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### The Voice of Nature

Founders Staff

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#### Recommended Citation

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The Voice of Nature

C A S T

VLADIMIR TOLSTOI  
COUNT AUDREY MODJESKA  
BARON POSTA LAKANOFFSKI  
GREGORY BORSKI

} Students of the University of  
St. Petersburg.

KAROL ORLOFF.....A Nihilist

MINISTER OF POLICE

DUKE ALEXIS

DUCHESS ALEXIS

MARIE ALEXIS

MADAME KRAMOLIN.....An old nurse.

WERRA.....A girl of the people.

S Y N O P S I S

A C T I.

Vladimir's student quarters in the University.

A C T II.

Same as Act First. Four months later.

A C T III.

The Foyer and Grand Staircase in the Imperial Opera House in St. Petersburg. A year later.

A C T IV.

Vladimir's quarters. The next day.

A C T I.

S C E N E :

Student quarters of Vladimir in the University.

T I M E :

Autumn.

Up R. C. a door in flat and the only entrance into room from below--Room supposed to be on top floor - at L.C. a large bay-window over-looking domes and spires of the city- At L. 3rd, door, leading into an inside room--At L 2nd, fireplace and mantel--Over R. 3rd, a door, supposed to lead into another small room or closet--This scene boxed and ceiling piece with chandelier from C.- Over R. near tormentor, a small dressing table, on which is hair brush, comb and small ha glass. At wall R. 2nd, an old folding bed which is open at rise of curtain, but when closed, represents a supposed piano. Up back of bed, an easel, on it an artist's frame, which, later on, serves as top to an old trunk--Chair at easel and bag of peanuts on it. On wall R. and L. of door R.C./ two large pictures representing gay Ballet girls on top of frame is a curtain shade arrangement, which, when pulled down with strings, will unroll a map which will cover the questionable pictures. Between door and window, a common chair--Large bay-window covered with very cheap curtains on pole. Old-fashioned arm chair in window and book in chair. At L. 3rd curtain pole above door but no curtains. Lock and key to door. In the inside room is an old, large box painted like a trunk, it must be large and high enough for a woman to hide in, and top and bottom must be out-on mantel at L. 2nd, nail and towel on it--under towel an old chair, and on it a

pail half full of water—on mantel  
 small fancy photo with easel backing  
 to represent Vladimir's mother. Small  
 paper bag with three eggs. Half dozen  
 knives and forks, three cups and sauc-  
 ers, shoe of Gregory, an alarm clock  
 and one inside to ring, salt cellar and  
 pepper box, empty wine bottle and emp-  
 ty cigar box. At fireplace, an oil  
 stove, lighted, on it a frying pan,  
 back of stove an old chair, it is also  
 left of an old kitchen table, on which  
 is an old wash basin, tin dipper, large  
 wooden spoon, empty cigar box and four  
 empty bottles. At right of table old  
 chair, and at right leg of table on  
 floor a full bottle of wine. At C.  
 an old hassock, and R. of C. between  
 hassock and folding bed a pile of books  
 in two stacks about two feet high; on  
 right stack, the upper books is the dy-  
 namite book. It is a red covered book  
 and inside is hollowed and when opened  
 the bomb is seen. On top of the two  
 stacks is a large book resting on end  
 and it forms a pyramid. As curtain  
 rises, Gregory is discovered sleeping  
 on floor with hassock for pillow, his  
 shoe beside him. Count Andrew Modjeska  
 is in bed also asleep, and Baron Posta  
 is sleeping at the foot, his left leg  
 resting on the chest of the Count.  
 Their apparel consists of shirt, trous-  
 ers and stockings, the rest of their  
 clothing distributed around the room—  
 General air of poverty, as students have  
 pawned all their possessions, the room  
 is in chaos, twenty-five empty bottles  
 around on floor also a few empty cigar  
 boxes, showing that the occupants have  
 had a night of dissipation. As cur-  
 tain rises, alarm clock off stage L. 2E  
 rings. Music for rise, The Drinking  
 Song.

When curtain up, Gregory slowly awakes.  
 Sits up, stretches himself, slowly  
 rises. looks over at clock, stretches  
 himself again.

Gregory

Confound that alarm clock. The man who invented that ought to have been slaughtered.

(Alarm clock stops, looks around room)

By jove! We must have had a devil of a time.

(Sees Posta and Andrey on bed still sleeping—laughs)

Well! There's a picture for a young ladies seminary.

(X's over to bed)

Come, come, wake up there, are you going to sleep all day?

(Xing over L - Business of tack in foot, limps across stage L. to wash from pail)

Andrey

(Stretching)

Oh! Oh! I had a horrible dream. I dreamt that a monkey was on my chest.

(Sees Posta's foot, which is on his chest)

No wonder I had the night mare.

(Throws Posta's foot off and Posta rolls out of bed on floor)

Posta

(On floor)

What are you trying to do with my feet?

Andrey

(Sitting on side of bed)

What were they doing on my chest?

Posta

I put them there.

(Still on floor)

Andrey

And I object having them under my nose, you understand?

(Posta rises)

Gregory

Oh! Come, come, take a bath and cool your blood.

(Over at bucket of water)

Andrey

Hold on there, Gregory! Don't be a pig and use all that water.

(X's over to Gregory)

Gregory

Are you afraid that I'll convert it into a mud puddle?

Andrey

I'll not take any chances.

(He fills tin basin on table from bucket with a tin dipper and he and Gregory start washing with much noise, puffing and splashing. Posta in the meantime has gone)

up stage where his clothes are hanging on a chair near the easel, he observes a bag of nut shells on chair, he takes them up and comes down stage, takes up Gregory's shoe which is near the hassock at C., Posta hears the puffing and splashing of Gregory and Andrey)

Posta

The menagerie taking a bath.

(Pours nut shells into Gregory's shoe)

(Andrey kicks Gregory and turns around to wash as tho' someone else did it)

Gregory

(To Andrey)

See here! If you do that again I'll turn you into a sausage.

(Takes towel from mantel)

Andrey

Hold on! Half of that belongs to me.

(Both wiping at same time)

Posta

(Up C. putting on coat)

Leave me a clean spot in the middle will you?

Andrey

Oh! Use your handkerchief.

Gregory

Where are my shoes?

Andrey

There's one on the mantel, fool!

(Xing over R. to a little table with his toilet articles on at R. IE)

Posta

A night of dissipation has made us all exceedingly polite.

(Putting on collar up C. Gregory has taken his shoe, sits at chair L. and puts it on)

Andrey

Yes.

(Combing his hair)

But where is Vladimir I wonder?

Posta

Where we ought to have been three hours ago, in the class room.

(Up C)

Andrey

Oh! Yes of course, he's a model young man.  
(Posta X's over L. near stove, Gregory X's over to C. and sits on hassack)

Gregory

No, sarcasm, please. Vladimir is all right.  
(Putting on shoe with nut shells in)

He's one of the best.  
(Stands on shoe)

Oh!

Posta

What's the matter?  
(Over L. at table)

Gregory

(Takes off shoe, empties shells on floor)  
Who put those nut shells in my shoe?

Andrey

(Combing hair and brushing up)  
Vladimir, I suppose.

Gregory

He's not such an idiot to play such stupid tricks.  
(C. Posta putting on his shoe. Over L.)

Andrey

(Continuing toilet)  
No! Great intellects like Vladimir's never stoop to such trifles.

Posta

Has Vladimir ever done anything to you?  
(Over L. tying his shoe)

Gregory

(Putting on his shoe)  
Of course not. He never gives him credit for anything, Posta.

Andrey

Why should he deserve more credit?

Posta

(Finds his shoe under table L.)  
Because he has more and we have been borrowing from it.

Andrey

(Making toilet)  
He'll not lose the money that he loaned me. Besides he should be thankful that we associate with him. A common fellow without a name.  
(Over R)

Posta

(Over L. Tying shoe)

I would rather be born without a name and make one, then with one and disgrace it.

Andrey

What do you mean?

Posta

Simply what I say.

Gregory

(C. Fixing his collar)

You're right, Posta. Andrey should be the last to speak against Vladimir. When we were thrown out of our rooms--

(Sitting on hassock tying shoe)

Posta

Yes, because we couldn't pay our rent.

(Over L. fixing his shoe)

Gregory

He invited us to share his apartments.

Andrey

Humph! Apartments.

(Over at bed, arranging collar, necktie, etc.-)

Posta

Well! It's not what you would call luxurious, but you seem to forget that he pawned all his elegant furniture to pay one of your debts of honor.

Andrey

As soon as I get my allowance he'll get his money, and not before.

Posta

You better hurry up then. Vladimir needs it. It will be a month before he gets his money from the Duchess.

Andrey

The Duchess Alexis is very kind to this commoner. I'll bet there's something behind all this great generosity.

Posta

(Rising indignantly)

Look here, Count Modjeska, if you insinuate that it is of a base nature, I will clear that point.

(Xing C.- Gregory goes up stage and puts on coat)

The Duchess Alexis and Vladimir's mother <sup>were</sup> very dear friends.



After leaving school Vladimir's mother fell in love with a worthless fellow who deserted her, and then the poor woman, died, after giving birth to Vladimir, and so the Duchess promised to educate the boy. Now that's all there is to it.  
(Going back to L.)

Andrey

And he repays his benefactress by making love to her daughter. A young lady of rank.

Posta

Pshaw! What's rank? Here I am a baron, and I haven't a single rouble. I have pawned all I had, and it's a pity that I can't pawn my title. I would if I could.  
(Sitting at table L.)

Andrey

Oh! Nonsense! I tell you one in Vladimir's position has no right to make love to Marie.

Gregory

(Comes down C)

And why not? Must he throw his affections to the winds, because you happen to fancy her?  
(Fixing his tie)

Posta

Oh! That's the idea, is it? Take my advise, Andrey, Marie loves Vladimir as much as he loves her, and you're only wasting your time.

Gregory

(C)

Yes, and for you to try to spoil his chances, would be contemptible.

Andrey

Hold on! I have stood enough of your insults.  
(Rising at R.C.)

Gregory

I don't care, I mean every word.  
(C)

Posta

Come, don't be idiots, this is no place to settle your quarrel.  
(Rising L. C.)

Andrey

Then he's got to keep quiet, that's all.

(Goes R. and sits on bed)

Posta

For Heaven's sake, change the subject. Look! See this shoe.

(Shoe in right hand)

I will wager a rouble, which I haven't against a rouble which neither of you have,

(Laughingly)

that with this shoe, I can scale the top book off that pile.

Watch!

(Over at table L. and is about to throw shoe)

Andrey

Stop! What are you doing?

(Rising quickly)

Posta

What's the matter?

(Excitedly) (Gregory comes down C also with great interest)

Andrey

There's a dynamite bomb there.

(R.C.)

Posta and Gregory

Where?

Andrey

The Dark red book.

Gregory

(C)

Who brought it here?

(Suppressed)

Andrey

I did, last night.

(R.C.)

Posta

You promised to deliver that to the Brotherhood.

(L. C. Gregory goes up to C. Door, locks it)

Andrey

I thought I was followed so I brought it in here.

Posta

That was wrong. You know that Vladimir is not one of us, that he is against Nihilism.

(Gregory at door R. C. listening)

Andrey

Oh! I can't consult him on everything. Besides it's here and we must make the most of it.

Gregory

Is it one of the new ones?

(Comes down C)

Andrey

Yes, the most, powerful, ever manufactured.

(Kneeling down beside books, takes up the book, slowly opens it and bomb can be seen in center of book)

Posta

It's a miracle we weren't blown to pieces.

Andrey

No, fear of that. I had my eye on it. Besides you have to jar it first, then it takes half a minute to unwind and explode.

Vladimir

(Outside laughing)

It's all right, never mind, I'll call them.

Posta

It's Vladimir, get it out of the way.

(Gregory starts for it)

Andrey

Never mind! It's safe here, when I go, I'll take it.

(Replace it among the other books)

Vladimir

(Outside, knocking at door C)

What! Ho there! What ho!

(Gregory unlocks door)

(Gregory L. C.-. Posta L.- Andrey R)

What ho! yourself, there!

(Enter Vladimir C)

(Salutes)

Good morning, boys.

All

(Salute)

Good morning.

Posta

What report from the class room?  
(Over L)

Vladimir

Three black marks.  
(C)

Posta

For the three gentlemen of leisure.  
(Posta L. Gregory L.C. Vladimir C. Andrey R)

Vladimir

I set the alarm for eleven, did you hear it?

Gregory

Did we hear it? Why it spoiled a beautiful dream of mine.

Posta

And mine also. I dreamt I was a trapeze performer, I made a startling leap through the air, and as I reached to grasp the bars at the other side of the ring, I felt a shock and awoke to find myself tumbling head over heels out of bed.  
(Laughs)

Vladimir

Ah! That's too bad. Have you had any breakfast?  
(Xing over L. back of table)

Posta

Breakfast! We don't know what it means.  
(Xing to C. and sits on hassock)

Gregory

Not even a bite.  
(Up C. at door)

Vladimir

Ah, that's too bad.  
(Over L)

You mustn't starve in my quarters.  
(Takes bag of eggs from mantel-piece)

Well, boys, what will you have? Eggs or---eggs?  
(Holding up bag with 3 eggs in it)

Posta

(Sitting on hassock C. Swinging empty bottle)  
Oh! We've had nothing but eggs for the last two weeks, it's enough to turn a fellow into a chicken.  
(Throws an old cigar box up back, it nearly strikes Gregory, who makes a start for him)

Vladimir

Come, come, boys, eggs or nothing.

(Over L. of table, Posta hassock C. Gregory up C.  
Andrey over R. still arranging toilet)

Posta

All right.

Gregory

Eggs!

Andrey

Oh! Anything!

Vladimir

How would you like to have your egg, Count?

Andrey

Fried.

Vladimir

All right.

(Breaks egg in pan)

Fried you are. And you Gregory?

Gregory

Boiled.

(Up C. on chair disgusted)

Hard!

Vladimir

All right! But --

(In doubt--sees pail of water, takes it is about to  
put it on stove--reconsiders--puts it down)

All right, we'll accommodate you.

(Breaks egg in same pan)

Boiled hard. And you Posta?

Posta

Oh! I'll have mine hatched.

(Sitting on hassock, swinging empty bottle)

Vladimir

Hatched! I don't know about that. However I'll try to oblige  
even you.

(Same business with egg, which is bad)

Your wish is gratified, there's the chicken.

(All laugh)

By the way, boys, I am expecting shortly the Duke and Duchess  
Alexis from France.

(Wiping his hands on towel, back of stove L.)

Andrey  
 Isn't there some one else you're expecting?  
 (Over R)

Vladimir  
 Oh, yes indeed, an important personage to my mind.

Posta  
 (With bottle in hand)  
 Yes, and if this bottle were only full, I would drink to the health of this important personage for she is worthy it, and I don't blame you for loving Marie.

Vladimir  
 I acknowledge it boys, I love Marie and what's more I'm proud of it.  
 (Striking heroic attitude with an old tin dipper)

Gregory  
 That's the way to talk. A frank confession is good for the soul.  
 (Up C)

Posta  
 If I had a girl like Marie, I would marry her right away.  
 (Rising)

Vladimir  
 What you?  
 (Sitting at stove watching eggs)

Posta  
 Why not? I'll be a papa one of these days.  
 (Fondles wine bottle in arms like a baby)

Vladimir  
 You're quite an expert.

Posta  
 Expert! Why, I'm an authority. I'm writing a new book now on the proper care of babies.  
 (Stroking bottle-- all laugh--Up to this time the three students can take plenty of time dressing)

Look!  
 (Very dramatically)  
 Did you ever see such carelessness.  
 (Pointing to bottle at leg of table)

Vladimir  
 (Rising)  
 What's the matter?  
 (Others excited also)

Andrey

What's up?

Posta

A full bottle of wine.

(Vladimir thinking its a bottle on table grabs it, Posta makes a dive for bottle on floor, gets it before Gregory who also makes a rush for it, they both struggle for bottle, Posta retains it, breaks away from Gregory strikes a picture in C. with bottle in hand)

Saved!. From the wreck.

(All laugh)

Vladimir will you join us?

Vladimir

Yes I'll take a cup.

Posta

Cup! Well that's all you'll get.

(He X's over to table at L. also Gregory and Andrey and they all take cups that are on table and Posta fills them--all the cups are used--after filling them)

Hold on there, where is my cup?

(Vladimir offers him large tin dipper)

Gregory

Oh! You drink out of the bottle.

Andrey

Here's to wine, women and song.

(Posta drinks out of bottle; Gregory strikes him on back and Posta chokes)

Gregory

Come, Posta, give us a song.

Andrey

Yes, by all means give us a song.

Vladimir

Yes, a good idea, a song.

Posta

Hold on now, and don't get excited, business first and then pleasure. Vladimir, fry those eggs, and Gregory- whose turn is it to make the bed?

(C)

Gregory

(L.C.)  
It's mine.

Andrey

(R.C.)

No, it's not, it's mine.

Gregory

I tell you I am going to make that bed.

Andrey

No you won't, I am going to do it.

(Ad lib quarrel kept up)

Posta

Hold on. Stop! Stop! I say. See here, if you fellows don't stop your quarelling, I will make the bed myself.

Gregory

It's my turn and I am going to do it.

(L.C.)

Posta

Shut up, will you. I will settle that dispute. Both of you can make it.

(They both start for bed, as they get over to bed, Posta with empty wine bottle in hand gets C. on top of hassock, as if striking cord)

Ta ta.

