!

LOUKA (*terrified, puts his hand on his heart*) May all the saints in Heaven come and help me! (*He falls into a chair*). I'm sick, I'm choking.

MME. POPOVA. Where is Dacha? Dacha! (*She calls*). Tania! Dacha! (*She rings*).

LOUKA. Oh! oh! they are all in the woods picking strawberries! There is nobody in the house! I'm sick! Get me some water!

MME. POPOVA. Will you do me the favor to go away, sir?

SMIRNOV. I beg you, Madame, to be more polite to me.

MME. POPOVA (*clenches her fists and stamps*). You're a rustic, a dirty bear, a monster!

SMIRNOV. What's that?

MME. POPOVA. I said you're a bear and a monster!

SMIRNOV (*stepping toward her*). What



right have you to insult me, Madame?

MME. POPOVA. Yes, I'll insult you! You don't imagine I'm afraid of you?

SMIRNOV. And you seem to imagine that as you belong to the poetical sex you have the right to insult me with impunity. Well, you haven't. I challenge you and you will have to fight!

LOUKA. May all the saints of Heaven help us! Give me a glass of water!

SMIRNOV. We are going to fight!

MME. POPOVA. Because you have fists like a peasant and lungs like an ox, you think I'm afraid of you! You're a rustic, a bear, a monster.

SMIRNOV. Come on! I allow no one to insult me, not even such a trifling thing as a woman.

MME. POPOVA (*forcing her voice to cry louder than he does*). Bear! bear! bear!

SMIRNOV. Yes, it is time to put aside the foolish notion that only men are responsible for insults! You want equality of the sexes. Well, I want it too. Come on, Madame, and we'll—

MME. POPOVA. A duel? All right!

SMIRNOV. And at once!

MME. POPOVA. This very minute! My husband left some revolvers. I'll go and get them. (*She starts toward the door, but comes back at once*). Oh! how I'd enjoy lodging a ball in that brazen forehead of yours. (*Exit*).

SMIRNOV. I'll bleed her like a pullet! I'm neither a boy nor a sentimental fool. There's no weaker sex for me!

LOUKA. May all the saints of Heaven help us! (*He falls on his knees before Smirnov*). Barine, sir, have pity on a poor old man! Go away! You frightened me so that all my bones are trembling still, and now you expect me to look on quietly while you fight a duel with my mistress!

SMIRNOV (*without hearing him*). A duel! There's your equality of sexes, emancipation of women! No more privileges! I'm establishing a principle when I shoot at her. But what a woman! (*He imitates her*). "Oh, how I'd enjoy lodging a ball in that brazen forehead!" What a woman! Her cheeks turned red—red as roses! And her eyes are regular carbuncles! Well, I've abandoned twelve women, nine have left me, but I

never saw one like that!

LOUKA. Barine, little Father, go away. I will say prayers for you all my life.

SMIRNOV. That's a woman for you! I can understand a woman like that! That's the genuine article! No grimaces, no softness, fire, powder, a regular fury! It's really a shame to kill her!

LOUKA (*weeps*). Barine, little Father, go away, please; go away.

SMIRNOV. I like her, decidedly! Yes, in spite of her dimples, I like her! I am even ready to release her from her husband's debt! She's an astonishing woman!

#### SCENE X.

The same, then MADAME POPOVA.

(*Mme. Popova enters, a revolver in each hand*).

MME. POPOVA. Here are the weapons, but, before we fight, you must show me how to fire. I never used a revolver in my life.

LOUKA. May all the saints in Heaven save us! I'll call the gardener and the coachman. Lord! Lord! why have you sent us this pest? (*Exit*).

SMIRNOV (*examines the weapons*). There are several sorts of pistols, Madame. There

are Mortimer pistols with caps, manufactured especially for duels. These are Smith & Wesson revolvers with all the modern improvements — excellent pistols! They must have cost at least ninety roubles a pair! Now, see here! You must hold the revolver like this. (*Aside*). Those eyes, those eyes! The woman's dangerous!

MME. POPOVA (*takes the pistol*). Like this?

SMIRNOV. Yes, like that. Then you raise the hammer. You take aim—throw your head back a little. Straighten out your arm—like that! Then press this thing here with that finger, and that's all. But the principal thing is to keep your head cool and take aim deliberately. Try not to let your hand tremble.

