

T H E      D U E L

ANTON CHEHOFF

M U S I C

ALBERT COATES

(Freely translated)



CHARACTERS

IJKA	Major-domo	Tenor
SIMEON	Coachman	
DASHA	A maid.	Mezzo
PELAGIA		} Soprani
KSENIA, pet of the kitchen)		
VERUSKA	Cook.	Contralto
GRIGORI STEPANITCH SMIRNOFF		Baritone
ELENA POPOV		Mezzo-Soprano

Workers in the fields.

Chorus.  
S. A. T. B.



THE DUEL

by Anton Chehoff.

Music

by Albert Coates.

Freely translated.

Enter LUKA

Ma'am, Ma'am, you're wearing yourself out. Everything, yes everything that breathes should enjoy life. Why even the Cook and the maid and the cat, they all know how to be happy but you - you - you haven't left the house for a whole year.

HELENA

And I'll never leave it. He lies in his grave and I have buried myself in these four walls...We are both dead.

LUKA

There you go again. It's awful to listen to..Nikolai Mihailtsh is dead. 'Twas the will of the Lord.. You have grieved over it - that should be enough. You have forgotten all your neighbours - you receive no-one - we live here like spiders - even the livery is eaten by the mice.....Dear Ma'am, Oh my dear Ma'am .....young and pretty as you are, your beauty can't last for ever.....There's a regiment at Biblow. Officers simply beautiful. Every Friday a Ball - Military music every day and -

HELENA

Please don't speak of these things. Nikolai Mihailtsh is gone - Life means nothing to me. His departed Soul must see how I love him.....I know it's no secret to you, he was often unjust, cruel, unfaithful. But I shall prove to him how I can love.

LUKA

Words, words, what's the use of words when you'd rather see Toby or Velikan harnessed to the trap to visit your neighbours!

(Luka tries to amuse Helena)

Hi, you, Toby there. Velikanda, Velikan, up you rascals, pull to-day as ne'er before. Hi, you Toby there. Velikanda, Velikan. Up you scum, up you scum. I'll eat your hearts out. Velikanda, Velikan, up you rascals, pull to-day as ne'er before. Hi! Hi! Hi! (cracking imaginary whips). Hi! old Toby. Hi! old Velikan, (exuberant). Ha ha ha ha ha Hoi - (Helena weeps). (Luka, quite overcome) Ma'am, oh Ma'am. What is it now in Heaven's name?

HELENA

He loved Toby so. What a wonderful horseman he was - how fine he looked when driving to the Kostchagins or the Vlasoffs - Toby, Toby (deeply sighing)

(Spoken nostalgically)

Give him an extra measure of oats to-day please.

LUKA

And Velikan?

HELENA

The same of course -

(A bell rings loudly)



HELENA

Oh, who can that be? I'm not at home to anyone. (Resigned)

LUKA

Very good, Ma'am.

(Luka exits)

HELENA

(Takes up photo again) Are you not ashamed? Here am I a true wife, having imprisoned myself until death and you - you -you quarrelled with me, left me alone for weeks.....But you shall see, Nikolai, how I forgive -

DASHA

(dashes in very excitedly) Oh Ma'am - Someone wants to, wants to -

HELENA

Dasha, what impudence! -

DASHA

Oh no, no, no....wants to see you -

HELENA

Oh! You told him I see no-one?

DASHA

Yes, but he insists, insists that 'tis a most pressing matter.

HELENA

Since Nikolai died.....

DASHA

But he's in the d,dining room now

HELENA rings furiously.

DASHA

They're fighting

HELENA

What?

DASHA

In the dining-room.

HELENA

Show him in. I'll teach him. What impudence, impudence -

GRIGORI

(at the door) Fool, ass, you make too much fuss. (Catching sight of Helena). Oh! Ah! (Luka stops him, Grigori shakes him off)

HELENA

(communes to herself) A Convent -

GRIGORI

Madam - (LUKA tries to hush him up)

HELENA

Yes - that alone is left for me.

GRIGORI

Madam -

HELENA notices him at last.

GRIGORI

Madam. I have the honour to introduce myself. Lieutenant Grigori Stepanitch Smirnoff - at your service. (They bow politely to each other.)

GRIGORI

I come to you about an exceedingly delicate matter.