(All join in singing)

"The festive day has come  
And brightly beams the morning,  
The sun peeps o'er the hills,  
The festal day adorning." etc.

(Or any lively college song)

(Posta beating time with empty bottle. Vladimir putting pepper and salt on eggs and beating time on stove with tin dipper. Andrey and Gregory making bed, keeping time to the music)

(Minister of Police enters near the end of verse, takes in the situation)

Minister

Gentlemen! Gentlemen! Stop! Stop! I say!. Stop!

(They stop singing, and the Minister comes down  
R.C.)

Posta

By whose authority?

(R.C.)



Minister

The Minister of Police.

(Pause - all astonished)

Who answers to the name of Vladimir Tolstoi?

(Posta retires up stage. Andrey over R.  
also Gregory)

Vladimir

That's my name.

(Rising from chair, at stove and going C)

Minister

We were anonymously informed that you have a dynamite bomb concealed in your rooms.

Vladimir

A dynamite bomb.

(Laughing)

Why, the accusation is absurd, false.

(Posta L. C. - Vladimir C. - Minister R. C. -  
Gregory up R. C. - Andrey extreme R.)

Minister

That remains to be proven.

(Points to room L)

What's in there?

Vladimir

Empty bottles and cigar boxes and an old trunk.

Posta

Perfectly harmless, I assure you, and will bear the minutest inspection. This way.

(Leads the Minister to the door L. opens it, and  
n the Minister goes in ahead, as he exits, Posta  
gives signs to the others, as if to take the bomb  
away, and then exits, Vladimir notices actions of  
Posta)

Vladimir

What does he mean?

(At C)

Andrey

There is a bomb here!

(Over R)

Vladimir

Where?

Andrev

The dark red book.

Gregory

I told you not to bring it here.  
(Going down R)

Vladimir

Quiet!  
(Re-enter Minister and Posta)  
Well.

Minister

Everything is all right in there.  
(He X's down near stove- knocks on the table--looks for drawers in it)

Vladimir

Permit me to assist you.  
(Xing to table)

Minister

No, thank you.  
(X's over to C. STOPS, looks in direction of closet up R. at 3rd E.)  
Is that another room?

Vladimir

Merely a closet, that is all.

Minister

An excellent place to hide a bomb.  
(Opens closet door as he gets out of sight.  
Gregory starts for bomb to take it- Vladimir strikes table with dipper. Gregory retreats up stage R. and Minister comes out of closet looks at bed, shakes it up and down- Vladimir occasionally strikes dipper on table, so as to make first sound unimportant, as tho' done carelessly)

Vladimir

Merely a folding bed, that's all.  
(Minister examining it)

Gregory

(He shakes bed up and down)  
Yes, that's all, merely a folding bed. No dynamite bombs here.

Minister

Umph! Evidently not.  
(Walks over to the books, carefully looks them over, then takes up the top one, glances through

the pages)

Latin!

(Throws book on the floor R. in disgust, then after hesitation, takes top book off L. side of pile, looks at it)

Greek!

(Throws that down, then takes up the dark red book, which is the bomb- looks at it-reads on back- "Life of Alexander the Great". The last I shall ever pay attention to an anonymous letter. Damn it!)

(Raises book in right hand is about to throw it on floor, Andrey, Gregory and Posta, start away, as if toward door -)

Vladimir

Hold on! Stop!

(Minister with book in hand, instantly lowers his hand without throwing book)

I beg your pardon but that book I prize, it was a birthday present from the Duchess Alexis.

Minister

Oh! I beg your pardon.

(X's over to C. to Vladimir returns him the book)

Gentlemen, I am delighted to say that the report was untrue.

(X's up to door C. turns)

I will not trouble you again, good morning.

(Exit R. C.D. As Minister exits Posta starts same old song, and they all join in the singing, so as to throw Minister completely off guard -about the time that the Minister would be down the stairs- Vladimir interrupts song-Posta goes up to C.D. and exits, giving impression that he has gone to watch the Minister)

Vladimir

Count Modjeski!--

(Song stops)

Why did you abuse my confidence by bringing a dynamite bomb into my room?

(Bomb in Vladimir's hand.)

Andrey

I intended to take it away this morning, I apologize.

Vladimir

So, then my three companions are Nihilists?

(L.C.)

Gregory

(Up R.C.)

Yes, we are. We are determined to rid the world of this hateful Czar.

(Vladimir down L.)

Vladimir

(Turns)

Leave that to a higher power. For the present I'll take care of this bomb.

(Going to door L.)

Andrey

(Over extreme R)

I will want that bomb when I go.

Vladimir

(Up L. in direction of door L. 3E)

Not this one, no damage will ever come from this bomb.

(He exits door L. 3E)

Andrey

(Crosses over C. talking off to Vladimir)

I shall insist on taking that with me.

Gregory

(At his R)

You were a fool to have brought it here.

Andrey

(Turns on him)

That's my business. I will be answerable to the Brotherhood not you. The up-start.

(Andrey X's down extreme R. Gregory up R. C. -re-enter Posta C)

Posta

I tell you, boys, that was a lucky escape. Where is Vladimir?

Gregory

(With nod of head)

Inside there.

Posta

Vladimir, here is a letter for you.

(At C)

Vladimir

(Re-enters)

For me?

(Takes it)

Why, it's from the Duchess.

(X's down L. sits on chair R. of table and opens envelope)

Posta

Why, certainly, that's an answer to my invitation to come here and spend a few days.

Vladimir

(Reads)

My dear Vladimir, we will arrive in St. Petersburg Thursday at noon.

Gregory

(Up R.C.)

It's near that time now.

Posta

(C)

Yes, why, to-day is Thursday.

Vladimir

(Looking at envelope)

This letter must have been delayed.

(Reads)

Before going to our Palace, we will call on you and inspect your new apartments, which as you wrote, must be very elegant.

(All laugh but Vladimir)

Here's a nice fix, what's to be done.

(Rising and going L)

Gregory

Keep them down stairs in the reception room.

(R.C.)

Posta

There in the hands of the painters and decorators, you idiot.

(L.C.)

Vladimir

Oh, if we could borrow some furniture.

(Back of stove)

Posta

Let's fake some. I have seen it done in dozens of French farces.

Vladimir

This is not a farce, it's a stern reality.

(Empty bottle in hand)

Look at the eggs.

Posta

Very well then, invite the Duchess in and let her fry the eggs.

Vladimir

Oh! We must do something. Let's clear the room.  
 (Vladimir cleans everything off table L. The rest snatch up bottles and cigar boxes and throw them into room L. Gregory and Andrey fix the bed and fold it up, great confusion--in the midst of this, Werra enters door in flat with a large basket of laundry on each arm--she remains at C. a moment in amazement and then burts out laughing)

Werra

What's this! A lunatic Asylum? Well, I swear, that's the first time I ever saw you fellows work.

(They pay no attention to her, but continue to fix up the room--Posta immediately after Werra enters exits into room L)

What's the matter?

(They keep right on working)

Say if you fellows can't answer, you can't get your laundry, you understand?

(Posta comes out from the room with a large box or trunk, with the ends out)

Posta

(As he enters)

This will do for a table.

(He bumps into Werra and the basket which contains the ladies' laundry falls on the floor at C)

Werra

Oh, you have ruined my washing.

(Backing C)

Vladimir

(Sees curtains, which are on top of the washing)

Curtains! Werra, the angels from Heaven couldn't be more welcome.

(He snatches up the 2 curtains, jumps on chair and fixes one curtain over door L. 3rd E. which has a pole already on it)

Werra

Here, hold on there. That's Madame Wassilies washing.

Vladimir

(On chair)

She'll have to wait.

Werra

But she'll kill me.

(Posta, who had placed the trunk over R. C. goes back to the laundry basket, which is on the floor, looks into it, takes out a white petticoat, with white frills on it, holds it up in front of himself and makes a few ballet kicks)

Posta

I say, boys, look at this.

(Ballet business here)

Werra

(Turns to Posta)

Here! Here! That's Madame Wassilies' favorite petticoat.

Posta

Is it? Well, she's fond of frills.

(Holding it up)

Gregory

(Who has gone up back of Posta, looks into basket, takes another petticoat out and holds it up)

More frills!

Werra

I'll not stand this any longer. I'll call the police.

(Goes up to window)

Police! Police!

Vladimir

Don't be silly! We'll pay you for everything.

(Jumps from chair, makes curtain do for a table cloth for table L.)

Andrey

Of course we will.

(He goes up to basket)

Gregory

You needn't worry.

Posta

No, we've plenty of time.

(Vladimir goes over to basket takes out a ladies' night robe.)

Vladimir

Here are a few more frills.

Werra

Oh, if Madame Wassilie was here she would poison me.

(Andrey also takes petticoat out)

Andrey

Isn't this a beauty?

(X's down R. Posta up at basket pulls out a red stocking)

Posta

Look boys, look, what do you think of this?

(Holds it up, Vladimir takes night robe and decorates mantel)

Here decorate the mantel with this.

(Throws stockings to Vladimir, which he places on mantel nearest audience)

Gregory

This old trunk must serve as a table.

Andrey

It has no top.

Posta

(Takes artists board from the easel)

Here, this will do.

(Places it on top of trunk- Gregory places his laundry to decorate top of trunk- Andrey places his, on pile of books, and fixes small table over R.- Vladimir arranges table and mantel over L.- Werra up back, defiant, with basket on arm)

Is that our laundry?

(Points to other basket which she has on her arm)

Werra

Yes, but you'll not get a stitch, until you pay me all you owe me.

(Noise of carriage wheels outside off R. 3E)

Andrey

It's the Duke's carriage.

(Over R)

Vladimir

Here, Werra, you get out of here.

(Posta throws the basket which is on the floor into room L. locks the door and puts key into pocket)

Andrey, you go down stairs and detain them as long as possible.

(Andrey exits C. Vladimir places mother's picture on table)



Posta

(C)

You had better go yourself, perhaps you can persuade them not to come up at all.

Vladimir

Good idea.

(Werra sitting on steps at window- Vladimir rushes up to exit C. sees pictures of ballet girls)

For Heaven's sake change those pictures.

(Exits C. Gregory and Posta rush up stage and pull strings on pictures, showing two large maps. Werra rises as they do this and goes down L.)

Werra

Oh, that's down right wicked.

Gregory

(Over R)

Now you get out of here.

(Posta looks off door C)

Werra

Not an inch until I get my money and Madame Wassillie's petticoats.

Posta

You can come back after the Duchess is gone.

(C)

Werra

(Down L. in front of table)

I won't stir one inch.

Gregory

(Over R)

If you don't, we'll throw you out.

Werra

You will? Try it! Try it if you dare!

(Holding up her arm to show her muscle)

I haven't worked at the wash tub for nothing.

Posta

(At C)

They are coming, Werra, get in or you will ruin us all. Get in there.

(Xing over L. to door)

Gregory

No --not there, in here. The trunk!

Werra

(Over vL)

What in that thing? No sirree!

Posta

(Comes to C)

Do, Werra, do, please, if you do, you needn't work in the laundry any more. We will get you a position here in the University taking care of rooms.

Werra

And I needn't scrub, nor take any more turns at the tub?

Posta

You'll lead a life of perfect ease if you'll only get in.

Werra

All right!

(She X's over to R. C. Posta and Gregory hold up the trunks--she gets under, they place it over her--her head sticks out through the top)

Well, boys, I'm in it!

(Posta at her L. Gregory at her R)

Posta

Don't let Vladimir or any one else know you're in there, you understand. Stay there till Gregory or I take you out.

Werra

All right, but I'll keep my eye on you fellows, I'm not going to lose my money nor Madame Wassilie's nighties.

Posta

(At C D)

They are coming, get down, quick.

(Gregory puts cover on and he and Posta drape it)

Now, Werra don't make a sound.

Werra

Say, what did you do with her stocking?

(Lifts cover showing head)

Posta

Never mind.

(Gregory and Posta push her down and place cover over her again)

Keep quiet! We will let you know when they have gone.

(Voices heard outside laughing, Gregory X's over L. and then enter the Duchess, Marie, Madam, Duke, Andrey and Vladimir.)

Posta

(Over L)  
Duchess, permit me to welcome you to Vladimir's sanctum.

Duchess

(Bows)  
This room is very odd.  
(Looking around--comes down L. of trunk)

Marie

Immaculately clean, this drapery.  
(R. of trunk looking at petticoat on trunk-- Madam up R. talking with Andrey-- the Duke X's over L. shakes hands with Gregory and slowly works down toward mantel, taking in everything, as he slowly moves down, he discovers the red stocking on mantel, takes them off, hiding them by his left side--Vladimir up C. with Posta--Madam talking with Gregory)

Duchess

These drapings are very unique.  
(Handing drapery on top of trunk)

Marie

Yes, the frills are a decided novelty.

Duchess

(TO Vladimir)  
Where did you purchase these frills?

Vladimir

(Coming down C. confused)  
Oh, we purchased them from -- from --

Posta

(L. C.)  
Why, we had them imported from -- China.

Duchess

From China?  
(Posta goes over L-- Vladimir talks with Duchess, as if trying to explain matters)

Duke

(Over at mantel L. as Posta goes down L)  
Posta, come here.  
(Posta goes to him)  
I don't think these came from China.  
(Duke laughs, and puts red stocking into his pocket and retires up back laughing--Posta expostulating with him)

Duchess

Vladimir, I am sorry to say this room is a disappointment to me.

Marie

A disappointment? I should say it was, a great disappointment  
(Over R. with Andrey)

Duchess

(Sees picture on table L)  
Why, Vladimir, whose picture is that?  
(Xing over to it, and taking it up)

Vladimir

(C)  
Why, that is the picture of my mother.

Duchess

(Surprised)  
Your mother! Why, my boy, you have never seen her.  
(Madame drops down L)

Vladimir

True! But that is the idealized face of the woman your grace has so often pictured to me.

Duchess

Your imagination has painted a wonderful likeness. Do you not think so, Madam?  
(Showing it to Madam, who by this time is down L. of table- Andrey the moment picture is mentioned X's over L. quietly)

Madam

(Looks at it, and starts- Andrey observes movement)

Duchess

My boy, it was the Voice of Nature that guided your hand.  
(Gives him back the picture)

Andrey

(Between Duchess and Vladimir)  
I think it resembles your Grace a little.

Duchess

You think so?

Vladimir

Why should it not, but for the Duchess, I would have been an outcast.  
(To Duchess)

And since your Grace approves of the picture, I shall value it as highly as I honor my mother's memory.

Duchess

(With surprised emotion)

Do so, and she will always guard you.

(Andrey retreats a trifle back, but observes closely everything relating to this picture incident--Duchess retires up C. Talks with Duke)

Marie

Isn't the key board of this piano unusually high?

(Over R. looking at imitation board of piano on folding bed)

Duchess

(Turning, coming down C.)

Is it the one I bought you?

Vladimir

Yes, yes, it's the same one--it's quite new.

(Xing over L. Posta L. of table)

Duchess

(C)

What's the matter Vladimir, you seem nervous? Are you ill?

Vladimir

No, no, I am quite well, quite well.

(Aside to Posta)

For Heaven's sake get rid of them.

(Duke in the meantime has retired up back he is quite sure that something is wrong, and watches the boys closely--Vladimir unobserved, puts frying pan under table)

Posta

(Xing over to Duchess)

Ladies, I propose that you inspect the University Conservatory. They are very interesting.

Vladimir

(Over L)

An excellent idea, excellent!

Posta

We have the finest collection of grass there in all the world.

Duke

(Comes down L. of Posta)

Grass!

(Gives him a nudge, gives him quiet laugh and retires up stage)

Andrey

(Comes down R. of Duchess extends his arm)

May I have the honor, Duchess?

(She takes his arm and exits C. chatting - Duke up L. watching the whole proceeding)

Gregory

(Up stage)

Madame Kramolin, will you permit me?

(She accepts his arm)

Madam

With pleasure.

(They exit. Vladimir who is over L. starts for C. same time that Marie starts. Vladimir is about to offer his arm to Marie, when Posta steps in between)

Posta

(Laughing)

You're not half smart enough.

Marie

You forget, I have more than one arm.

(Takes Posta's arm, swings around, and takes Vladimir's. Marie has Vladimir on her R. and Posta on her L. as they go up C., the Duke steps down, taps Vladimir on the shoulder)

Duke

Vladimir, I wish to speak to you.

(Vladimir bows to excuse himself to Marie. Marie turns)

Marie

Be brief, papa, don't keep him long.

(Exits with Posta. Vladimir goes down R.C. Duke L.C.)

Duke

My boy. I have received letters from your Professors full of praise. Now, then, after you leave the University, I want you to enter the Army and make a name for yourself.

Vladimir

I can never repay the Duchess and you for all your kindness.

Duke

Tut, tut, don't mention. You are the son of my wife's dearest friend who died under fortunate circumstances, and it was our pleasure, yes and our duty, to care for you as if you were our own. Now, if there is anything that you may wish to ask from me, name it, and if it stands in my power, it will be yours.

Vladimir

Well I - I have one favor to ask, but really it is so great, I hardly dare to ask it.

Duke

Oh! I understand, an increase in your allowance, eh?

Vladimir

No, no it's not that.

Duke

Not that! Oh! Then it must be Marie! Is it? Come come, speak out.

Vladimir

Well, yes, it is Marie.

Duke

I thought so. I have had my eye on you both, you love her, and you wish my consent to pay your addressess. Well, if she doesn't object it's all right.

(Gives his hand)

But my boy, no thought of marriage for at least--well, say three years.