MME. POPOVA. Don't be afraid. A room isn't a good place to fight a duel in. Let's go to the garden!

SMIRNOV. Very well. Only I must warn you that I shall fire into the air.

MME. POPOVA. What an idea! Why?

SMIRNOV. Because—because. Well, it's my own business!

MME. POPOVA. You're afraid? Yes, you

are! Ha! ha! ha! No, sir, don't try to get out of it, you shall follow me to the garden! I can't rest till I've put a hole in your forehead—that detestable forehead! You're afraid!

SMIRNOV. Yes, I'm afraid!

MME. POPOVA. That's not true. Why don't you want to fight any longer?

SMIRNOV. Because—because I like you!

MME. POPOVA (*with a malicious laugh*). He likes me! He has the audacity to tell me he likes me! (*She points at the door*). My compliments.

(*Smirnov lays the pistol on the table without a word, takes his hat and goes; he stops half a minute before the door; they look at each other, then Smirnov comes slowly back to the front of the stage*).

SMIRNOV. You're still angry? So<sup>1</sup> am I. I'm furious! But, you see—you see—how shall I say it? You see, this whole business—(*he shouts*) Well, how can I help it if I like you? (*He seizes a chair by the back; it cracks and breaks in two*). Why do people have such fragile furniture? I like you! Do you understand me? I—I'm—almost in

love with you!

MME. POPOVA. Don't come near me, I hate you!

SMIRNOV. My Lord, what a woman! Nine women have left me, I have abandoned twelve, but I never saw one like her! I'm lost; I've bit the bait like a mouse!

MME. POPOVA. Don't come near me or I'll fire!

SMIRNOV. Fire! You could never understand what pleasure it would give me to die under your eyes—to die from the ball that little velvet hand hurled at me. I'm going mad! Think and decide in a hurry, for if I leave here, we'll never see each other again! Make your decision. I'm a gentleman; I have ten thousand roubles a year; I'm a first-rate shot; I can hit a copeck in the air; I have some fine horses! Will you be my wife?

MME. POPOVA (*brandishing her revolver indignantly*). We're going to fight! Come on!

SMIRNOV. I'm stark mad! I can't keep hold of my senses. (*He cries*). Hello! someone, bring me some water?

MME. POPOVA (*cries*). Come on, come on!

SMIRNOV. I'm crazy. I'm in love like a milksop, like an idiot! (*He seizes Mme. Popova's hand. She cries out with pain.*) I love you! (*He falls on his knees.*) I love you as I never loved anybody else! I have abandoned twelve women, nine have left me—and I never loved one of them as I love you! You see, I'm a hopeless case! I'm on my knees before you like an imbecile, and I'm offering you my heart; it's shameful, it's ridiculous! I haven't loved anybody for five years. I swore I never would begin again, and here I am caught like a young romantic! I offer you my hand; will you have it or not? You won't? Very well! (*He rises and goes quickly toward the door.*)

MME. POPOVA. Wait!

SMIRNOV (*stops*). Well?

MME. POPOVA. No, go on. No, wait. Go on; go away! No, no, stop! Oh! if you knew how furious I am, how furious! (*She throws the revolver on the table.*) That thing bruised my fingers. (*In her anger she tears a handkerchief.*) What are you doing stuck there like a tree? Go away, I tell you!

SMIRNOV. Good-bye!

MME. POPOVA. Yes, yes, go! (*She cries*). Where are you going? Wait! Go on, go on. Oh, how angry I am! Don't come near me, don't come near me!

SMIRNOV (*comes very near her*). And what about me? I'll never forgive myself! I've hauled myself around on my knees till I've caught cold in my bones. (*Roughly*). I love you! and I swear to you I'd be glad to get out of this pickle! I must pay the interest on my mortgage tomorrow, the harvest has begun, and here you are in my way! (*He seizes her by the waist*). I'll never forgive myself.

MME. POPOVA. Don't come near me, don't touch me! I detest you! I hate you! Bring your pistol and come on!

(*He kisses her; she resists very feebly*).

#### SCENE XI.

(*The same, then LOUKA, an axe in his hand; the gardener with a rake; the coachman with a fork, and some peasants armed with clubs*).

LOUKA (*perceiving the attitude of the couple*). May all the saints of Heaven help us! (*A pause*).

MME. POPOVA (*drops her eyes*) LOUKA, tell the coachman not to give Tobie any oats at all today.





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