HELENA

And that is - ?

GRIGORI

Your late lamented husband left me two notes amounting to about twelve hundred roubles.

HELENA

Twelve hundred.

GRIGORI

As to-morrow I have to pay the bank interest I owe them, I should like to request in all respect that you pay me my money to-day.

HELENA

(to herself) Twelve hundred. Hmm! Twelve hundred. (She studies him) And what commodity did he procure from you?

GRIGORI

Oats.....Ma'am, oats!



(Parlando)

HELENA

Luka, don't forget Toby is to get an extra measure to-day.

(LUKA bows and exits anxiously watching GRIGORI SMIRNOFF)

HELENA

If Nikolai Mihailtsh is indebted to you I will of course pay you, but not to-day. (Slowly and mournfully). To-day is the anniversary of my beloved husband, and I'm not in the mood to discuss financial matters.

GRIGORI

But I'm in the mood to fly up the chimney feet foremost. If I can't lay my hands on my interest to-morrow they'll ruin me. I'll be an outcast from my own estate!

HELENA

The day after to-morrow you may get your money.

GRIGORI

But I don't want my money day after to-morrow...I must have it to-day.

HELENA

Sorry, no money to-day.

GRIGORI

I can't wait.

HELENA

I haven't got it.

GRIGORI

So you won't pay.

HELENA

No, impossible.

GRIGORI

Ha! Is that your last word?

HELENA

My very last.

GRIGORI

Absolutely?

HELENA

Absolutely.

GRIGORI

(Speechless).....I thank you, thank you indeed..... And they expect me to swallow all this.....Yesterday morning I called on all my debtors. If only one of them had paid up! And now I come here, seventy versts from home, hoping for a little money and all I get is moods!..... I need money, I need money, money -

HELENA

Great Heavens, he's gone mad! (Helena realizes that Grigori is only putting on a show).

GRIGORI

(Quite hysterically). I feel..the knife..at my throat. Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah!

HELENA

My manager will give you all you want upon his return.

GRIGORI

I came to see you, not your manager. What the devil -

HELENA

Ah! Really, Sir, your language! I shall not listen any more.

(HELENA exits, nose in air)

GRIGORI

(shouts after her) But my creditors. (Alone) ...Moods! Moods!.....What can one say to that?..... Shall I get into a balloon and make off.....Or shall I bang my head against a wall?.....If I call on Grusdieff he's not at home....Iroshevitch hides himself.. I've quarrelled with Kurzin, Masutov is ill....And this woman has moods! Oh! how angry I am. I can hardly breathe. Servant, Servant!

LUKA

What is it now?



GRIGORI

Krass, Krass, Krass, and quickly.

(LUKA exits smiling slyly)

Woman's logic, woman's logic. That's why I never liked talking to women and why I dislike doing it now...I'd rather sit on a powder barrel than talk to a woman. (He takes up photo). Her husband, I believe. (He salutes the portrait ironically). It's cold here, this affair is awful. It's enough to make one yell...with anger. (Lowest notes) Brr! Brr!

(LUKA enters)

LUKA

Madam is ill and will not see you any more.

GRIGORI

(Shouting) Ho! Out with you.-

(LUKA exits very agilely.)

LUKA

(Ill-humoured) Brr! (sits). I'll - I'll - Well, I'll wait. I'll sit here until I get my money. (He tattoos out the rhythm)- A week, a week, a month, a month, a year a year! (Goes to window and shouts to Simeon outside). Simeon! Hi! Simeon! Unharness the horses, we're staying.

SIMEON

(Outside) (Spoken) Very good, Barin.

GRIGORI

Awful heat, No money, No sleep at nights and now, Moods! and mourning dresses. Oh! I must have a drink. Simeon, Simeon! (Breaks altogether, hands over face).

LUKA and SIMEON enter simultaneously. By-play as SIMEON is a very cheerful brute and likes a game. He shoves and pushes Luka about, the latter is quite unable to speak.)

SIMEON

(Addressing Grigori) What can I do for you my Barin?

LUKA

(Not to be outdone.) What can I do for you dear Sir?

GRIGORI

Something to drink.

SIMEON

(turning to LUKA) You hear, the Barin wants a drink.

LUKA

You hear, your Master wants a drink.