Vladimir

Three years! Well, of course we can wait.

(Xing R. leaning on back of trunk)

Duke

Certainly, time flies, and in the meantime you can sow your wild oats, eh?

(Laughing)

Vladimir

I don't understand your meaning.

(Surprised)

Duke

No-o! Well, I am a man of the world, you know, but you mustn't carry too far these---

(Pulling from pocket red stocking that he had taken off the mantel)

frivolities. Come now, tell me, is the wearer pretty?

Vladimir

Oh! Why, I can easily explain that.

Duke

You rascal, I never thought that of you.

(Enter Marie Door R. C. Duke puts stocking in his pocket and goes to L.)

Marie

May I come in?

Duke

Certainly. I leave this rogue in your charge.

(Xing to C.)

Read him a lecture. He deserves it, Marie.

(Up at C. whispers in Marie's ear, she X's down L. with her back turned to Duke-Vladimir afraid Duke has told Marie-snaps his fingers at Duke)

It's all right, Vladimir.

(Goes to door, shows stocking and exits laughing)

Marie

(Turns)

Why, he seems exceedingly good natured, what has happened?

Vladimir

(After Duke exits, runs up to door closes it)

Nothing, that is- Marie, I have good news for you.

(Down C)

Your father has given his consent to our marriage.

Marie

He has? Oh, I am so glad!

(Embraces Vladimir, who swings her around to the R)

Vladimir

Yes, I never expected it. But he makes one condition however, that we must wait three years.

Marie

Good Gracious! Three years!

Vladimir

Yes, that's all, oh! It's all right. Your father says, time flies.

(He goes L. of table Marie over at chair R. of table)

Marie

Three years: I'm awfully disappointed!

Sits in chair R. of table in disgust)

Vladimir

Marie, are you sure that you really love me?

(L. of table)

Marie

Why, the idea, you know I do.



Vladimir

Marie, this is the happiest moment--

(Takes her hand, is about to kiss, her? Werra's raises lid of trunk and she stands in view; head out of trunk, lid raises with both hands, then with shake of the head to Vladimir as if to get her out of there. Vladimir surprised, unaware of Werra's being there, makes gestures to Werra, as if to get down out of sight--Marie's back is turned to Werra and she is completely mystified by the actions of Vladimir. Werra makes angry signs in the negative)

Marie

Why, Vladimir, what's the matter?

Vladimir

Nothing!

(Making gestures to Werra to get down- she shakes her head- Vladimir in despair)

I - I Look! Marie! - Look at that beautiful painting.

(Pointing to an old chromo, framed over fireplace- this down to attract Marie's attention from Werra- Werra will not disappear. Vladimir goes down L. hand on heart, other one gesticulating for Werra- to get down)

Oh! Oh!

Marie

(Frightened)

Vladimir!

Vladimir

(Stretches out both arms to her, she goes into his arms. Vladimir makes signs back of her, to Werra, at last Werra reluctantly disappears. Vladimir swings Marie around to L. starts for trunk, pushes cover down and strikes picture of perfect ease)

There, I'm better now.

Marie

I'm glad of that.

Vladimir

Isn't that picture a beauty?

(Marie looks at picture- Vladimir kicks trunk- Marie looks around quickly)

Don't ydu think we'd better go to the conservatory?

Marie

Yes, I think we had.

(Vladimir takes her up C) he looks around and discovers Werra lifting up cover again, with a dart, down he goes, jams the cover over trunk again)

Vladimir

Keep still.

Marie

Why I didn't say anything.

Vladimir

No, no, I beg your pardon, Marie.

(He starts to exit with her but the Duchess enters C. D. followed by Madam Kremoline- Marie backs a little to L. and Vladimir over L. down stage confused, with his eyes on the trunk)

Marie

Mother, we are going to the conservatory, will you come with us?

Duchess

No, my dear, we just came from there. We will wait here till your return.

Vladimir

(Over L. aside)

If they discover Werra, I am lost.

(He backs on stove, burns himself, and in a confused manner)

Yes, we were going to the conservator. I'm sure you will excuse me.

(Takes Marie's hand, leads her to door. Marie exits first, then Vladimir, who gives last look at trunk)

Duchess

(Down L)

Madam! Something must be done. It's dreadful.

(Sinks in chair R. of table portrait near her)

Madam

(Going to her)

What is the matter, Duchess? Why did your Grace ask me to come here?

(Duchess takes picture in hand)

Duchess

I need your advice.

(Count Andrey appears in door C)

Madam

You do indeed. You must be more careful Duchess, a little while ago when speaking about that picture, you nearly betrayed yourself.

(Andrey listening, begins to comprehend the conversation and gradually slips behind curtains at window to listen)

Duchess

I know I did. I felt like clasping Vladimir to my heart and telling him that I am his mother--his mother.

(Looks at picture)

Madam

Not so loud Duchess.

(Going R. and looking around)

Duchess

Oh! This is heart-rending,  
(Rising)

My husband has just now informed me that Vladimir and Marie love each other. We must avert the possibility of a marriage.

Madam

If you part them, the Duke will demand a reason. You cannot tell him that you are Vladimir's mother. Take my advice and not oppose it.

Duchess

Madam Kremolin, you are mad! Do you fully realize what you are saying? Do you forget that Marie, is Vladimir's half sister?

(Madam sees the curtains move, and starts back-- Duchess observes Madam)

Why, what is the matter?

(Madam over R)

Madam

There is some one behind that curtain. I saw it move.

Duchess

Oh, you have lost your wits. The wind caused the curtain to move, you are over excited--you are mistaken.

Madam

There's some one there.

(Duchess goes up L. of curtain and Madame up over R)

(Duchess takes bottom of left drapery and the Madame,

the bottom of right, and quietly lift it away from centre, disclosing Andrey sitting in chair, book in hand as though fast asleep.)

Duchess

(Aside)

Count Modjeska!

(Lets fall the curtain and goes down L.-Madame does the same and goes down R)

Madame

You are lost.

(Very low)

Duchess

No! He's fast asleep.

Madame

Impossible! Not five minutes ago, I spoke to him in the conservatory. He is trying to deceive us.

Duchess

Is it possible!

(Angrily, but intense)

I'll soon find that out.

(Goes up stage and with two swings pushes curtains way back--The Count still in same position)

Count! Count Modjeska!

(Count wakes, looks around with evident signs of amazement, the Duchess, meantime going down L. and the Madame right)

Andrey

Why! Ladies! I beg your pardon, I accidentally fell asleep.

(Down C)

Duchess

It is not so, you have played the eaves-dropper.

Andrey

Duchess!

Duchess

It is useless to feign surprise. You listened, did you not? Answer me?

Andrey

I'll not deceive you Duchess, I did listen, but not willingly. I followed you and Madame into this room, and thinking you were aware of my presence, I sat in the window to read, when to my great surprise I heard your startling confession that Vladimir was your son.

Duchess

Why did you not speak then?  
(Madame going up to door C)

Andrey

Because I feared that the knowledge of my having heard the secret would disturb your Grace, and I decided to remain silent, but rest assured Duchess I shall never betray you.

Duchess

(Pause)

Thank you, you are a man of honor. I hope Count that you will forgive me for my hasty words, and since you have heard so much, it is only just to myself that you should know all.

Andrey

Really, Duchess that is unnecessary.

Duchess

It must be done. Vladimir's father was a man without title, but I loved him and secretly became his wife. The old priest who joined our hands, was the only witness; that night he was murdered in his bed, his house set on fire and the only record of our marriage was destroyed. My father hearing of my affection for a commoner, as he called Vladimir's father, had him wrongfully accused of Nihilism, and without a trial, he was sent to Siberia where he died; fearing my father's wrath, I fled to France and there became Vladimir's mother.

Andrey

And your husband, the Duke?

Duchess

Knows nothing. When I returned to Russia with Vladimir, I led the world to believe, that he was the son of an unfortunate schoolmate of mine, whose name was the one I used in France, Olga Tolstoi. I had no document to prove my marriage, and when I became the Duke's wife, I had not the courage to tell him.

Andrey

And Vladimir does not suspect?

Duchess

No! Although thousands of times, when I watched him and Marie play together as children, I called her daughter and had to deny him his rightful name of son, the fatal confession would come to my lips but never pass them. God! What I have suffered, to feel that the world might jeer and scoff at him, and perhaps call him--nameless.

(Sinks in chair)

Andrey  
Why not tell Vladimir?

Duchess  
No, no, I have not the courage, I dare not.  
(Madame who has gone up stage at C. door at beginning of scene between Duchess and Andrey)

Madame  
Hush! Vladimir.  
(X's over L. up stage)

Duchess  
(Rising)  
Not a word to him; I will expect you to-morrow.  
(Enter Vladimir)  
Where is Marie?

Vladimir.  
In the conservatory.

Duchess  
(Bows)  
I shall join her.  
(She exists. Meantime the Madame is up stage L. has watched Andrey closely - Vladimir starts in direction of trunk, sees Madame).

Vladimir  
Oh! Madame, I believe that you are interested in trees, -  
(Madame bows)  
If so, you will find one beneath the window, a fine specimen, I assure you it's worth examining.

Madame  
Thank you, I will inspect it.  
(Madame goes to window, behind curtains)

Vladimir  
(Pulls curtain, turns)  
Did you get Werra out?

Andrey  
Werra! What do you mean?  
(Over up to door C)

Vladimir  
Why she was here!  
(Going down C.)

Andrey  
Here! Where?

Vladimir  
In that trunk.  
(Looks in direction of Madame)

Andrey

My God! She's heard all.

Vladimir

(Going down to him)

Talk to Madame, while I get her out.

(Count goes to Madame, back of curtains- Vladimir lifts trunk, so that Werra can get out, she crawls out)

Come, get out you little monkey.

Werra

(stretching herself)

Oh! I feel as if I were tied up in a knot.

(Xing L)

Madam

(Comes out from window observes Werra in amazement)

Where did that creature come from?

(Look of indignation from Werra)

Vladimir

Professor Ipenoff sent her to me, he wishes to speak to me, immediately.

Madame

Oh!

(Coming down)

You said there was a peculiar tree under that window and there is nothing there but an empty street.

Vladimir

Oh! I beg your pardon, I meant the tree under the lecture hall window, the Count will show you. Come, little one.

(Vladimir exits, Werra starts up C. Madam looks at her closely through her lornnette, and as Werra is about to exit)

Werre

Oh! Get a Kodak.

(She exits)

Madam

Impudent little creature. Count, I'm glad Vladimir has gone I wish to express my gratitude, I am sure that in you, the Duchess has a true friend.

Andrey

Thank you. I shall do all in my power do assist her.

(Enter Posta)

Posta

I beg your pardon, Madam, but the Duchess desires your presence.

Andrey

(Offers his arm to Madam)

Permit me.

(He escorts her to door and exits- Posta watches intently)

Posta

I'll wager that he's been making love to her.

(Laughs, goes over R)

Oh! I'm tired, I haven't had enough of sleep.

(pulls down folding bed and sits on edge nearest audience)

I'm glad they're all gone, but Werra.

(Enter Werra quickly)

That Werra makes-makes an impression on me, the little ape.

Werra

(Coming down)

Did you speak?

Posta

What! You here again?

(R)

Werra

Yes, I'm here.

(L)

Posta

Werra I'm convinced that you are a little darling.

Werra

Darling! It was ape a little while ago.

(Posta approaches her)

Stay where you are, I'll have none of your monkey shines around me.

Posta

Who in the wide world taught you all that foreign slang?

Werra

(Over L.C.)

Madame Wassilie's maid is an American girl, I am her chum and she has coached me in many things, you bet.

Posta

(over C.C)

Then you'd better get right out of here.



Werra

Not until I get my baskets and Madam Wassilie's frivolities.

Posta

Frivolities!

(Outside laughter of all the characters)

The devil!

(Going to door, Werra X's R)

They are coming up again.

(Down to trunk)

Here, quick, get into this trunk.

Werra

No sir, once was enough for me.

Posta

Werra, I implore.

Werra

No, no, no, I'll not do it.

(Enter Vladimir)

Vladimir

Posta, I want you to go.

(Observes Werra)

What! You here again? Posta go and keep them below.

(Posta exits)

Now, Werra, you get out of here.

Werra

No sir I'm going to stay here until I get my cash.

Vladimir

Oh!

(Goes down L. not knowing what to do, turns)

For the last time will you get in there?

Werra

For the last time, no.

(Sits on bed)

Here's where I am going to stay.

Vladimir

All right! That's where you will stay.

(X's over and lifts the folding bed with Werra in it, she screams, but he shuts it up and Werra is inside. Werra screams inside, banging side of bed)

Shut up! Shut up! If you scream again I'll kill you.

(Duchess enters followed by Marie and the Duke all look anxiously at Vladimir, Posta enters at C. door)

Be a good little girl now--that's right, that's the way to do it.

(Turns and observes them all)

"Begone! Thou has set me on the rack--I swear I swear"--  
(Strike top of bed in disgust)

Duchess

Why, what is the matter.

Vladimir

I was trying to think of that last word and it's escaped me.

Duchess

Why I thought you were talking to some one.

(LC)

Vladimir

Why, no, merely reciting a piece of poetry that's all.

Posta

Yes, talking to himself, he's often taken that way.

Duchess

Indeed.

Posta

Yes, will recite to himself for hours and then he'll play on that piano.

(C)

Marie

Oh! How lovely, play for us.  
(X8s Over R.C.)

Vladimir

(Over R)

No, no, I cannot it's not well -I mean that I'm not well.

Duke

Nonsense! Play us anything.

(Up stage R. near pictures on wall)

Marie

Yes, anything, we're not particular.

Vladimir

(Over at bed)

The piano is dreadfully out of tune.  
(He bows and grins)

Marie

We won't mind that. I like a little discord now and then.  
(Ad lib quarrel between Vladimir and Marie)

Duke

That's right, fight it out, I love to see a little discord before marriage as well as after.

Vladimir

I tell you it's shockingly out of tune.

Duke

Keep it up, keep it up.

(Laughing back up R. C. his hand strikes cord and the map goes up with a bang showing ballet girl. Posta tries to prevent Marie from seeing picture- Duchess annoyed--Duke laughs--Goes over to the other one and pulls cord on that, to the surprise of all--the Duke still laughing goes down L. takes night robe from the mantel waves it around his head)

What do you think of this?

(Laughs heartily, Duchess shocked Marie enjoys the situation, Posta quietly so, Vladimir crestfallen, but holding on to piano, when the Duke says: "What do you think of this?" Werra inside of folding bed, screams)

Werra

Help! Help! Let me out! Let me out!

(She pushes bed open and Vladimir tries to hold her in, Werra is too strong for him and the folding bed comes down with Werra inside. Duke laughing, Duchess and Marie amazed, Posta turns up stage laughing, and Vladimir dumbfounded at the result, all confusion, Duke at C. Duchess over L. then Marie L. C., Posta up C. Vladimir R. C. And Werra on the bed)

QUICK CURTAIN

(For second curtain, Werra trying to hide herself with blanket- Vladimir trying to apologize to Duchess and Marie who are C)

C U R T A I N .

THE VOICE OF NATURE

A C T II.

ACT II.

SCENE:

Same scene as Act I.-

Four months later. Instead of everything with an air of poverty, richness and elegance greets the eye. Magnificent Portiers on windows and over doors R. 3d, E. & L. 3d E. Large chandelier with electric lights. Beautiful mantelpiece. Mirror on top. A piano at R. where folding bed was. A large piano lamp near at hand. Over L. near fireplace a table with plush covered and miniature easel with photo on. Three handsome chairs R., L. and back of table--A small writing desk up C. Folds hanging on wall above desk. A small fancy lamp on table over L. Two candelabras with candles on mantelpiece. Elegant pictures on wall and book case over R. Key in door C. Rugs, etc., in fact anything that will make scene appear rich and home-like. Large fancy sofa over R. in front of piano. At curtain rise a number of voices heard outside singing the Russian Anthem or a College song. Night effect through window and fire in fireplace. Sleigh bells heard off stage. Werra discovered at window, listening. Werra is in character of servant in the University. At rise, scene quite dark, only glow from fireplace and lamp turned down low.

Werra

(At finish of song)

Bravo, boys! Bravo!

(Throwing kisses to those below, enter Posta C. who observes her)

There - there- and there.

Posta

By jove! She's liberal with her kisses. I'll get a substantial one.

(Goes up softly to curtain)

Werra

Oh! I could hug and kiss the whole lot of them.

Posta

Then begin with me.

(Pulls the curtains together)

Werra

(Inside)

Let me go! Do you hear? Let me go!

Posta

(Inside)

Not without a kiss.

(Loud bang inside, as though Werra slapped his face - curtains open, and Werra darts out from behind, and goes down R - Posta appears C. through curtain, holding on to his jaw)

Oh, but you're an angel!

Werra

Yes. Did you feel the love pat from my wing!

Posta

(Down C)

Your wings must be cut.

Werra

(R. C. arm upOlifted)

Would you like to try?

Posta

No, no, my dear, I wouldn't cause you the slightest pain, because I love you.

Werra

Then if you do, obey me.

Posta

(Crossing over R)

At your command.

(Kneeling)

Most angelic Maiden.

Werra

(On piano stool)

I didn't tell you to kneel down and ruin your breeches. Go over and turn up that lamp.

(Posta rises)

Posta

With pleasure.

(X's over L. turns up lamp, while doing so)

Werra do you know that I think you are rather good looking?

Werra

Rather! Good looking?

(Commandingly)

Light those candles.