SIMEON pushes LUKA out of the room

SIMEON

(Apprising his master in the free Russian colloquial manner) Ugh! You do look a fine figure for a visitant. ...Dust...dirty books, unwashed, uncombed. Straw on your vest. The lady probably thought you a highwayman..... Ugh! You a guest, let alone a creditor. Ugh!

(LUKA enters with the krass while SIMEON continues cleaning his master up playfully)

GRIGORI

(taking it) Brr!

LUKA

Sir, you are taking too many liberties.

GRIGORI

(fiercely) Who is?

LUKA

flustered. Nearly spilling the krass. SIMEON rescues it, taking it from him and surreptitiously taking a mouthful), I - I - I only, only meant -

GRIGORI

Brr! I - I - to whom are you talking? (Spoken) Go away!



SIMEON throws the wooden tray to LUKA  
who catches it dexterously but defiantly).

LUKA

(at the door) A fine mess. ....How can I get them to leave?

The GIRLS and LUKA peeping from behind pillars and furniture.

KSENIA  
PELAGIA

Lord preserve us from all these calamitous doings.  
Lord preserve us from all these calamitous doings.  
Lord preserve us from all these calamitous doings.  
Lord preserve us from all these calamitous doings.  
Ah...Ah...Ah...  
How angry, how angry he seems.

DASHA  
VERUSHKA

We don't trust these men. We don't trust these men.  
They have roguish faces. We don't like these men.  
We don't trust him and the other, the other, is worse.  
We must all help her to get rid of them.

GRIGORI

Lord!...how angry I am. Lord! how angry, how angry,  
I am. Angry enough to throw mud at the whole round  
world. Ugh! am I angry, angry with all the whole round  
world...the whole round world.....How am I ever to get  
my money?

LUKA

Lord preserve us from all these calamitous doings.  
Lord preserve us from all these calamitous doings.  
Lord preserve us from all these calamitous doings.  
Lord preserve us from all these calamitous doings.  
Ah...Ah... Ah...  
Oh! How can I get them to go.

SIMEON

I see faces in every corner.....Wait, I'll play them  
up...play them up...play them up. Just wait, I'll play  
them up.....They'll sing a diff'rent song when I've  
finished with them all.

HELENA appears unexpectedly at the door.  
SIMEON gasps as HELENA appears, and slinks away.

HELENA

(to GRIGORI) Sir, in my solitude I have come to hate  
the human voice, therefore I beg of you don't disturb  
my rest.

GRIGORI

My money and I'll leave.

HELENA

I have told you more than once, and in your native tongue,  
wait until the day after to-morrow.

GRIGORI

And I - I will be forced to hang myself if, also in your  
native tongue, I don't receive my money to-day. Surely  
you don't think I'm joking.

HELENA

Sir, I beg to you, why scream. This is not a stable.

GRIGORI

Stable - I never mentioned stable.....I must have that  
money for the interest to-morrow.



HELENA Have you no idea how to treat a lady?

GRIGORI Indeed I have.

HELENA I question that. You are too ill-bred, too vulgar. Respectable people don't behave like you towards ladies.

GRIGORI Oho! how remarkable. Would you then prefer French? (Over emphasized) Madame, Madame. Je vous prie... Pardonnez-moi for having disturbed your moods... Pardonnez-moi, Pardonnez-moi....Pardonnez-moi, pardonnez-moi, Madame. Je vous prie.....Madame, how's your grandmother and how your new mourning gown becomes you... Permettez-moi, permettez-moi...permettez-moi, permettez-moi. Madame. Je vous prie... (Salaams mockingly.)

HELENA (spoken) We are not amused! I call it downright vulgar.

GRIGORI Not amused...vulgar! Madam, three times have I fought duels for women. Twelve I jilted, nine jilted me. There was a time when I loved, suffered, melted in Love's delights, sighed to the moon, chattered like a magpie on emancipation, sacrificed half my fortune in the tender passion. Enough..enough..enough.....Women ... women. Full of conceit....deceit, cruel, odious, illogical... Have you ever seen a woman who was really true and faithful....Present company excepted....(makes profound bow)....Easier far to find a cat with horns, or a white woodcock, than a faithful woman.

HELENA But who is true and faithful.....the man perhaps?

GRIGORI Yes, indeed, the man!