(Posta lights candles on mantel piece)

Posta

Oh, anything to oblige.

Werra

I think I would train you to make a good husband.

Posta

(Laughing)

You think so?

Werra

I know so. But I'd have a hard job. Think of your present condition, what are you?

Posta

(Dejectedly)

Nothing.

Werra

Correct! How do you propose to make a living?

Posta

You forget that I'm Baron Posta Lakanoffski.

(Over L. with dignity)

Werra

You forget that I am Baron Posta Lakanoffski. Where on earth did you pick up such a jaw-breaking name?

Posta

I inherited that name.

Werra

You look it.

Posta

Oh, well, if your going to be sarcastic-  
 (Werra laughs, and then good-naturedly holds out her hand - he takes it, looks in her eyes, is about to kiss her--Enter Count Andrey in full evening dress)

Andrey

Ah! Do I interrupt?

Posta

No, not at all.  
 (Going L)

Andrey

Where is Vladimir?  
 (Up C)

Werra

Don't know.  
 (Down R)

Andrey

Has he gone out?  
 (Down C)

Posta

Don't know?  
 (Xing up R.C.)

Andrey

Will he return shortly?

Werra

Don't know.  
 (Count goes down L - Posta up at C. D. - Andrey turns)

Andrey

What's the matter with you two?

Posta

Don't know.  
 (Slams door and exits- Werra down R)

Werra

Aren't you glad you found out?

Andrey

You haven't told him about the Duchess and Vladimir, have you?



Werra

(Polishing piano with apron)

I'm not going to blab. If it were only your interest at stake, I'd tell in a minute.

(Low knocking heard at door- Werra looks around and then continues her work-knock again heard- Werra continuing her work)

Andrey

(Over L)

There's some one at the door, do you hear?

Werra

(Without moving)

Come in.

(Door slowly opens and Karol enters, he has peculiar looking make up, not hideous, but striking- he pauses in C. D. looks around, see Andrey, then goes down slowly to him)

Karol

Count Andrey Modjeska.

( Takes letter from pocket, gives it to him)

I await your answer.

(Andrey takes letter and opens it)

Werra

(Over R. polishing piano)

And it came without calling.

(Werra exits R. IE)

Andrey

I cannot come to-night. Gregory will make apologies.

Karol

(Aside to Andrey, so that no one could hear)

It is important that you should be there.

Andrey

(Angrily)

Gregory has my letter which explains all.

Karol

That matters no. We'll expect you before adjournment.

(Enter Werra)

Good night.

(Xing up to C. D.- turns)

Good night.

(Exits )

(Andrey over L. irritated goes to mantel and leans on it)

Werra

(Over R)

Say, Count, that friend of yours has a face like dynamite bomb.

Werra

(Polishing piano with apron)

I'm not going to blab. If it were only your interest at stake, I'd tell in a minute.

(Low knocking heard at door- Werra looks around and then continues her work-knock again heard- Werra continuing her work)

Andrey

(Over L)

There's some one at the door, do you hear?

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(Without moving)

Come in.

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(Enter Werra)

Good night.

(Xing up to C. D.- turns)

Good night.

(Exits )

(Andrey over L. irritated goes to mantel and leans on it)

Werra

(Over R)

Say, Count, that friend of yours has a face like dynamite bomb.

Andrey

Mind your own business.

Werra

Made you nervous didn't he? What did he say, Count?

(Knock at C.D. - Werra X's to R. mysteriously)

Look out he's coming again.

(Knock outside)

Come in.

(Enter Madame Kramolin)

Madam

(Not seeing Count)

Oh! That creature here again.

Werra

The old chromo.

(Aside)

Madame

(Seeing Count)

Oh, Count.

(Bows)

Vladimir isn't here is he?

Andrey

No, I have been waiting for him. Werra, you may retire.

(Werra exits C. suspiciously & bangs door - Madame eyeing her till she exits)

Madame

She is very impertinent. If Vladimir comes shortly, tell him that Marie is waiting below.

(She bows, starts to retire.)

Andrey

One moment, and one question please. Why did you, the last time you were here, advise the Duchess to let Marie marry Vladimir, when you knew that she was his half sister?

Madame

You have no right to ask me that question.

(Over R)

Andrey

As a friend of the Duchess, I must know. You had some motive. If you desire protection, I will be as faithful to you as I have been to the Duchess.

Madame

I must trust you, but it must never pass your lips without my consent.

Andrey

I promise you that.

Madam

Thank you. Vladimir, as you know, is the son of the Duchess, but Marie is not her daughter.

Andrey

(Staggered)

Not her daughter?

(Turns and goes down L. in deep thought)

Madam

No.

(Over R. subdued)

Two months after Marie's birth, the Duke and Duchess went abroad, and left her in my care. The child took sick, and one fatal night by mistake I gave her an overdose of a powerful sleeping draught, and to my great sorrow, killed the real Marie.

Andrey

Does anyone else know of this?

Madam

I confessed all to the family Doctor, and he, knowing the Duke's great desire to have an heir to his fortune, advised me to remain silent. In a foundling asylum, we discovered a baby girl, who closely resembled the real Marie. The duke and duchess believe this child to be their own.

(X's R)

Andrey

And you intend to tell the Duchess?

Madam

When I can muster up the courage- yes.

(Sitting on sofa R)

Andrey

Are you aware that it would involve you in a criminal proceeding? That if you confess, you might be charged with murder?

Madam

Murder! My God!  
(Rising)

Andrey

It may mean Siberia. The Duke has looked upon that child as his for years. If you confess, you will cut his very heart strings. Therefore you must be silent.

Madame

True! True! You are right, I must be silent.

(Staggered over R)

(enter Marie

Marie

Madam, are you aware that you have kept me waiting?

Madam

I beg your pardon, child.  
(Re-enter Werra)

Marie

Where is Vladimir?

Werra

(Over L. bowing)

In the class room, he will be here in a few minutes.

Marie

Thank you, we will wait.  
(X's down to piano)

Werra

(Aside to Andrey)

That's a hint for you to evaporate.

Andrey

I shall have the pleasure of meeting you at the ball. Good evening.  
(Exits C)

Marie

(Over R)

Thank good ness, he's gone.

Werra

Yes, the air is a little clearer.

(Madam has gone up to window, as if to throw off her great agitation)

Madam

Oh! Look Marie, what a beautiful moon, it's rising so majestically. My dear departed husband was always fond of the moon, especially, when it was full.

Werra

Yes, I'll bet her dear departed was often that way. Full!

Marie

Hsh! Close the portiers, she'll gaze on that moon for hours.

(Werra closes curtains. Marie X's over L. and sits back of table)

And this is his mother's picture?

Werra

I hope she won't steal that man.

(Xing down C. Sees Marie with portrait)

Oh! Be careful, Vladimir fairly worships that picture.

Marie

But he'll surely not object, if I decorate it with roses. Do you know, Werra the more I look at this picture, the more it resembles my mother?

Werra

It strikes me a little, that way too.

Marie

Does it? Tell me, Werra, did you ever hear Vladimir speaking of me?

Werra

Why! That's all he talks about. See that photograph of you,  
(On the piano)

Well, he's kissed the enamel clean off, why, there's enough of microbes on that picture to make a whole nest of kissing bugs)

(Both laugh)

Marie

I like your merry disposition, that's why I tell you my sweetest secret.

Werra

A secret! Why, do you know I'm stuffed with other people's secrets?

Marie

There, now I'm finished.

(Looking in admiration at portrait twined with roses)

enter Vladimir, sees her, then Werra - he gives sign to Werra to exit into room L. 3d E.- Werra quickly X's over to L. Vladimir places his hat on rack, as he turns Werra is over L. standing-Vladimir gives her another sign to exit she does so quietly - then Vladimir comes down quietly back of Marie while she is admiring portrait- he kisses her- Madam open curtains at same time)

Madam

Beautiful!

(Vladimir X's down R. surprised- Marie rises, goes down L)

That effect was grand.

Vladimir

(Confused, turning)

Thank you, I am glad you liked it.

Madam

(Up between curtains)

I was lost in admiration, with what grace she was swallowed by those inky clouds.

Vladimir

Inky clouds. Why, what do you mean?

Madam

The moon!

Vladimir

The moon, oh! The devil. Marie,  
(She X's to him- Madam behind curtains again)  
We'd better get rid of her.

Marie

I'll tell her to go - but no- I can't do that- here - I know-  
hide this fan

(Gives him fan)

(Aloud)

I wonder where my fan is?

Vladimir

Perhaps you left it at home.

Marie

(Looking over L. on table)

No, I am sure I brought it here. I can't go to the ball without a fan. Madam!

(Comes from curtains)

Would you mind riding home and bringing me another one?

Madam

(Coming down)

Certainly not, I'll get you one.

(Rings bell)

I'll tell the creature here to go down stairs, and tell the coachman to ride there and bring you one immediately.

(Madame rings bell --Werra enters hurriedly at her L.

Madam startled)

Werra

Well! You needn't jump, I have had the measles. What do you want?

Vladimir

I think you'd better vanish.

(Over R)

Werra

Left face, forward march.

(Sings Russian National Anthem and exits)

Madam

What an impertinent little creature.  
(Over L)

Vladimir

Oh! No she isn't. She's a trifle forward that's all.  
(Xing over to her, and in his explanation shows fan)

She's one of the best-

(Marie tries to warn him, pantomime about fan)

Well--it's all right--she's  
(Discovers mistake)

Oh!  
(Hides fan)

Madam

There's your fan. What do you mean by trifling with me  
in this way? I shall inform the Duchess.  
(Goes up C)

Marie

(Following her up R. of her)

Oh, no, you'll not betray us Dodo.

Vladimir

(On her L)

Certainly not, you will forgive us, won't you, Dodo?

Madam

No, I will not.  
(Positively C)

Marie

(Patting her cheeks)

Oh, yes you will Dodo.  
(Kisses her)

Vladimir

Oh, yes of course you will dear Dodo.  
(As if trying to kiss her)

Madam

Sir!! Well, I'll forgive you this time, but if it ever occurs  
again-

(talking heard outside- enter Duchess in full evening  
dress-Duke in uniform- Count full dress- also Posta

Werra at door L. 3d E. Duchess at C. - Marie goes over  
to piano - Madam X's over L. to fireplace--Vladimir goes to  
Duchess kisses her hand)

Vladimir

Why, Duchess, this is an unexpected visit.

Duchess

Why, are you not going with us?

(C)



Vladimir

I have sent my regrets. To-morrow is examination day and to-night my books claim my attention.

(L.C.)

Duke

(Down L)

That's right, never neglect your studies.  
(Slaps him on back)

Marie

(Over at piano)

Look mother! This piano is actually a real one.  
(Fingers over keys and laughs)

Duchess

Yes, Vladimir has been taught a lesson regarding his extravagancies.

Posta

(Steps forward C)

Duchess, pardon me, but I feel it my duty to exonerate Vladimir.

Vladimir

Posta.

(L.C)

Posta

No, no, I'm going to speak. Duchess, Vladimir, did not waste his money, but loaned it to us and even pawned his furniture to pay a debt of honor for Count Modjeska.

(Andrey R. C. looks annoyed)

Duchess

Count, is this true?

(C)

Andrey

(Pause)

Yes.

Duchess

Vladimir, forgive me.

(Extends her hand which he kisses)

Duke

Noble boy! Noble boy! Your hand.

(Shakes it heartily, then whispers in his ear)

I have those interesting red stockings in my pocket,

(Takes them out a trifle)

I will return them to you.

(Puts them back but a corner of them is seen sticking out)

Vladimir

No, no, not now, some other time.

Duke

All right just as you say, my boy.

Madam

(Over L. of Duke)

I beg pardon Duke, but there's a little piece of red lining hanging from your coat.

(She stoops down, pulls out stocking, holds it up horror stricken)

Female stockings?

(All amazed)

Werra

(Aside)

Madam Wassilie's frivolities!

(Over extreme L)

Duchess

General!

(Pause)

I am waiting an explanation?

Duke

An explanation! Why I - that is - easily explained - I - I -

Duchess

(Sarcastically)

Umph!. I thought that you would say, that for once in your life you condescended to enter a store and bought those abominations for me.

(Pause)

Well! I am waiting an answer?

Duke

Why - you see - I - I - oh! Damn it, I have no answer.

Duchess

I thought so.

(Over R. Duke goes up back)

Vladimir

Pardon me, but I think I can explain. You remember when we forced Werra to give up her laundry to decorate our room?

(C)

Duchess

Yes, I remember.

Vladimir

Well, in the laundry we found those--those--abominations, I, in my excitement, placed them on the mantel where the Duke found them, he put them in his pocket and only a few moments ago spoke of returning them to me.

Duke

As usual, innocent as a lamb.  
(Coming down L.C.)

Duchess

To who do they belong?  
(RC)

Duke

They don't fit me!  
(Madame over L. with stockings in hand)

Werra

They belong to Madam Wassilie.  
(Over extreme L)

Duchess

Return them to the owner.  
(Werra takes them from Marie goes up stage and as she exits, flounces them in face of Posta)

Posta

That girl is full of the devil.  
(Marie at piano with Vladimir)

Duke

Duchess, you must pardon me, I must attend that conference at the Foreign Office before going to the ball this evening.  
(L.C)

Duchess

Must you leave us so soon?  
(R. Madam extreme L. Posta up L.C.)

Duke

Yes, an important meeting. Nihilism is becoming rampant, and it must be crushed. The Count will escort you. You will all excuse me, I know.

(He bows and goes up to door C. to Posta)

Posta, look out for the little chambermaid.  
(Exits)

Duchess

I am so sorry that Nihilism is spreading again. It means so much misery.

(Count X's over to L. to Madam. Posta down L. C. Near

Duchess)

Posta

I suppose the Nihilist, feel that they have some rights which should be respected.

(Marie at piano, playing softly)

Duchess

Yes, but the sorrow of it all.

(Goes to Marie-Posta looks over at Andrey and goes up stage near window)

Madam

Count, Marie's love for Vladimir grows stronger every day. I fear a separation will kill her. I must speak the truth.

Andrey

Very well, but remember it means Siberia.

Madam

Yes, but look at them.

(A shot fired outside--all confusion Marie stops playing-  
Posta runs to windows)

Vladimir

What is the matter?

(C)

Posta

The police are chasing a man who is running up the college steps, he has entered the building.

(Two shots fired)

Vladimir

Who is the man?

Posta

It's Gregory.

All

Gregory!

Posta

The Minister of Police has entered.

Vladimir

Then he's lost.

Posta

The officers are surrounding the house.

(Bang of a door heard off R. then sound, as if a man running up a flight of stairs. Gregory enters C. Door pale, hair all disarranged closes door after him- X's down L)

Vladimir

What's the matter?

Gregory

Vladimir, save me. In God's name hide me.  
(L.C.)

Vladimir

What have you done?

Gregory

We had a meeting, the police surprised us-I escaped but am pursued.

Duchess

Is he a Nihilist?  
(R.C.)

Vladimir

You heard what he said.  
(C)

Gregory

Duchess! Duchess! For God's sake, save me.  
(Vladimir goes up and holds door)

Duchess

I would save you but I am powerless. Oh! This is horrible.

Vladimir

They are coming, hide behind that piano. Marie, you stand there.  
(Above piano)

And Duchess, you there.

(Gregory hide s behind piano-.Duchess stands at foot of piano nearest audience)

Werra

(Outside)

You can't go in there. You have no right.

Minister of Police

(Outside of door)

Out of the way, girl, do you hear?

Werra

(Outside)

I tell you, you can't go in.

Minister

(Outside)

Remove that girl.

(Noise as though a couple of guards were moving her away from door- Marie when she hears noise outside sits down at piano, and continues playing the Minister enters-she stops-all look with surprise-Minister enters hastily - to Vladimir)

So I find I am once again in your rooms?

(c)

Vladimir

To my great surprise, yes.

Minister

(Minister goes down L. then X's R. - sees Duchess,  
stands amazed)

Duchess Alexis!

Duchess

What means this intrusion!  
(Over R)

Minister

(Confused)

Pardon me, there must be some mistake. We are pursuing a  
Nihilist.

(Two Cossacks seen in door)

All

(General movement)

A Nihilist!

Minister

(Down C)

Yes, my men saw him enter this part of the building, and I am  
compelled to search every room.

Werra

(Going down to his R)

Well, do we look like Nihilists?

Duchess

Werra!!

(Werra retires)

(To Minister)

Do your duty.

Minister

It will be unnecessary to make any further investigations.

Duchess

But I insist upon it.  
(Over R)

Vladimir

This is the only other room we can boast of.

(Going to door L. 3d R)

This way please.

(At door)

Minister

Thank you.

(Exits, then Vladimir)

Werra

(Looking after them)

Oh the brute! Hunting some poor fellow.

(Calling into room)

Here don't you dare upset that bed.

Duchess

Werra!

(Re-enter Minister and Vladimir)

Minister

There's no one in there.

(Going C)

Posta

(Throws back curtain from window)

No, nor in here.

Werra

(LC)

Perhaps you'd like to look under that table or behind that piano.

Minister

Well, it wouldn't be a bad idea.

(He starts over R. the Duchess takes a step or two forward)

It is quite unnecessary- Ladies and Gentlemen, the man I want is not here. I crave your pardon.

(Bows to Duchess-exits and closes door C)

(Vladimir goes up to door-opens it, looks after them)

Duchess

(Down R)

Thank God.

Vladimir

That was a narrow escape.

(Up at door)

Duchess

(Duchess leans on sofa for support)

Tell him to come out.

Vladimir

Gregory!

(Gregory comes out from behind piano)

Werra

Then there was some one there after all.

(Over L)

Gregory

Duchess, I owe my life and liberty to you.

(R)

Vladimir

You must waste no time you must leave this place at once and in some disguise.

(C)

Werra

Let him come with me, I'll give him one of the gardener's uniform.

Vladimir

Good! The very thing.  
(Up at C. door again)

Werra

Come on, follow me.  
(Exits quickly L. 1st E)

Gregory

(X's over and then turns)

Duchess, once more I thank you, I thank you all.  
(Bows and exits L. 1st E)

Duchess

Vladimir, escort, Marie and Madam to the ball room and then help that unfortunate young man. My purse is at your disposal.

Vladimir

Duchess, you are more than kind.  
(He escorts Madam through door also Marie, he waits at door to escort the Duchess as she starts up C)

Andrey

One moment, Duchess. A few words please.

Duchess

Certainly.  
(Vladimir closes door--Duchess down R)  
Well, I am waiting.

Andrey

I think that the time has arrived Duchess, when Vladimir must be told.

Duchess

Told! What! That I am his mother?  
(Approaching R.C.)

Andrey

Yes.  
(C)

Duchess

Impossible! I cannot do it.  
(Xing down R)



Andrey

You must. The time has arrived when they must be separated.

Duchess

(Turning)

Why do you desire their separations?

(At R.C.)

Andrey

Because I love Marie.

Duchess

That may be true, but she may not love you.

Andrey

You must force her to accept me.

(L.C.)

Duchess

Force her! My child! What if I refuse?

(R. C. defiantly)

Andrey

I shall furnish the Russian Court with another Scandal.

Duchess

(At C)

Then your friendship for me was pretended? In short a farce.

Count Modjeska, you are a coward.

(Andrey goes to her - she steps toward him)

Yes, a coward!

(Andrew turns from her and goes L. She following him)

You pledged your word of honor that you would guard my secret, and now, you take advantage of my trust, by trying to force me to give you my daughter's hand. You are worse than a coward.

Andrey

Duchess if you say that word again, I'll forget that you are a woman.

Duchess

(Turns on him)

And strike me, I suppose. And to such a specimen of manhood, I should sacrifice Marie. No - never - never.

(Xing R. taking up her cloak on safe, as if to go)

Andrey

Very well, then. To-night's ball.

(Taking his cloak over L.)

Will be a fitting place to air your Grace's early love affairs.

(About to start up C.)

Duchess  
No, no, stay, remain. You would not do that.

Andrey  
Not if you accept my proposition.

Duchess  
(In agony)  
For pity's sake, Count, don't force me to humiliate myself  
before all the world. Give me time. Time! Time to think.  
(In intense agony)

Andrey  
Until to-morrow. Then you must tell him all.

Duchess  
Oh! This is torture! Agony! Can't you think of any other  
excuse for separating them? Think, Count, think, think.  
(Duchess appealing to him)

Andrey  
(X's down L. as if in deep thought- sees portrait of  
Vladimir's mother on table-stops)  
Yes, there is one. You must appeal to his honor.  
(Duchess turns away from him and looks upward in agony-  
Andrey takes picture, places behind him)

Tell him that you lied to him.  
(Xing over to her, and showing the portrait)  
Tell him that his supposed dead mother was not the good and  
noble woman you have pictured, but a criminal, who expiated her  
crimes upon the scaffold. That's the only way I see out of it.

Duchess  
And thereby rob him of the memory of his supposed dead mother?  
The memory he worships-in short, Count Modjeska, you wish me  
to defile my own character?

Andrey  
(Xing over L)  
Well, that's one way of putting it.  
(Places picture on table)  
But it must be done.

Duchess  
Horrible! Horrible!  
(Duchess sinks on sofa)

Andrey

Tell him that the Duke does not know the true story of his mother's career, but that some of your family who are acquainted with it, threaten to inform the Duke unless his engagement to Marie is broken. You understand?

(Over R)

Duchess

Yes.

(Faintly)

Yes, I understand and then?

Andrey

Then, take Marie abroad, I shall follow, become a suitor for her hand, and with your assistance win her.

(Xing over L)

Duchess

Oh, my God! Have I sunk so low, and is this the price that you demand?

Andrey

Her hand, or your disgrace.

(L. C.)

Duchess

A terrible choice.

Andrey

I await your answer.

Duchess

I will tell him to-morrow. I'll degrade my memory and destroy his faith.

Andrey

You will not fail? Come -

(Pause)

Answer me.

Duchess

(She draws herself up haughtily and looks him straight in the eye)  
I will not fail.

(Enter Madam C. followed by Werra)

Madam

Pardon me I am looking for Marie's handkerchief, she always forgets something.

(Looking around on table. Werra goes over L. up stage watching Madam- Count goes over to Duchess who stands like one in a trance, he offers his arm and smiles)

Andrey

May I escort you down stairs?

Duchess

(She looks at him- hesitates, then takes his arm, they go up C. at door, Andrey lets go her arm, takes her left hand as if to kiss it- the Duchess in C. D. withdraws her hand)  
That, is quite unnecessary.  
(They both exit C. Door)

Madam

(Over L)

Ah! There it is on the piano.  
(X's over takes handkerchief from piano and starts to go up C. to exit)

Werra

(Closes door after exit of Duchess)  
Don't be in a hurry, please. Sit down  
(Pointing to L)  
I want to talk to you.

Madam

(X's over to L)

But they are waiting for me.

Werra

(R.C.)

Let them wait. Sit down,  
(Madam sits in chair R. of table L)  
Madam Kramolin, I know all.

Madam

All! Why, what do you mean?

Werra

I overheard your conversation with the Count, and was surprised to find that Vladimir was the son of the Duchess.

Madam

(Horried- and then rising)

But do you not believe that I poisoned her?

Werra

Poisoned her!

(Recollects herself)

Well, I can't say that until I know all.

Madam

But you said you heard all.

Werra

Some of it escaped me. You see I was behind that door and had to listen through a crack.

Madam

Then let me swear to you that the death of the real Marie was purely accidental.

Werra

(Getting excited)

Then Marie is not the Duchess' daughter?

Madam

No.

Werra

Oh! You dear, darling, old stupid.  
(Hugs her and dances over R. swinging around)

Madam

Why, child, what is the matter?  
(L)

Werra

I'll tell Vladimir to-night.  
(C)

Madam

No, no,  
(Rising)  
You would not have me accused of murder.

Werra

Murder?

Madam

Yes, Count Modjeska says that if the Duke knew of this it would mean my death,

Werra

Jerusalem!

Madam

Oh. Werra, for the love of your mother, promise to remain silent, my life depends upon it.

Werra

I'll do it, but it's a blinkity-blink-blank shame.

Posta

(Enters)

Excuse me, Madam. Marie says if you cannot find her handkerchief to come without it as she is tired of waiting.

Madam

I'll go at once.  
(Throws a significant look at Werra and exits)

Posta

(Closes door)

Now Werra, we are alone, and I want to tell you a secret.

Werra

(Over R)

Don't you do it. I'm stuffed with other peoples' secrets.

Posta

But this concerns you.

Werra

Well sing it out.

(Disgusted, sits on sofa)

Posta

I want to tell you Werra, that I love you.

Werra

And you call that a secret? I knew that a month ago.

Posta

Then it's all the easier said, will you become my wife?

(Kneels beside her)

Werra

What! Your wife! Oh! That's different. And you want me to become your sweet little baroness?

(Grabs him by the hair)

Posta

Yes, I do.

Werra

Get out, you're bluffing me.

(Xing over L)

Posta

I'm not, and I want you to go to a seminary and there become fitted to occupy that station in life.

Werra

You really mean to educate me?

Posta

If you are willing.

(Enter Vladimir)

Werra

Oh! If I only had a witness.

(Werra X's down L. turns, sees Vladimir at door, Posta R)

Now, ask me that question and I'll answer you.

Posta

Vladimir, I have asked Werra to become my wife, I have offered her my heart and fortune.

Werra

What do you think of that? Do you think he means it?  
(L.C.)

Vladimir

(Downs C)  
I certainly do.  
(Sizing up Posta)

Werra

If you do Posta and you love me, kiss me.  
(She holds out her arms, Posta X's over)

Posta

You little darling.  
(About to kiss her, stops, looks at Vladimir)

Vladimir

Go on, go on.  
(Turns R. Posta kisses her again and again)

Werra

(Restraining him)  
There, there now, wait until to-morrow.  
(Swings C)

Vladimir

(Over R)  
Allow me to congratulate you both. And Werra, bear in mind, that Posta is a very delicate young man, therefore, be careful of him.

Werra

(With hands on muscle)  
Oh! I'll take good care of him, you bet. Posta! It's time for me to go home.  
(Bows exceedingly low to Vladimir)

Good night Monseer.

(With air of dignity)  
Posta! Your arm, and escort me to my residence.  
(Posta takes her arm and with mock dignity, they go up to door and Werra turns)

Open the door.

(Said gently)  
(Posta comes down not understanding)

Open that door.

(Very gruffly)

Good night!

(Said very sweetly. they both exit)

Vladimir

(Up at door)

A delicate creature; but he loves her, and I think she loves him. I hope so, for marriage without love, must be horrible. The world will laugh at him for wedding one so far beneath in the social scale, but then the world laughed at me for having the audacity to approach the woman I love.

(Takes Marie's photograph from piano and fondly admires it xing over L)

Dear Marie, I know I am not worthy of your love. 'Tis too much to expect for a rough, coarse grained commoner, and yet, faint heart ne'er won fair lady yet. That must be my motto.

(Bell rings outside)

Ten O'clock my studies!

(Goes up stage to little desk, turns back to audience, opens a book and starts to study. Song is heard outside he pauses a little, goes to window, pauses, returns to desk sits as if to study again, closes book and rises, turns and goes down stage L)

It's no use, I can't study! I'm too excited even to sleep.

(About to turn down the light, the red glare of the fireplace shows out strong. Pause. Then Marie enters hurriedly through C. door, closes it, and hastily locks it and stands apparently exhausted against the door)

Why! Marie! What is the matter? What has happened?

Marie

You love me Vladimir, do you not?

(Up at door)

Vladimir

Why yes, you know I do.

(At L)

Marie

They want to separate us, to part us forever.

(Xing R)

Vladimir

Who wants to part us?

(At L.C.)

Marie

My mother.

(R. C.)

Vladimir

The Duchess! When did she say that?

Marie

A few moments ago, below in the ball room. She forbade me ever to see you again. She will see you in the morning and in the afternoon we leave for Italy.

(Going R)



For Italy!

Vladimir

Marie  
Yes, but I have baffled her, I sent her a note saying I was coming here and would stay here until she gave her sanction to our marriage.

Vladimir  
No, no, Marie, you cannot. Do you fully realize what you are doing?

Marie  
Yes, fully.  
(Going down R. She has key in her hand)

Vladimir  
No, no. You cannot comprehend the greatness of this indiscretion. Give me the key and let me open the door.  
(L. C.)

Marie  
No! That door must remain locked.  
(Over R)

Vladimir  
But, Marie, if this were known at Court your fair name would be tainted forever, for our love's sake let me open that door.

Marie  
It is for our love's sake I want it locked.

Vladimir  
(Aside and going down L)  
Oh! What shall I do?  
(Turns)  
Marie, I shall force it open.  
(Marie rushes up to door, places herself in front of it)

Marie  
No, no, you shall not.

Vladimir  
My God! Marie, you are rash, headstrong! If nothing else will move you, think Marie, of your honor.

Marie  
That is in your keeping.  
(Vladimir turns away, Marie still at door. Pause.  
Knocking heard at door and then rattling of knob.  
Marie gradually goes away from door and Vladimir turns.  
Pause)

Vladimir

(Whispers)

Some one at the door.

(Goes up)

Marie, in there.

(Points to door L.-3)

You must not be seen.

Marie

No! I shall remain.

(Over R)

Duchess

(Off stage and knocking at door)

Vladimir! Vladimir!

Marie

(Over R)

It's Mother.

Duchess

Vladimir!

(Rattles door outside)

Is Marie with you?

(Pause, Vladimir looks at Marie, Vladimir extends hand as if asking for key)

Why don't you answer me or open the door?

(Vladimir's hand still extended. Marie slowly gives key. Marie X's over L. while Vladimir goes and open door and then Vladimir backs a little down R. The Duchess quickly enters, pauses in door)

(sees Marie)

So, Marie, you are here.

Vladimir

Duchess- I - I cannot explain this.

Duchess

(At C)

There is nothing to explain. I know you both so well, that I would not, for an instant, doubt your honor.

(Marie who has been looking intently at her mother, from position over L. gradually sinks to chair L. of table and buries her face in hands)

Marie, I forgive the passionate impulse of a romantic young girl, who, by an indiscreet act, sought to force her mother's consent to a union, which although it breaks her heart, she could never sanction.

Vladimir

(Surprised)

Never sanction! Why, Duchess! What do you mean?

Duchess

It was my intention to speak to you to-morrow, but since matters have come to such a crisis, I will speak now.

Marie

Mother,  
(Rising)

Nothing you can say can ever change my love for Vladimir.

Duchess

Poor child! All that will soon be changed. Vladimir, I have been to you all that a mother could be to a child, have I not?

Vladimir

Yes, Duchess, you have.

Duchess

All facts regarding your antecedents you know through me.

Vladimir

Yes.  
(Marie X's up C. back to door)

Duchess

(Andrey slowly opens door up at C. and listens)  
I led you, the Duke, all to believe that your mother died while giving you birth, but, but I lied.

Vladimir

Lied. You lied to me! Oh! No, no, no.  
(Down R)

Duchess

I lied, because I wanted you to cherish not curse her memory.

Vladimir

Why should I not cherish her memory, she was a good woman, and your nearest friend?

Duchess

Up to the time of your birth, yes, But after that.

Vladimir

After that!.. What?  
(R. C.)

Duchess

She fell--

(Vladimir staggers back dumbfounded. Marie during conversation with Vladimir has gone slowly up to curtains and but for her hold on drapery would have fallen on that announcement. Andrey unseen by all the others up at door with an air of triumph)

And as one of the most notorious criminals died upon the scaffold.

THE VOICE OF NATURE

A C T III

ACT III

SCENE: A year later- The Foyer and Grand Staircase in the Imperial Opera House, St. Petersburg.

Large winding stairway running up the C. and off R. Red plush carpets on stairs and down to footlights. This scene must be one of extreme richness and beauty. Palms, candelabras, chandeliers and statuary can be used. A small table and two chairs over L. Up stage R., another small table, two gold chairs also candelabra and candles lighted. A small fancy table at L. 3d E. with one candle and fancy candlestick on lighted. Music for rise from Carmen.

Karol

(Quartette singing inside, if desired, instead of curtain rise music)

(Karol discovered-on step)

Ah! The revelry is on, and this night will be your last; for once the oppressed will be the victors, and all oppressors shall fall.

(Goes down stage)

Where can Gregory be?

(Goes down to L. and looks off-enter Duke and Minister of Police from upper stairs)

Duke

(As he goes down stairs)

The singing was superb, but the Prima donna's voice shows a little wear and tear. I am afraid she sings too much.

(Goes down L.)

Minister

(Following him)

It must be torturing to think she might lose her voice.

Duke

It's more torturing to the public, when she doesn't know it.  
(Laughs)

But are you sure the Czar can enter the Opera House with perfect safety?

Minister

Yes. We have guards everywhere, always on the lookout for suspicious characters. The guard behind is one of my men.  
(R)

Duke

I should say by his looks that he needed watching. When will the Czar and Czarina arrive?

Minister

After the next act.

Duke

And not a person will leave the Opera, I suppose, until they arrive. Afraid of missing the Grand Reception.

Minister

The place is thronged, and I am sure no one will leave. By the way, how is your protege Vladimir getting along?

Duke

Excellently. He has been in the army nearly a year, and is now up stairs in the private box of the Duchess.

Minister

I gave him quite a start once, I received an anonymous letter and was compelled to search his room for a dynamite bomb.  
(Movement of Karol, up back listening)

Duke

Yes, quite a joke, wasn't it?  
(Laughs)

Minister

Yes, and shortly after, strange to say, we traced a Nihilist to his very room, and when we entered, low and behold instead of a Nihilist, we found the Duchess Alexis.  
(Laughs)

Duke

I never heard of that. But do you know, I think Nihilists can squeeze themselves into a knot-hole.

Minister

They are very tricky.  
(Calls)

Karol!

Karol

(He comes down L. of Minister and salutes)

No listeners, your Excellency, you and the Duke are the only ones who have left the Opera, since the performance began.

(By this time Duke has worked over to L)

Minister

You see they never think of leaving.

(Enter Andrey at top of stairs in full evening dress)

Duke

Ah, count, will you join us in a smoke?

(Andrey near top of stairs)

Andrey

In a moment, gentlemen.

(He looks off to R. as though watching someone)

Duke

(Xing over R. to Minister)

Come, what say you to a little promenade? I have some choice cigars here, warranted not to kill, will you join me?

Minister

I am afraid I can't spare the time.

Duke

Nonsense man. Take a few whiffs with me, and straighten out your legs a bit. Come on, come on.

(Exit both laughing)

Andrey

(He has been watching off R. and as they make their exit he turns around gradually, holding on to railing of stairs, as he turns on stairs at about the C. he comes face to face with Karol)

What are you doing here?

Karol

That's my business, you traitor.

Andrey

(Still on stairs)

You forget, that the Minister of Police is here.