HELENA The man? Ha, ha, ha. (laughing derisively). Well.... that's something new. My husband, a Southerner, was of men...the best. I loved him passionately. I gave him my youth, my happiness, my fortune, my life. I worshipped him like a heathen... and what happened?.....The best of men betrayed me in every possible way. He left me alone for months, wasted my money on other women.....but I still am true to him..... Behold me in this mourning.

GRIGORI Mourning - pah! - I see thro' this mourning.....Some knight will pass here and looking up will cry: 'Here dwells the Princess Tamara who, because of her love for her old hubby has buried herself here!..Ha, what art!

HELENA (taken aback) How dare you say that to me?

GRIGORI Why do you powder your nose then?

HELENA How dare you?

GRIGORI Don't scream so. I'm not your manager.

HELENA I'm not screaming. 'Tis you who are screaming.....Leave me.

GRIGORI My money...and I go.

HELENA No! I won't give you any money.

KSENIA  
PELAGIA Heaven help our lady.....Heaven help our lady.

LUKA Heaven help our lady.

SIMEON (Peeping) What a jolly scene this is.



KSENIA  
PELAGIA

Heaven, help our mistress.....Gracious heaven help us....  
Save her, Luka. Save her Luka. Ah.....Save her Luka...  
Save her, Luka.....Ah!.....Ah!.....Ah!

LUKA

Horrible catastrophe....Horrible catastrophe.....Gracious  
heaven, help us.....I will do my best.....I will do  
my best, very best, very best, very best, very best.

DASHA  
VERUSKA

Save her, Luka. Save her, Luka. Save her, save her, save  
her..... Save her, Luka. Save her, Luka, do your best,  
do your best, do your best, do your best....Ah!.....  
your very best.

SIMEON

What a jolly scene this is.....He won't get his money...  
.....'Tis a merry picture.....Now I wonder what  
to do for the best, what to do for the best. Ah! (Makes as  
if he had an idea )

GRIGORI

You won't - won't - give me any money.....As I am  
neither your husband or your fiancée, I beg of you don't  
make such a fuss.....I...I can't stand it. (Sits down  
dejectedly).

HELENA

Not a kopeck.....You, you are sitting down.....  
You're sitting down, you're sitting down, you're sitting  
down.

GRIGORI

Don't make a fuss, don't make a fuss, don't make a fuss!

HELENA

Will you please leave this house.

GRIGORI

And you please give me my money.

HELENA

Impudence! Leave this house....

GRIGORI

No!

HELENA

No?

GRIGORI

No!

HELENA

We'll see. (Rings furiously).

LUKA pretends to run in from afar.

HELENA

Luka, show this gentleman out.

LUKA

Sir, you hear our lady's order. Obey it.

GRIGORI

(Jumps up) What's that!....What's that! ....I'll grind  
you to powder.

LUKA

Oh!....Oh! (Nearly swooning) Lord, have mercy on me a  
sinner, sinner.

HELENA

(Rings furiously) Dasha! Dasha! Pelagia (rings).  
Ksenia! (rings) Verushka.

GIRLS are peeping all the time, LUKA only tries  
to protect them.

LUKA

(gradually comes to himself) They have all run away,  
they are frightened, believe me.

DASHA shyly appears.

HELENA

My handkerchief.

DASHA rushes off for it. PELAGIA enters  
nervously)

HELENA

Smelling salts!



PELAGIA Oh Lord, Ma'am! (rushing away)

KSENIA & VERUSHKA, COOK & KITCHENMAID,  
enter, pushing each other forward)

HELENA Bring me the chopper.

KSENIA & VERUSHKA Merciful Heaven! (reiterated rapidly) Heaven help us.  
(Slowly)

KSENIA & VERUSHKA nearly collapse as  
they exit)

DASHA, PELAGIA, KSENIA, VERUSHKA all  
returning with their appointed items.

HELENA You monster, you odious brute, you vicious monster!

GRIGORI (Entirely taken aback) What did you say?

HELENA I said Monster. You are odious, you're a boor - a  
Monster.

GRIGORI (Very formidable) Permit me to enquire by what right  
do you insult me?

HELENA And permit me to enquire, do you think I am really afraid  
of you?