Karol

Yes. Will I give you an introduction?

Andrey

Don't be silly. Is there anything wrong here to-night?

Karol

'Tis the morrow that traitors need fear.

(Re-enter Duke mains over R. - when they enter Posta and Werra are heard and Minister from R. IE - Duke goes to C.- Minister quarrelling outside L. 2E)

Posta

(Outside)

Very well, have it your own way, but I tell you it's so.

Werra

(Outside)

And I tell you it is not so.

Posta

(Outside)

I tell you that it is.

Werra

(Outside)

I tell you that it is not.

(Andrey at foot of stairs)

Duke

(To Minister)

The Baron Lackanoffski and his charming little wife.

Andrey

It's an outrage to be compelled to meet a woman who earned a livelihood at a wash tub.

(Up C)

Duke

(R.C.)

I believe the doors are all wide open.

(Enter Werra and Posta - Werra in magnificent Court costume, with more than the usual length of Court train which she handles awkwardly- Posta in Lieutenant's uniform- Werra is very angry, and he is trying to pacify her)

Werra

Oh, don't bother me, I tell you we are too early.

(Going C)

Posta

I tell you that we are late.

(L. C.)

Werra

It's aristocratic to be late, and I am not going in that Opera till the Czar has squeezed himself into his box.

(At C.)



Duke

(R. of her)

Then permit me to assure you, Baroness, that you are in plenty of time.

(Bows)

Werra

Oh, delighted to see you General.

(She bows, takes a step or two back finds that she is on her train- stoops down, picks it up and throws it violently to the L. and it strikes Count Andrey)

Andrey

Oh! I beg your pardon.

Werra

(Indignantly)

Oh, you're always in the way.

(Smilingly to Duke)

What comedy play do they sing to-night?

(Posta over L. - The Minister of Police, has sauntered up stage, and as Karol leans over the railing, they talk together)

Duke

Comedy play? They sing the best acts from several of our latest Operas. Allow me to offer you a program in honor of to-night's performance. It is embellished with poetry.

(R.C.)

Werra

Oh! I hate poetry. They tried to cram that stuff in my head at the Seminary, but it wouldn't stick there.

Posta

(Disgusted)

Oh, Werra!

(Over L)

Werra

(Angrily )

Shut up! Oh I beg your pardon. Please shut up!

Duke

Posta, I think you have the liveliest little wife in St. Petersburg.

Posta

Yes, she keeps me hopping.

Duke

Baroness, you are as naive as our American cousins.

(R.C.)

Werra

I'm glad of it. I like Americans, they are the only beings on earth who ever discovered themselves.

Duke

Discovered themselves!  
(Laughs)

No, no, my dear child- Christopher Columbus discovered that glorious country.

Werra

Oh, yes, that's so, Columbus - wasn't he the gentleman who laid the egg?

(C)

Duke

(Confused, desiring to laugh, but restrains himself.

Posta over L. disgusted)

Well, no, no, not exactly that - he he e

Andrey

(Comes down to L. C.)

He made an egg stand on end.

Werra

Indeed! Well, wasn't he smart?

(Sarcastically - Enter Marie on top steps, in pure white costume- Werra has crossed down R. She turns and sees Marie)

Hello, Marie, I am so glad you're here. I was getting a little rattled being alone here with so many men. I am glad to see you.

(Up C.)

Marie

(Extending her hand)

I am glad to see you, Baroness.

(Minister gives instruction to Karol who exits L.2E

Duke and Posta exit L. 2nd E. Minister exits up stairs, Andrey exits C. under stairway)

Werra

If you want to do me a favor, don't call me a Baroness, it sounds as stiff as a broom stick, call me plain Werra as you always did. When did you get back from Italy?

Marie

Yesterday.

(Down to table L)

Werra

Have you seen Vladimir?

(At her R)

Marie

He's up stairs in the box with mother.  
(Sits in chair)

Werra

Do you still love him?

Marie

More than ever.

Werra

That's right stick to him through thick and thin.  
(Turns R)

Where's Posta? I'll bet he's run away from me. I had no peace, I had to dress hurriedly in order to get here, and now that I'm here, he's out of sight. No, there he is now,  
(Pointing off L. 2nd E)

Oh, I'll give it to him.  
(As she exits)

Oh, you're trying to run away from me are you?  
(Andrey enters from the opening under the stairs, comes down C. after Werra exits)

Andrey

Marie, why are you so sorrowful? What is it makes you so sad?

Marie

Nothing! Nothing!

Andrey

There is something-- I'm sure--believe me, Marie, it pains me deeply, because - I - I love you.

Marie

(Annoyed rising)  
Oh! Count! I -  
(Xing R)

Andrey

I must make it known. It was not mere chance which made me meet you in Naples, two months ago, I went there with the express purpose of offering you my rank and fortune.  
(L. C.)

Marie

That is impossible, Count, I love another--  
(Over R)

Andrey

But your mother objects to him, surely you wouldn't marry him when you think of his antecedents.  
(Re-enter Werra L. 2E)

Marie

I am not going to marry his antecedents.

Andrey

But he is not worthy you.

Marie

(Low, but intense)

Count Modjeska! That is for me to decide.

Werra

(At L. 2E)

That settles him.

(X's to foot of stairs- re-enter Duke and Posta L.2E)

Duke

Ah! Here comes Vladimir.  
(Over L)

Posta

And the Duchess.

(Enter Duchess followed by Vladimir, Madam last, she remains on stairs. Werra comes up a few steps)

Werra

Hello, Vladimir, I'm so glad to see you. Look at Posta, isn't he a fit subject for the chamber of horrors?  
(All laugh)

Vladimir

Duchess, permit me to present Posta's wife, The Baroness Lakanof-fski.  
(Both ladies bow)

Werra

Isn't that name a mouthful? I believe, Duchess, I had the pleasure of meeting you once before, I had the introduction through a folding bed.  
(General consternation and amusement. Posta looks furious. Duchess takes the situation good naturedly as she goes down the steps)

Duchess

Posta, I congratulate you; you have chosen wisely.  
(At foot of stairs)

Posta

Thank you, Duchess.  
(Duchess X's R. Marie sits over R)

Werra

(Dn stairs with Vladimir near the bottom step)  
Look at poor Marie, see, how she's pining for you.

Andrey

(Over R. of Duchess. Aside)

I have spoken to Marie, she is still determined to become Vladimir's wife.

Duchess

Impossible? Let us go to the conservatory, we can speak there without being disturbed.

(They exit under stairs quietly as though Andrey called her attention to something- Vladimir has been watching Marie who is over R. in deep thought Werra goes to Posta who is over L. talking to Duke)

Werra

Posta!

(Posta goes to her, aside)

Look? Vladimir is dying to talk with Marie, we must get the Duke out of the way and dust ourselves.

Posta

Pshaw! How can we do it?

Werra

Lie! Lie! Can't you?

Posta

I can't think of anything.

(Xing down L. and then up )

Werra

(Disgusted)

Duke! You're a married man, aren't you?

Duke

Married! Well, I should say I was married!

(Down L. C.)

Werra

(Nodding in direction of Vladimir and Marie)

Can't you take in the situation?

Duke

Certainly

(Laughs)

Two is company and three is one more

(Laughing)

Come, Posta.

)Werra exits up stairs between Duke and Posta, all laughing)

Huh! The older I grow the more stupid I get.

(Laughing, they exit, Werra, Posta and the Duke -Vladimir who has been standing up R. Comes down C)

Vladimir

Marie, it is near time for the second act, I think we'd better go.

Marie

(Rising)

Vladimir, why have you avoided me? Have I offended you?

Vladimir

Who no, indeed, but think of the barrier that separates us. What would the world say?

Marie

(RC)

I have studied the so-called world and found it empty. I have asked myself thousands of times, if I should desert you because your mother was a weak woman, and always my heart has answered no. Vladimir, you see this little rose. I want you to cherish it, as a symbol of my undying love.

(She fastens flower in his button-hole, working around of his L. - enter Duchess and Andrey from under the grand stairway-they observe Marie and Vladimir who are over L.)

Andrey

You must tell Marie now, that Vladimir is her half brother.

Duchess

No, no, I cannot.

Andrey

I insist.

(Extreme R)

Duchess

No, no, I have not the courage.

(R.C.)

Andrey

Either Marie or Vladimir must be told, which do you choose?

(Vladimir and Marie are about to go up the stairs)

Duchess

Marie, Marie,

(They stop)

I wish to speak with you. You will excuse me. Vladimir, I am sure, and you also, Count.

(Marie drops down L)

Andrey

(Up R.C.)

Certainly. Vladimir, let us hear the end of the act.

Vladimir

By all means.

(Up L. C.)

I am in the proper mood for music.  
(Goes up stairs, half way up he turns)

Duchess!  
(Bows - on top stel turns)

Marie!  
(Gives a loving look at Marie and then exits- Andrey exchanges looks with Duchess- Marie has gone down L)

Marie  
Well, mother, I am all attention.

Duchess  
(At C trembling)  
Marie - I - I wish to speak to you finally about Vladimir.

Marie  
You could not have chosen a more welcome subject, for I have finally decided to become Vladimir's wife.

Duchess  
(With horror)  
No, no, my child impossible. Listen, and then you will understand the hopelessness of your love for Vladimir. I know he is worthy of you, but marry him you cannot.

Marie  
Cannot, why not?  
(With great surprise)

Duchess  
There is a tie between you so strong that it cannot be broken.

Marie  
Why, what do you mean?  
(Going to her)

Duchess  
My child, I loved once as you now love.

Marie  
Yes, yes, I know you loved and married the man of your choice, my father.

Duchess  
That was my second marriage, the first was my marriage to Vladimir's father.  
(Marie staggers backward)

Marie  
To Vladimir's father?  
(Leaning on table for support.)

Duchess  
Yes, nerve yourself for this confession. I am Vladimir's mother.

)Long pause-Marie looks at her, as if dazed, then gradually sinks in chair at table overcome)

Now, Marie you know all.

(Duchess goes over to her)

My poor Marie, I have broken your heart.

Marie

No, no, I am calm. Go on, I can hear all now.

Duchess

No, my child, this is neither the time nor the place.

(Greatly agitated)

Your father does not know that Vladimir is my son, and looks with favor on your love, and you know now that can never be.

(Looking around anxiously for listeners)

Marie

Yes, yes, I know, but without the love of Vladimir, my future life is shattered.

Duchess

(Going to her)

My child, I pity you, but you are young, your future is before you. Count Modjeska loves you, he has offered you his hand, why not accept him?

Marie

Mother! You dare speak to me thus--Count Modjeska! Never, never.  
(Xing down R)

Duchess

Then ruin and dishonor will fall on all of us.  
(L.C.)

Marie

How?  
(R.C.)

Duchess

He discovered my secret, and knowing I have no document to prove my marriage to Vladimir's father, he threatens to divulge my secret to the world, unless you consent to become his wife.

Marie

And my marriage is the price of his silence? Mother, I loathe the very sight of that man. I detest -I despise him.  
(Xing extreme R)

Duchess

It is not for myself that I speak, but for your father's sake. If these facts were to become public, property, it would kill him.

(C)

Marie



Marie

Last year, you told Vladimir and me a different story about his mother, and you deceived us. How can I believe you now?

(Going to her)

Duchess

(Horrorified)

And you doubt what I say?

Marie

How can you blame me?

(Over R. in extreme agitation)

Duchess

Oh, Marie, I would have told you the truth then-

(Marie X's over L. with expression of displeasure)

But had not the moral courage to do so. To part you, the Count forced me to tell that miserable lie.

(Marie sits on chair completely overcome)

Oh, Marie you don't know what I have suffered these many years.

(Andrey up on the stairs)

The Count! Marie our fate lies with you.

Andrey

(Coming down the stairs)

Ah, Duchess, I found the Opera very tiresome, indeed.

(Marie X's over R.- Duchess over L. heart-broken)

Duchess, a little while ago I asked your daughter to become my wife, she was not quite decided in her answer, perhaps she wished to consult you?

(Down C)

Marie

(With effort)

Count, my mother has told me all. My hand is the price of your silence/

(Count bows)

Perhaps money would satisfy you?

Andrey

Marie, you insult me.

Marie

Insult you! Count, Modjeska, since you insist, here is my hand; I will be your wife but I can never love, no, nor even respect you

(Count kisses her hand, Marie shudders- laugh up stairs and from top of stairs, the Duke appears followed by Madam Posta, Werra, then Vladimir- Andrey X's over L.- Duchess up R. C. - Marie down R.)

Duke

(On stairs)

What a pity you missed the ending of the act, it was great, great.

(Down near the bottom)

Madam

(On stairs)

It was simply divine.

Werra

(On stairs)

I thought it beastly. I couldn't understand a word.

(All laugh)

Duchess

(Who has been up stage during the scene of Marie and Andrey, comes down C)

While you were enjoying the scene of the Opera, I was enjoying a still prettier scene.

Duke

Indeed! What was it?

Werra

Tell us, by all means.

(Vladimir at bottom of stairs)

Duchess

I have the honor to announce my daughter's engagement to Count Modjeska.

(Andrey over L. - all express surprise)

Vladimir

To Count Modjeska!

(Dumb-founded - the xing down to Marie)

Marie, speak is this true?

Marie

(With effort)

Yes, why not?

Vladimir

Why not! Have you forgotten your promise? Marie, look!

(Places hand in lapel of coat, showing rose)

Marie

(Turns, sees it)

Merely a touch of romance, I now realize that this is the age of realism.

Vladimir

Realism! Realism! You say this to me?

Marie

(With great effort)

Yes.

Vladimir

You are right, this is the age of realism, and now I realize what a romantic fool I have been, for while I worked, toiled, slaved to aim at higher things than worldly realism, you plunged yourself in a whirlpool of pleasure, and now you laugh at the romantic fool who believes in virtue and in God. From this moment, to me, the world is changed, I'll laugh when the world laughs, and look up on women as they really are, and not the idols that I pictured, for that was myth, a myth, a vain, foolish myth, a dream, a dream, a dream!

(Backing during the speech making exit through the curtains under the stairway. Pause- all dumbfounded at the sudden turn of affairs)

Duke

(Going over to Marie)

Marie, are you sure you love the Count more than Vladimir?

Marie

Yes, father, quite sure.

Duke

Poor Vladimir, poor boy.  
(Goes up stage R)

Duchess

(At C)

Count, escort Marie to our box,

Andrey

With pleasure.  
(Xing over to Marie)  
This is the proudest moment of my life.

Marie

But not of mine.  
(Looks hatefully at him, then steadies herself, takes his arm, walks up stairs with him and off R. followed by Duchess--Madam is about to follow them, as she starts to go up stairs)

Werra

Madam!  
(With gesture as if to wait)

Duke

(Over R)

Posta,  
(Posta X's to him)  
What do you think of this affair?

Posta

Think!.. I think it's a damn shame.

Duke

So do I. Let's find Vladimir.

(They exit R. IE.- Werra follows them down toward R.C.  
Madam by this time is L.C.)

Werra

What is the meaning of all this engagement business? Not ten minutes ago she told me that she loved Vladimir, I turn my back and presto change she is engaged to the Count.

Madam

The Count forced the Duchess into this alliance, he threatened a court scandal. I suppose Marie has sacrificed herself.

Werra

Oh, the monster!

(Going down R. then turning)

I wish I could put a dynamite bomb under him and blow him to

Madam

Baroness!

(At L.C.)

Werra

Oh, I don't care,  
(Xing L)

Just let me catch hold of that Judas. Oh, the villain! Won't I pepperhim.

Madam

(R.C.)

What do you mean?

Werra

You must confess to the Duchess that her daughter is dead. That Marie is not his half sister, that she can marry him a thousand times over if she likes. Do you hear?

Madam

But I have no longer the documents that prove Marie is a foundling

Werra

Where are they?

Madam

The Count has them. He begged me to let him examine the documents and then refused to return them.

Werra

Has he destroyed them?

Madam

No I called yesterday at his apartments and I noticed the documents in his desk.

Werra

Then we must get them.

Madam

Yes, but how?

Werra

Wait a moment! Wait a moment!

(Going L. in deep thought Madam follows her)

Don't bother me. I have it. The Count has several times tried to flirt with me on the sly, in public, he ignores me. As soon as I get a chance I will flirt with him, and I'll manage it so that I will visit his rooms to-morrow afternoon alone.

Madam

Alone! And would you go?

(R.C.)

Werra

Would I? To get these papers—yes. When I am inside, you send a letter by a servant requesting him to come at once to the Duchess. Watch him leave the house and then come in yourself. We will send his valet away under some pretext, then open the desk, with an assortment of keys which I shall procure, and if they don't fit, we'll break it open.

Madam

You are a clever girl, Barcness.

Werra

I was born without cash but blessed with a few brain cells.

Madam

Shall we confide in your husband?

(R. C.)

Werra

No! No! He can't keep his mouth shut for five minutes, he was born talking.

Madam

But the Count to avenge himself will betray the Duchess secret, and create a scandal.

Werra

No he won't. Once we have those papers, I'll tell him that if he utters a single word I'll brand him as a blackmailer of women and at the same time, disgrace him before the officers of his regiment by giving him the worst horse whipping a dog ever got.

Madam

Would you?

Werra

Would I? Look at these muscles! Look at them! I haven't stood over the wash tub for nothing.

(Over L. - enter Count at top of stairs)

Madam

Sh!!! The Count!

Werra

(Whispers)

leave me alone with him.

(Madam goes over R. Turns- Andrey bows to her- he comes down goes to L. and Madam exits upstairs)

Now I must make love to that scoundrel.

Andrey

Baroness, I have received many congratulations

(At C)

on my engagement to Marie, but not yours. May I ask why?

Werra

(X's R. poutingly)

Because I'm jealous.

Andrey

Jealous?

(C)

Werra

Yes.

(Over L. of table)

Andrey

And why? It isn't possible that you ever cared for me.

Werra

(Turns on him)

If you were not a fool you could have seen it.

Andrey

I always thought you hated me.

(C)

Werra

Where were your eyes? I only accepted that position in University to be near you. Hate you! Indeed, if I hated you, would I have kept that secret regarding Vladimir?

(L. C.)

Andrey

Hush, Werra, not so loud.

(Looking around)

Werra

Oh, I can't help it.

(Xing L.)

You can't crush one's heart and ask her to remain silent.

Andrey

But my dear Werra -

(Hesitating)

We'll talk this matter over later.

Werra

Count Modjeska, you can't spring any "I'll see you later" gags on me.

Andrey

But, Werra, what can I do? We can't talk this matter over here.  
(L.C.)

Werra

There's my address.

(Gives card)

Call any time when Posta is not at home.

Andrey

No, no, that would never do. You sometimes come to the city do you not?

Werra

Yes, occasionally I do a little shopping.

Andrey

When is your next shopping day?

Werra

To-morrow.

Andrey

Tomorrow! Where--where can we meet. You are well known, so am I.

Werra

Fear not for me. I always wear a heavy veil when I go shopping, and the man that could look through that must have an X-ray.

Andrey

Werra, you are always jolly, and I like you. Call at my apartments at two.

Werra

You are not trifling with my affections.

Andrey

Trifling, far from it--my card.

(Gives it)

With my address. I'll be there.

Werra

Hst!  
(Enter Posta R 3E. he notices Werra put the card in her bosom)

Posta

Werra, I'm surprised!  
(Xing over between them)

Andrey

Why, Posta, you act as though you were jealous about something.

Posta

No, I'm not jealous, don't you flatter yourself.  
(C)

Andrey

(Laughs)

That's right my boy, you have no cause to be.

(Going up the stairs)

You have a very charming young wife and I think you are exceedingly well mated.

(Exit R. top of stairs)

Posta

(Looking after him)

You mind your own business.

(Down to Werra)

Werra, what did you hide so hastily as I came in?

(R.C.)

Werra

(L.C.)

Why, you silly boy, it was my handkerchief.

Posta

It was not your handkerchief. It looked like a letter or card.

Werra

(Haughtily)

Baron! You've been drinking.

Posta

No, I have not, and I want to know what it was.

Werra

How dare you doubt me?

(L.C.)

Posta

If you won't answer me, I'll go and get intoxicated.

Werra

If you do, and come home drunk, you'll know what you'll get.

(Bus with muscle)



Posta

Oh pshaw!

(Sings part of any college song, exit R. IE)

Werra

Well, this looks as though it would end in a mess.

(Takes out card)

Count Andrey Modjeska.

(Laughs, holding up card and going up the stairs)

Soft, soft as butter. Umph! Posta suspects.

(Stoops down behind railing of stairs and pretends to put it in her stocking. The Duke enters from under the stairs, looks around and sits on chair right of small table up back)

Duke

I wonder where Vladimir is? Poor fellow, he has my sympathy.

(He sits. Werra, who is up above him on the stairs, stoops over to see how it is, discovers that it is the Duke, takes her slipper in hand and as the Duke is sitting, reflecting on the events that have passed, Werra takes deliberate aim with her slipper and throws it at the Duke, he jumps from chair with a bound, goes down R. with hands above head for protection, he turns and discovers Werra leaning over steps smiling)

Duke

Why, Baroness! What does this mean?

Werra

(Politely)

My slipper, please.

Duke

Yes, I see it; but how did it get down here?

Werra

A mosquito bit me on the ankle. I tried to shake it off and my slipper flew along with it.

Duke

(Picking up slipper)

I don't see any wings on it. Permit me to return to the adorable Cinderella, her magic slipper.

(Tries to give it to her, but she is up too high)

Werra

Oh, Romeo! Romeo! My bald head Romeo.

(with mock pathos)

Duke

(Same spirit)

Ah! It is the yeast and Juliet is the sun!

Werra

Ah me!

(Strikes pose and sighs)

Duke

She speaks. O, speak again, bright angel.

(Werra sighs)

She speaks, yet she says nothing.

(Turning and going down R)

Werra

Stay! Stay! My Romeo, do not desert me now, they Juliet has-  
oh!!!

Duke

(Turns)

What has my Juliet?

Werra

A pain. I stepped on a tack, Oh! oh! Oh!

(Limping down the stairs)

Duke

(Turning down R. with mock emotion)

Ah! My Juliet has a pain, a pain -

Werra

(Down on stage over L. and standing on one foot)

Say, are you going to keep me standing here all night on one  
foot like a rooster?

Duke

But what can I do?

Werra

What do they do when they find a nail in a horses hoof - they  
pull it out don't they?

(Hopping toward chair L)

Duke

I beg your pardon.

(Bowing)

Sit right there.

(Duke has Werra's shoe in his hand. Werra sits and the  
Duke kneels beside her, takes her foot, examines it)

There's no tack there.

Werra

Yes, there is, look again. Whou! You tickle me.

(Laughs, Enter Posta up C. Under stairway, catches Duke  
examining his wife's foot)

Duke

(Embarrassed)

I beg your pardon. Broness.

Posta

(Comes down between them)

No, but beg mine you old rascal! Sir! This is an outrage.  
What do you mean?

Duke

(Backing in great surprise)

What do I mean? Why, Baron, I can explain

Posta

Scoundrel! Explain if you can. You hold evidence against your-  
self in your own hand.

Duke

But my dear Baron.  
(R.C.)

Posta

Silence! If you were not an old man, I'd challenge you to a  
duel. As for you, Madame, from the moment that you had that  
card, I suspected you, now I see I was right, and not only one  
man, but two.

Werra

(Rising)

But my darling.

Posta

Don't darling me. I shall never see you again until we meet in  
a divorce court.

(Runs up the stairs)

Remember, in a divorce court, in a divorce court.

(Exit)

Werra

In a divorce court, and he intends to make me a widow, yes,  
(Dramatically)

and it's all your fault.

Duke

My fault! Mine!  
(R. C.)

Werra

Yes, yours. Give me that slipper and let me go.

(She takes slipper from Duke's hand, X's over R. to couch)

I hate you you old bald-headed masher.

(Sitting on couch R. putting on slipper)

Duke

Masher! Masher! Why, what do you mean by that word?

Werra

I mean that you tried to flirt with me on the staircase.  
Didn't you call me your Cinderella?

(Xing to him and then with emotion)

Oh, Posta! Posta! I loved you so much and now, oh! Oh!  
(Staggers and about to fall in faint, and the Duke catches her at centre)

Duke

Good heavens, she's fainted.

(Enter Posta and Minister of Police at top of stairs, they are about to go down when Posta sees the Duke with his wife in his arms, immediately the idea flashes on his mind that here is actual evidence, he turns around to the Minister with gestures and pantomime of "there, what did I tell you," this is kept up until the audience fully takes in the situation and then they exit. Woe begone expressions on the Duke's face. Shakes her a couple of time)

Werra! Werra! Baroness! Oh, where are those confounded attendants.

(He shakes her again and Werra is still limp, he finally drags her over to seat or couch R. tries to make her sit up, he imagines he has succeeded and starts to look for attendants and as he gets C. Werra has lost her balance and the Duke rushes to her aid just in time to prevent her falling on the floor)

Not a soul anywhere.

(He balances her again and once more starts to look for the attendants, this time Werra falls face downward on sofa, the Duke hastens to her side, lifts her up)

Heaven's she'll suffocate.

(Makes her sit up again, and finally he sits with his back to her; Werra opens her eyes and moves a little, and the Duke rises)

Ah! She's reviving, thank the Lord.

Werra

(Who has been feigning all the time, partially revives)

Where---where am I?

(The Duke has risen and is on her L. She observes him)

Oh, it's you, is it?

(She follows him and he retreats)

It's all your fault, you have separated me from my husband, you you-

At C faints again and the Duke once more catches her)

Duke

Oh, Lord!

(He looks around in agony for help, sees it is no use and tries to drag her over to couch again, he can't do it, hesitates and then boldly lifts her in his arms-meantime Werra on coming to has taken her train in her hand, and by doing so it is out of the way when Duke raises her in this scene. The Duke staggers under her weight and starts for staircase, as he does so, Posta comes down and they meet at bottom of staircase)

Posta

Oh, you old pirate! It's all your fault; wait on her, that's right take her in your arms; oh, this beautiful evidence, I'll see my lawyer, I'll see him at once.

(Posta exits L. 3E Duke in meantime helping Werra up and looking at Posta as if to ask help, he gets Werra up to the middle of stairs, as she reaches there she stands on her feet, turns around to Duke)

Werra

Thanks, Duke, you are awfully kind. Ta ta.

(Waves her hand and exits laughing)

(Duke looks at her in amazement pauses)

Duke

(In disgust)

Oh, hell!

(Goes down stairs)

That girl is a vixen.

(Mopping his brow)

That's the toughest time I've had since the war.

(Exit L. 2E)

(Music)

Marie

(Enters from head of stairs)

I cannot stay within and hear their songs of love while my heart is slowly breaking.

(Down steps, and going over near table L)

Oh, Vladimir, Vladimir.

Vladimir

(Who has entered under stairs, pale and agitated)

Who called my name?

(Looks and discovers Marie, the moment she sees

Vladimir, she starts for the stairs again slowly, he intercepts her)

Stay, Marie, I had to see you once again, it seems as though I had some horrible dream, and yet--tell me, Marie, do you really love the Count Modjeska? Speak! Answer me?

Marie

(At table L)

Yes.

(With effort)

Vladimir

But not an hour ago, you swore that you loved me.

Marie

I did. But my mother made me realize the folly of such a step.

Vladimir

Folly, folly! That is what you call it?

Marie

Vladimir, my fortune demands that I marry a man of rank,

Vladimir

Rank! Then it is the title that you marry and not the man?

Marie

Title, title only.  
(L.C.)

Vladimir

My God! And you say this to me, you, Marie! Is heart nothing, affection nothing, soul nothing, but title all?

(R.C.)

Marie

(With effort)

Oh! I can endure this no longer. Good bye, Vladimir.  
(Offers her hand)

Vladimir

Vladimir! There is no such man. Vladimir, the man who loved you with all his heart and soul is dead, and in his place there stands a being absolutely soulless. Go!

(Marie looks at him, and then slowly goes up the stairs, Vladimir X's over L. his eye still on Marie as she approaches near the top of the stairs, he turns around, facing audience, Marie throws a kiss to him. Vladimir takes rose from button hole and crushes it to pieces, Marie observes this and exits with a sigh of regret, Vladimir sits in chair R. of table over L. in deep thought and profoundly stirred)

The Nihilists are right! All titles should be destroyed. The veil has been rent asunder and the angels of aristocracy are but painted spectres, grasping for titles and for gold.

(Gregory enter R. IE full evening dress, at same time Karol enters H. 3<sup>E</sup> and goes down to L. IE).

Gregory

Why Vladimir old boy! Welcome!

(Vladimir X's to him and both shake hands at C)

What are you doing here tonight?

Vladimir

Gregory.

(Observes Karol)

Who is that man?

Gregory

An attache and a friend of mine.

Vladimir

Friend enough to be trusted- in all things? In all, remember?

Gregory

In all.

Vladimir

Are you still a Nihilist?

(Karol starts over R. a trifle)

Gregory

(Pause)

Yes.

(Karol starts up stage to watch)

Vladimir

Posta and Count Modjeska?

Gregory

Posta, has withdrawn honorably, Modjeska, is a traitor. Why do you ask?

Vladimir

Because, I now believe in Nihilism.

(Xing L)

Gregory

What has changed your views?

(R.C.)

Vladimir

The cursed aristocracy which fills this building to-night. I wish to join your Brotherhood.

(Xing to C)

Gregory

I'll take you at your word, I know you mean it.

(Shakes hands with Vladimir)

Karol- a brother worker.

(Karol comes down L. and shakes hands with Vladimir)

Our work begins to-night.

Vladimir

To-night! So much the better.

Gregory

The Czar will soon be here. This part of the Opera House is unprotected, Karol alone keeps watch. There is a fuse under the railing of those stairs.

(Karol points-Gregory up C)

The moment it strikes that pillar at the top of the stairs,

(Pointing up R. 3E)

which is filled with gun cotton and dynamite, it will wreck this part of the building, and at the same time explode under the royal box,

Vladimir

But why bother with the fuse, why not light the powder direct at the pillar above?

(C)

Gregory

To give the man who lights the fuse a chance to escape.  
(R.C.)

Karol

(On stairs, low and intense)  
No chance at all.  
(Bugle heard off L)

The Czar!

Vladimir

Will he come this way?

Karol

No, look!

(Vladimir goes up on stairs)  
He is crossing the corridor and will go to the opera by the private staircase.

Vladimir

Whose duty is it to light the fuse?  
(On stairs)

Gregory

(Over R)  
These dice will decide.  
(Karol goes down L. of table, Gregory goes R. of table L. and Vladimir C. of table, Gregory takes dice from pocket and throws)

Twelve!

(Karol takes dice and throws)

Karol

Fourteen.

Gregory

It's mine.

Vladimir

No, no, not yours, but mine.

Karol and Gregory

Yours!

Vladimir

Yes.  
(To Gregory)  
You have a sister and must live, I have no one and will die gladly. What is the signal?

(C)

Karol

Wait a moment.

(Darts up stage on stairs, looks off left)



Gregory

You will hear a bugle call; on the third call, light the fuse.  
Good-bye.

(Extends hand, Vladimir takes it)

Vladimir

Good bye, This night will end it all.

Karol

(Comes down L. of Vladimir)

You are brave. But you understand that the man who lights the fuse must perish with the rest.

Vladimir

Yes, yes I know---I'll do it.

Karol

Good-bye.

(Xing to L. IE)

Remember, at the third call of the bugle.

Vladimir

It shall be done on the third call.

(Karol exits L. IE Vladimir goes up on stairs, looks off R. 3E)

Open wide your ears, listen attentively to every note, you are listening to your dirge.

(Bugle call away in the distance)

The first! I am resolved! It must be done,

(Down from stairs)

To perdition with the aristocracy who laugh at the nameless poor. To-night, I and the devil will laugh, and we will all laugh as we reel through space to find the grave--the grave. Oh, Marie, Marie!

(Xing over extreme R)

Duchess

(Enter at top of stairs)

Oh, this punishment is more than I can bear, but I brought it on myself, upon myself.

(Sees Vladimir)

Vladimir!

(Goes down to C)

Vladimir, are you angry with me?

Vladimir

Angry! What right has an outcast to be angry with a Duchess!

(Xing L)

Duchess

I came to offer sympathy.

(R.C.)

Vladimir

I want no sympathy, I want Marie.  
(At L.)

Duchess

My boy, it cannot be.

Vladimir

Indeed!

(Xing to her)

Then why did you bring me up with her, teach me to love her, and now, when the gates of Paradise are open for me to enter, you come and close them and all because I have no title.  
(Xing L.)

Duchess

No, no, not that, you wrong me.  
(C)

Vladimir

Perhaps it was my mother's crime that moved you. Speak, was that the reason?

Duchess

(Gasps)

Yes, it was.

(Bugle call heard)

Vladimir

Then let me tell you, Duchess, that nature will not let the son stand idly by and hear his mother slandered. The charges that you made against her, failed to pierce my heart, and as this is our last meeting on earth, let me tell you, Duchess Alexis, that you have lied to me, that you have lied.

Duchess

Oh, Vladimir, you don't know what you are saying.

(Back off stage the Pilgrims chorus from Tannhauser is heard if desired. Bugle call)

Vladimir

The third. Now, Duchess Alexis, I shall blow the Russian aristocracy to atoms and send them all to Hell.

(Darts over to L. 2E. takes the single candle and swinging around to R. the candle goes out, then going up stairs, he takes the small candelabra with 4 or 5 lighted candles in his hand, the Duchess meantime X's over L. after him and as he swings around up stage)

Duchess

No, no, my boy, not that, not that.  
(Over L. back of table)

Vladimir

(Wildly)

Vladimir

Now, Duchess Alexis, I shall illuminate St. Petersburg with the grandest display of fireworks, that the world has ever seen.  
(Starts the fuse)

Duchess

For God's sake, don't, don't commit murder.  
(Vladimir has touched the fuse under railing of stairs and it starts)

Vladimir

Too late, too late, it starts.  
(Vladimir follows it up stairs and Duchess following clinging to his arm and trying to get at the fuse)

Duchess

(In desperation)

No, no, think of Marie.

Vladimir

(Unmindful of her, watching the burning fuse and keeping Duchess at arms length)

Yes, I think of her in the arms of her lover, laughing at the man she duped. Look,  
(In triumph)

It's on its journey, the journey of death.

Duchess

For God's sake! For your mother's sake.  
(Increasing intensity)

Vladimir

(Angrily)

I have no mother, she died upon the scaffold a vulgar criminal and I am her son.

Duchess

No, no, she was not a criminal! Your mother lives.

Vladimir

Lives! Where?

(Up on middle platform)

Duchess

Here! I am your mother.  
(The bomb now is very near top pillar)

Vladimir

My Mother! My God! The bomb!