GRIGORI As you think that because you're a figure of romance you  
can therefore insult me to your heart's content, willy  
nilly, without being severely punished...I challenge you.

HELENA (taken aback) You challenge me -

GRIGORI I challenge you.

HELENA You challenge me -

GRIGORI I challenge you.

HELENA You challenge me -

LUKA Oh! Merciful Heaven.

PELAGIA & KSENIA, D.V. Oh! Merciful Heaven.

LUKA Oh! Merciful Heaven.

PELAGIA & KSENIA, D & V. Oh! Merciful Heaven, save our lady from all violence from  
this most boorish man. (Repeat)

SIMEON Now that's what I like to hear. (Repeat)

GRIGORI As you believe yourself to be a figure of romance -

HELENA And you believe because of your big fists that I should  
fear you -

P & K. D. & V. Save her, Save her, Heaven help our lady now. Heaven help  
our lady now. What a bother is this man. Vengeance! What a  
fury she is in. Vengeance!.....Punish him Lord, oh  
punish him Lord, yes, oh punish him, oh punish him, oh  
punish him Lord.

LUKA Save our lady from all violence, from this most boorish man.  
(Repeat) Vengeance! Lord! Vengeance Lord! Heaven help  
our lady now. (Repeat). What a bother is this man Vengeance



SIMEON

Splendid how all this is going. (Repeat) She will..... she will.... Splendid how all this is going. Jolly how all this is going.

HELENA

Punish him I will.....Punish him I will.....Do you think I'm afraid of you indeed.....Oh, what a joy it will be to see you lying here on the ground at my feet with a bullet through that head of yours, that impish and detestable head.

GRIGORI

Punish her I will. ...Punish her I will. Greatest insult in my life. I'll demand satisfaction from her now. Greatest insult in my life. I'll demand satisfaction from her now

GRIGORI & SIMEON

down, yes down, yes down, down, down -

GRIGORI

I'll shoot her down, I'll shoot her down. (Repeat)

P. & K.  
D. & V.

Dear my lady, do take care. What a vicious brutal man. If he shoots she is lost, If he shoots she is lost. Lady dear don't fight, don't fight, or we will die. Ah!... Ah!..... Ah!.....Ah!.....(lamenting)

LUKA

If he shoots you are lost. If he shoots you are lost. Oh, my lady don't fight, don't fight. Ah!.....Ah!.....

HELENA

Ha ha. Ha ha. I will shoot him down and no mistake.

GRIGORI

I will shoot her down and no mistake.

SIMEON

If he shoots she is lost. If he shoots she is lost..... He'll shoot her down.....Ha!

The old GARDENER appears with wheelbarrow.

LUKA

(Happy to see gardener) Sereejenska, Sereejenska, stay with us. Stay with us. Sereejenska. (Hides him from the others).

GARDENER

Eh? Eh?

HELENA

And now you say you wish to fight a duel?

GRIGORI

Immediately.

HELENA

Immediately!

GRIGORI

Immediately.

HELENA

Good! My husband had a pair of duelling pistols. I'll go and find them.

GRIGORI

Good! Pray do.

HELENA

Oh! What a pleasure it will be to shoot you down.

GRIGORI

What impudence!

4 GIRLS

Oh Lord!

LUKA

Oh Lord!

SIMEON

She's brave, she's brave.

4 GIRLS

(Wringing their hands) Ah!....Ah!.....(Repeat)

HELENA

Oh, what a pleasure 'twill be to put a bullet thru' that impish head of yours, yours, yours. Ha, ha, ha. Hahaha. Ha, ha, ha, Hahaha. (Repeat) The devil take you.

GRIGORI

'Tis high time to do away with the age-old superstition that



with  
SIMEON

it's only the man who is forced to give satisfaction,  
satisfaction for an insult like -

LUKA

Oh, my lady. Oh, my lady, what can an old man do to save  
you. Ah!.....Ah! (Repeat)

HELENA interrupts them all to throw (the devil  
take you" at GRIGORI. She goes towards the door  
and turns again)

The others hide as she passes.

{4 GIRLS

Lord have mercy upon us.

{LUKA

HELENA

(Goes for the duelling pistols) We shall fight in earnest.

GRIGORI

(Slumps into a chair with his eyes on HELENA) We shall  
fight in earnest.

SIMEON

What a silly notion!.....Here come the light brigade.

K.P. &  
D.

Devil take you and leave our dear lady alone.....What  
can we do to make him go.

V. &  
LUKA

Devil take him, why doesn't he take himself off.....What  
can we do to throw him out?

SIMEON

Hear their blessing, they're frightened to death of you, sir.

GRIGORI

Hand me that chopper.

(SIMEON hands him the chopper)

K. & P.  
D.V. & L.

What can we do to make him.....Ah!

(GIRLS scream and exit as GRIGORI lifts  
the chopper against them)

(LUKA hides himself quickly)

(GRIGORI slumps down but remains fierce. LUKA  
starts creeping towards him. GRIGORI suddenly  
sees LUKA but falls back into thoughtful mood)

LUKA

Oh, gentle sir. Oh, gentle, gentle sir.

GRIGORI

(grimly) I'll shoot her down. I'll shoot her down.

SIMEON

(mimicking his master) Down.

LUKA

Oh, gentle sir, have mercy, oh, have mercy on me. I'm just  
an old, old man. I am frightened to death. Turn thy wrath  
away, away from this house. Oh.....sir. Oh.....sir.  
(WEEPS UNRESTRAINEDLY)

GRIGORI

I'll shoot her down for I'm no fledgling.

SIMEON

Fledgling.

GRIGORI

No sentimental weak young gander.

SIMEON

Gander.

GRIGORI

For me there is no weaker sex.

SIMEON

Sex.

GRIGORI

A duel that's emancipation.

SIMEON

'mancipation.



GRIGORI The way to make the sexes equal.

SIMEON Sexes equal.

GRIGORI I'll shoot her down, I'll shoot her down.

SIMEON Enough!

GRIGORI And she -

SIMEON 'Tis going too far. 'Tis going too far.

GRIGORI She accepted the challenge, -

SIMEON I'll have to stop it best I can.

GRIGORI Accepted the challenge with eyes blazing -

SIMEON That waiting man gets on my nerves.....'Tis going too far. I'm getting anxious.

GRIGORI angrily blazing -

SIMEON 'Tis better far to get him home.

GRIGORI blazing. I never saw her like till now, -

LUKA Oh, gentle Sir....Go away.....Go away.....away.

GRIGORI on my honour. 'Tis the first time.....the very first.. the first.

SIMEON Now heav'n be praised.....always getting caught up by women.

GRIGORI That is a woman, a real, real woman.....I can understand her.....'Twould be a pity to shoot a woman like that, a real, real woman!.....Fire! Powder! Noise! Fire! Powder! Noise!

HELENA enters brusquely with the pistols.

HELENA Here are the pistols.

(She keeps examining them out of curiosity)

HELENA But before we have our duel please show me how to shoot. I've never had a pistol in my hands before.

(LUKA is nearly swooning with fear)

LUKA Lord, be merciful and have pity upon us. The gard'ner, the coachman and all the peasants they must help me, help me, help me -

(SIMEON takes LUKA by the ear)

LUKA Ugh!.....Leave me alone you big brute -  
(and leads him out).

GRIGORI Ha, these are splendid specimens of special duelling pistols...revolvers. Wesson & Smith, with ejectors - fine pistols. A pair like that cost ninety roubles.

(Is taken up with pistols and forgets HELENA.  
She prods him)

GRIGORI Oh ah! Oh yes! This is the way to hold a revolver.  
(Aside) Oh, those eyes, those blazing eyes!

HELENA What, like this?



GRIGORI

Yes, that's right. Now pull the hammer back and take aim, head back, arm stretched out. Now press your finger down and that's all; but don't get excited, no hurry and no hand trembling.

HELENA

We must go outside for all this.

GRIGORI

Yes, but I'd better tell you at once. I am going, going to shoot (pointing upwards, whispers) into the air.

HELENA is speechless with anger.

HELENA

This is too much - why in Heaven's name?

GRIGORI

Because - Eh' that's my business.

HELENA

You're afraid, Ha! you're afraid, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha! No. my dear Sir. No turning back. I shall not rest till I've made a hole in that head I hate so much. Are you afraid?

GRIGORI

Yes, I admit it. I'm afraid.

HELENA

Liar! You won't fight?

GRIGORI

No! No! because I like you.