(Rushes up remaining stairs, and just as the fuse is about to reach the pillar, he tears it from railing and with burning fuse in hand, turns to his mother who is on centre landing with arms out-stretched.)

Mother! Thank God! Thank God!

(Embraces his mother, with burning fuse still in hand, the orchestra plays "God save the Czar" and

C U R T A I N

(On second curtain, Vladimir throws burning fuse on stage and then embraces his mother again)

C U R T A I N

THE VOICE OF NATURE

A C T      L V .

A C T IV

S C E N E : Same Scene as Act Second.

The following evening. A lighted lamp on table L. - One candelabra and five candles burning in room L. 3E - Two dress suit cases on sofa. At rise, knocking heard outside by Posta-Pause.

Posta

(Outside)

Vladimir! Vladimir!  
(Knocking at door)

Vladimir!  
(Door opens and Posta looks inside)

Not at home, eh?  
(Enters)

Strange!  
(Goes down R. observes dress suit cases)  
Everything packed, evidently for a hasty departure. I'll leave a note asking him to call.

(Goes over to table L. and turns up lamp)  
(He writes, facing audience. Knock heard, Posta writes on)

Come in!  
(Knocking heard)

Come in, come in, you infernal blockhead.  
(As he says, "come in" the Duke enters and hears the words "Infernal blockhead" the Duke stands at door indignantly Posta after pause, turns around and is surprised to find the Duke there, he rises at once, in confusion.)

I beg your pardon.

Duke

(Angrily)  
Never mind, I came to see Vladimir, but since you are here, may I ask what you meant by sending this afternoon, a lawyer's letter in which you name me as one of the witnesses in a divorce suit against your wife?

Posta

I had a right to do so.

Duke

(Down C)  
A right! A right!

Posta

What provoked that interesting situation, in which, I discovered you and my wife? What made Count Modjeska give her a card, which she hastily concealed when she saw me? What made her visit a locksmith to-day, get an assortment of keys and walk deliberately to Count Modjeska's apartments?

Duke

How the devil should I know? I'm not a detective.

Posta

I'm convinced of her guilt with Count Modjeska and I - I would have made any sacrifice to have made her happy. Oh, Duke! Duke!

(Sits at table, buries his face in hands. Enter Werra, Duke down R. confused, he looks at Werra, she calls him over the Duke goes quietly over to her, as he gets close to her, she straightens up and says sternly)

Werra

Don't touch me.

(Backs away from him, Posta jumps up with a start, sees Werra, thinks that Duke has insulted his wife)

Posta

(Sternly)

How dare you touch my wife?

Werra

You can't kiss me.

(With mock indignity)

Duke

Kiss you--why--

Posta

You old scoundrel, you dare insult my wife.

Duke

(In desperation)

Oh, your wife be-blessed. You're crazy the both of you.

(He goes up C. to door, Werra X's around to R)

You are well matched and mated, and ought to be in a lunatic asylum. That's my opinion, and frankly expressed.

(He exits with a bang of the door)

Posta

That means damn.

(Over L)

Werra

Yes, a wooden damn.

(R)

Posta

Woman, who dare you stand there and smile after breaking my heart.

Werra

I couldn't break your heart--with an axe. What's the matter with you any way?

(Posta sits down chair L)

(In extreme disgust)

(Werra X's Over to him, looks at him)

Well, can't you say something? Umph! You're a sociable as an iceberg. Are you going to the Musical this evening?

(Posta turns around indigust)

Oh, you needn't grunt like a pig. Can't you answer a civil question, or are you too busy admiring your big feet?

(No answer from Posta)

Oh, you're a horried brute of a man, I shall never speak to you again.

(Stamps foot and goes up to door, pauses, looks around, comes down a trifle)

I'm sure I won't speak to you for a month!

(A little nearer)

I -- I -- I am quite postive that I shan't speak to you for a week.

(Half crying, turns to go again, then faces him once more throws herself at his feet and says passionately)

Oh, Posta, what is the matter?

Posta

Let me alone. You know full well--

(Werra places arms around his neck, Posta takes them off)

Go and hug Count Modjeska.

Werra

Count Modjeska!

(Thinks a moment, then solves mystery- laughing)

Oh, I see you've been watching me.

(Goes down R)

Posta

(Rising)

Yes, I have, and to think you could betray me so basely.

Werra

Ah, don't be silly; have patience enough until tomorrow, then you'll know how much I love you. Why, I love you so deeply, that if you were to die, I couldn't part with you.

Posta

You dear darling, what would you do?

Werra

I'd have you stuffed.

(Posta disgusted)



Posta

Stuffed!

(Goes L, Werra follows him)

Werra

Ah, you wouldn't like that would you? Perhaps you would rather have me preserve you in the ice chest?

(Knock at door)

Come in.

(Knock still louder)

Come, which will you have, stuffed or the ice chest?

(Posta disgusted, Werra goes over R. Laughing- knock heard again)

Come in!

(Angrily)

(Enter Andrey very much excited)

Posta

(Excitedly)

Well, what do you want here?

Andrey

(C)

I want the documents that your wife stole from my room.

Posta

What! That my wife stole? My wife could never be guilty of such a thing.

Werra

Yes, I am. That's why I went there, and you accused me with being in love with such a blackmailer.

Andrey

(Enraged, steps forward)

Baroness!

Posta

Hold on!

Werra

Let him alone. Posta allow me to settle accounts with this-- this--well, to quote the English poet "God made-him for a man and therefore push him along?"

(Over R)

Andrey

I have no time to waste. I want those stolen documents and I'll return your keys.

Werra

I don't want them, they wouldn't fit. Throw them out the window, and take a dive yourself.

Andrey

There are your keys.

(Throwing them down)

Those documents will do you little good. Marie will never marry Vladimir, the Duchess will never consent, if she does I shall betray her secret to her husband and the aristocracy.

Werra

And I will swear that I overheard you threaten the Duchess that unless she gave you Marie in marriage, you would invent that vile story and accuse her of it.

Andrey

Would you take your oath to such a falsehood?

(C)

Werra

To get you hanged I'd swear to anything.

Andrey

What does your husband say to such a wife?

Werra

(Commandingly)

Posta, answer him?

Posta

My wife is an ideal woman, can do no wrong, and I will verify anything she may say.

(Over L)

Werra

In other words anything that I say, goes. We will now excuse you. I have the documents and you cannot prove that Vladimir is her son.

Andrey

You are mistaken. The Duchess wrote me four letters in which she repeatedly calls Vladimir her rightful son.

Werra

(Eagerly)

They weren't in the desk.

Andrey

Yes, they were.

(Smiling in triumph, backs up L.)

Werra

Oh! I could punch my head.

(Enter Madame Kramolin in haste, does not observe Andrey, but on seeing Werra)

Madam

Oh, Baroness! The Duchess and Marie are coming here and--

(Sees Andrey and stops)

Andrey  
It's all right. I shall be here too, and unless Marie becomes my wife, I shall report a court scandal, and what is more, prove it.

(Bows and exits)

Madam  
What does he mean?

Werra  
He means - bing - a knock out

Posta  
Oh, pshaw! How can he ruin the Duchess?

Werra  
There, there, that's enough, don't ask any silly questions, wait till to-morrow, in the meantime keep your mouth shut. Follow that rascal, find out what he does and then report to me. Attention! Forward march.

(Posta salutes, makes turn, marches to door)

Halt! Left about face - forward march!  
(he marches to her)

Halt! Kiss me.  
(He kisses her)

Kiss again.  
(He kisses her)

Double quick.  
(Kisses her twice)

March!  
(Posta marches C and off)  
That's the sort of a husband to have.

Madam  
How can you be so light hearted?  
(Over R)

Werra  
Oh, if I didn't have some fun now and then I'd have the bicycle fever.

Madam  
Does the Count know that we have stolen the paper?

Werra  
Yes, but the documents don't save us, the Duchess wrote him letters, acknowledging Valdimir as her son and that upsets our plans.

Madam  
What's to be done?

Werra  
Does the Duchess still believe Marie is her daughter?

Madam

Yes.

Werra

To-night you must tell her it isn't so.

Madam

No, no I dare not.

Werra

Then if you won't I will.  
(Madam about to remonstrate)

Yes, I will.  
(Jingling of bells heard outside)

Madam

It's the Duchess! She's coming here to meet Vladimir.

Werra

Detain Marie till I speak to the Duchess alone.

Madam

But you will not show her the documents?

Werra

When the time comes I'll call you.  
(Madam exits, Werra takes out documents and examines them)

This promises to be a lively evening. How it will all end.  
(Sighs)

The Lord only knows.  
(Enter Duchess pale and nervous)

Duchess

Ah, Baroness, Vladimir is not here- I dread to meet him, I feel that this meeting will be the crisis of our lives.  
(Xing L)

Werra

You must be calm, Duchess, you'll need all your courage to go through this evening's ordeal.

Duchess

(Walking about nervously)  
I know, I know, I shall never forget the look which spread over his face, when I confessed that I was his mother. I'm afraid, that he despises me.

(Over L. and sinking in chair)

Werra

Duchess, is it true that you wrote letters to Count Modjeska. In which you acknowledged Vladimir as your son?

Duchess

Yes, Why?

Werrass

Unless you consent to his marriage with Marie, he means to disgrace you by publishing them.

Duchess

(Looks at Werra - pause- overcome with emotion)  
Yes, yes, I know. Oh, my God.

(Rising)

What can I do,  
(Xing R)

what can be done-

Werra

Ssh!! I hear some one.

(Goes to door, opens it, Duchess X's over L. again)

It's Vladimir, I'll leave you alone with him.

(Exits door C)

Duchess

What can I say? What excuse can I make?

(Sinks in chair)

Oh, Vladimir! Vladimir!

(Enter Vladimir C. evening dress, long cloak, very pale  
Snow storm begins outside, he remains for a moment on  
threshold, he advances slowly, and after a pause, he  
goes down R)

Vladimir

Duchess!

Duchess

(Rises with expression of anguish on her face, disappointed  
in the fact that he has not called her mother, she turns  
slowly to him--he is cold and impassive)

Is there no other name that you could call me?

Vladimir

Duchess, the very walls have ears and if the world knew of our  
relationship -

Duchess

(Rising)

Let them know. I have wronged you long enough, I must now pro-  
tect you.

Vladimir

I shall always remain what I have been the caprice of fate has  
robbed me of my name, and it's iron will cannot be resisted.

Duchess

I'm sorry for you, Vladimir, I'm sorry for Marie.

Vladimir

It was a crushing blow.

(Knock at door)

Who's there?

Gregory

(Outside)

Gregory.

Vladimir

Come in.

Gregory

(Enters pale and excited, comes down C)

I come to warn you, the plot has been discovered, the half burned fuse was found, Karol was arrested, he swore that Count Modjeska set the fuse and then fearing torture, committed suicide.

Vladimir

Do they suspect us?

(Over R)

Gregory

No, only Count Modjeska and me. I must depart at once, but have no fear, I will never betray you.

Vladimir

Have you any funds?

Gregory

Enough to see me across the border.

Vladimir

Wait a moment.

(Exits R IE)

Duchess

How did you obtain passports?

Gregory

I secured them long ago in case of emergency.

Duchess

Give me your hand.

(He does so)

I saved your life once. Promise me to abandon Nihilism tho' the cause be just, to assassinate is a crime, promise me?

Gregory

I promise,

(Bows, enter Vladimir, with a purse)

Vladimir

Here, take this money.  
(Gregory acting as though refusing it)

You must - go to Berlin, I will meet you there next mon th.

Duchess

(In surprise)  
you!

Vladimir

Yes, good bye, Gregory.  
(Shakeshands with him, Gregory goes to door)

Gregory

(Turns at door)  
Good bye, now for a new land and a new life.

Duchess

Are you going away too?  
(Over L)

Vladimir

Yes, I have obtained a leave of absence and will go abroad.

Duchess

For how long?

Vladimir

Perhaps forever.

Duchess

But why, why?  
(Vladimir hesitates)  
Is it on account of Marie?

Vladimir

Yes. For although she is my half sister, God forgive me, I love her still.

Duchess

(horrified)  
Oh, Vladimir.  
(Going to L. and sinking in chair)

Vladimir

Yes, mother, I cannot help it, the thought of Marie becoming Count Modjeska's wife drives me frantic.  
(Duchess bows head on table, showing by her hands, her great agitation, Marie enters softly up back and goes down R)

**Mother**, we must part at once.  
(Duchess extends right hand)  
Say good bye to Marie for me and tell her that I-  
(Vladimir turns and discovers Marie. Werra enters)

Marie

You were going away and did not even intend to see me.  
(Madam enters, X's down R)

Werra

Don't worry, Marie, he'll not go away, at least not yet.  
(C)

Duchess

(Rising and turning)  
What do you mean?  
(L)

Werra

You know that I'm a plain blunt woman,  
(Andrey appears in door)  
I don't waste much words, but I get to the point, therefore,  
prepare yourself for a shock. You believe that Marie is  
related to Vladimir, but it's not so.

Duchess

Not so? Why child, this is absurd.

Werra

No, it's not. Madam Kramolin can explain she has the documents.  
Your child Marie, was killed by an accident.

Duchess

My God!

Vladimir

Then there is no obstacle to my marrying Marie?

Andrey

(Coming down C)

Yes there is, a court scandal will prevent it, and these  
letters from the Duchess, will prove my case.

Vladimir

Then you are the man who holds my mother in your power.  
(L.C.)

Andrey

(C)

Yes, and I intend to keep her there.

Werra

(To Madam)

Help me to find Posta.  
(She exits with Madam)

Vladimir

Give me those letters.  
(C)

Andrey

These letters are not for you nor the Duchess, they are for  
the Duke.



(Xing over R)

Duchess

Oh, I've endured this agony long enough, I'll not be a coward any longer. I shall tell him myself. Marie drive to the Palace and request the Duke to come here at once.

(Marie exits C)

Andrey

And Marie, tell the Duke to prepare himself for a shock.

Vladimir

The Duke will never hear a word from your lying lips.

(C)

Andrey

What do you mean?

(R)

Vladimir

Mother, leave us.

(C)

Duchess

No! I have deserted you long enough, I shall remain.

Vladimir

For the last time, give those letters to the Duchess.

Andrey

I told you once before, no.

Vladimir

Very well. Then I shall take them from you.

(Going up to door, locks it)

Andrey

What are you doing?

Vladimir

You shall never leave this room alive.

(Taking off coat)

Andrey

What do you mean, murder?

Vladimir

No, not murder.

(Taking down sword from wall)

but for insults which you have heaped upon my mother I intend to kill you.

Andrey

I'll not fight you.

Vladimir

You must fight.

(Throwing down foil to him- over R)

Come, defend yourself. Come, you insulter of defenceless women, pick it up, pick it up I say, and fight a man.

(Andrey takes off coat)

Duchess

(Up back at L.C.)

No, Vladimir, leave that man to the law, the Duke will soon be here, and I will explain all.

(At C)

Vladimir

No need of that, Mother, I'll get those letters.

(Xing over L. to prepare, Vladimir over L. and Andrey R.

they work around so that Vladimir gets over R. then he makes three lunges in quick succession which are parried by Andrey then Vladimir makes a jumping lunge which parried by Andrey, who immediately takes the offensive and lunges three times at Vladimir following it up right away with a jumping lunge, Vladimir successfully parries and makes a thrust at Andrey, by this time Andrey is over at the table L. and seeing that he is unable to cope with Vladimir, knocks the lighted lamp which is upon the table to the floor, it falls with a crash and all is darkness. The Duchess has followed the bout eagerly and is centre when lamp falls to stage, Vladimir is down R. C. Andrey over L. Back of table)

Duchess

Vladimir, do not stir.

(All lights are out, theatre, in entire darkness-pause. Loud knocking heard at door C. again and again)

Minister

(Outside)

Is Count Modjeska within?

(Knocking heard again)

Open the door! Open the door in the name of the Czar.

(Pause)

(Duchess who has made her exit into room L. ~~3~~ returns with a lighted candelabra and with the aid of the light the fighting is renewed, the moment they start, the knocking continues louder and louder with an occasional "come, come, open the door" "Open the door I Say". - The men move around, Andrey to R and Vladimir L. and they move cautiously around again so that andrey is up stage in direction of window, then Vladimir lunges and drives him up into the window, knocks sword from his hand, Andrey from the start has kept the letters in his hand, he is grasped by Vladimir who struggles with him to secure the papers, he finally does so and Andrey loses his balance and topples out through centre pane of glass into street below, the snow storm beats in

furiously and as he falls out through window, the Duchess backs in horror down R. Vladimir up in the window turns in triumph with papers in hand)

Vladimir

Now, mother, your secret is safe.

(Duchess turns on chandelier from button over L. at fire place. The door is burst open with a crash, the Minister of Police enters, followed by Marie who goes over L. and then the Duke enters and comes down R. of Minister, two Cossacks at door)

Minister

Where is Count Modjeska?

(Down R)

Vladimir

(Coming down C)

You'll find him in the street below.

(Minister exits)

Duke

You have sent for me Duchess, what is the matter?

(Over R)

Duchess

(Over L)

I sent for you to tell you that

(In great distress and really unable to tell, Vladimir notices it and comes to her rescue)

Vladimir

The Duchess has sent for you, to tell you that at last, she has consented to my marriage with Marie.

(Marie goes into his arms from L. Werra, Posta and Madam appear in door)

Duke

Good. I'm damn glad of it.

(Shakes his hand- Marie already in Vladimir's arms. Congratulations all around as the curtain drops)

C U R T A I N