HELENA

(outraged) You like me - you dare to say that!..... Go!.....Leave the house.

GRIGORI reluctantly lays the revolver on the table, then, all silently, takes his hat and starts towards the door. He stops to gaze on her going towards the door.... He turns and silently, rather humbly, approaches her.

GRIGORI

Please don't be angry. I was mad, mad as the devil. But something has happened. Is it my fault that you owe me money? (Grasps back of chair, which collapses). Ugh! What breakable furniture you have.. .....I like you. I'm almost in love.

HELENA

Merciful Witnesses, I hate you, hate you!

GRIGORI

Lord! What a woman.....I'm lost, ruined! I'm in a trap like a mouse.

HELENA

Go - or I'll.....

GRIGORI

I've never met one just like her.

HELENA

Go, or I'll shoot.

GRIGORI

Shoot!.....Shoot! What happiness!.....To die by your little hand.....your beautiful eyes..I'm mad, mad, mad!.....Will you be mine? Will you be mine? Will you be mine, will you be mine? Madame, Je vous prie.....

HELENA

I'll shoot - - (sways the revolver).

GRIGORI

I love you as never before.....Shame and disgrace. Five years I've not been in love. I thanked the Lord, and now I'm caught.....and now I'm caught, and kneel and beg for your hand. Will you -



GRIGORI waits a moment, then goes quickly towards the door.

HELENA

Wait!

He stops.

HELENA

Wait a moment.

GRIGORI

Oh!

HELENA

No, nothing. You may go!.....but wait a moment. No! go, go. I hate you, hate you.....or, no, don't go.....Oh! if you only knew how angry I am, how angry -

GRIGORI

Our hearts respond.

HELENA

(Flings the revolver down) Ugh! my finger is quite swollen from this wretched thing. (Pretends to fuss over her finger).....What are you standing there for? Get you gone. Brash!

GRIGORI

Fare thee well.

HELENA

Yes go.....Ah! Why are you going? Wait, no go. Oh! how angry I am...angry.....Don't come too near - er - no nearer.

GRIGORI

You angry! What about me? Fall in love like a school-boy. Ah! I must be ill.....I love you. All I needed was to fall in love - this is fine, and to-morrow I have to pay my interest. Harvesting has begun, and then you appear. I can never forgive myself. (Takes her in his arms)

HELENA

(fighting him) Hands off! Take your hands off me! Go away...I hate you, hate...this is..is..is.  
(A long kiss)

All rush in with their implements.  
Simeon in vain trying to keep them out.  
Startled transformation.

LUKA

Ah! Merciful Heavens (repeated five times)

SIMEON is standing with his back to HELENA & GRIGORI. LUKA turns him round to face them.

SIMEON

Ah! (Under his breath, mouth wide open, not understanding)

LUKA  
SIMEON

Now Heaven be praised. Now Heaven be praised!

KSENIA & PELAGIA

Has the duel taken place?

DASHA & VERUSHKA

Have they shot each other dead?

KSENIA & PELAGIA

(To LUKA) Tell us what we are to do.

DASHA & VERUSKA

(To SIMEON) They are sitting oh so still.

LUKA

Oh, what a happy ending to such a painful situation.

4 GIRLS

'Tis truly a happy ending to such a painful situation.



4 GIRLS

What joy that now our dearest lady has found again such happiness. Dear our lady, honoured master, dear our lady, honoured master. What joy that now our dearest lady has found again such happiness.

HELENA

I consent.

GRIGORI

I consent.

HELENA

We consent.

GRIGORI

We consent.

4 GIRLS

We'll dance and sing.....Ah (joyously) Ah.....  
Ah.....

LUKA

Sereejenka, Sereejenka, dance for us.

4 GIRLS

Sereejenka, Sereejenka, dance for us.

(He starts dancing. All look on admiringly.)

SIMEON

Ho, what a merry fellow is this Sereejenka. Who'd have thought that Sereejenka could dance like that.

4 GIRLS

What a pleasure it is to watch him dance.....Hoi.....  
Ah.....Ah.....Ah. Tra la la la la (Repeated four times).

LUKA

Tra la la la la (Repeated three times).....many years.. many years.

HELENA

Many years.

PRINCIPALS

Now we come to the end of this little play and wish you all.....Good-night.