



The Execution

by

Melissa Murray

This is a scanned copy of the script for Monstrous Regiment's 1982 production of *The Execution*, a three-act play about the assassination of Tsar Alexander II written for the company by **Melissa Murray**.

Full information about the production can be found in its **Production** page on the company's website (www.monstrousregiment.co.uk), which also provides access to recordings of the show's music, composed and performed by Lindsay Cooper.

A copy of the original script for *The Execution* is held in the Monstrous Regiment archive at the V&A Theatre and Performance Archives.

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THE EXECUTION

BY

MELISSA MURRAY

SCENE I

LOCATION : ZURICH, VERA FIGNER'S SITTING ROOM

CHARACTERS: GREGORI GOLDENBURG, AMELIA APTEMEN, VERA FIGNER

APTKEMEN Will you have a cigarette?

GOLDENBURG I don't smoke but thank you.

APTKEMEN You may as well sit down while we wait (PAUSE) As you please.

GOLDENBURG This is a beautiful city, Miss Aptkemen. Very beautiful. Though of course one can see hardly anything of it on the walk from the railway station. Up here on the mountains you must find the air very beneficial.

APTKEMEN We are not here either as invalids or tourists.

GOLDENBURG Naturally not. Forgive me, you will recollect that the journey from home is very long and extremely trying (PAUSE) You said by eight I believe?

APTKEMEN And it is now a quarter to eight.

GOLDENBURG Never mind, never mind. I will sit here and be patient. We are always too patient, it is a great weakness. It is a very pleasant room, the view and so forth, you inhabit in conjunction with Miss Figner, I presume

APTKEMEN I have a smaller room in the attic. Vera lives here with her husband.

GOLDENBURG I have heard nothing of a husband, is he one of us?

APTKEMEN He is a kind man.

GOLDENBURG And? A kind man and-?

APTKEMEN He is in Berne at the moment. You will not meet him unless you intend to remain in Zurich until next week.

GOLDENBURG How do your studies progress if I might enquire?

APTKEMEN Very well.

GOLDENBERG And pray what is it exactly that you are engaged in studying?

APTKEMEN Agronomy.

GOLDENBERG Agronomy.

APTKEMEN The scientific management of the land.

GOLDENBERG A subject of great value of the extremest importance if I might say so.

APTKEMEN Thank you.

GOLDENBERG Indeed I have often remarked upon all occasions, how we are to improve the lives and livelihoods of the peasants if we have not addressed ourselves to the problem of developing a rational and scientific method of agriculture? Unusual for a woman.

APTKEMEN Isn't it?

GOLDENBERG That was a statement of fact you understand and not of prejudice. Also I had been told, informed that your people were mostly and in the main medical students. Physiology and so forth. Anatomy.

PTKEMEN That was true but now there are very few of us left in Zurich since the Edict.

GOLDENBERG They returned to Russia.

PTKEMEN Yes, under compulsion.

GOLDENBERG No, I will not accept under compulsion, they dedicated themselves to the highest of goals, as the true daughters of Russia -

(VERA FIGNER ENTERS)

APTKEMEN Ah Vera, I am glad you're back, this gentleman-

GOLDENBERG Allow me to present myself. My name is Gregori Goldenberg and I presume I have the honour of addressing Vera Figner?

FIGNER I am pleased to make your acquaintance. Pray be seated. Ah my dear Amelia sometimes I fear I am too old and too serious to be a student. This evening can you imagine during our lecture one of the students, a Frenchman -

GOLDENBERG Please excuse me, madam.

FIGNER Certainly.

GOLDENBURG

This room is very warm. However I have travelled a great distance to see you madam to see both of you of course. I have certain communications to make, very vital communications to make. I have come directly, only two days ago, directly from Russia madam.

FIGNER

You need not address me as madam my name is Vera.

GOLDENBURG

By all means let us dispense with gentry manners. You will please address me as Gregori. Will I continue?

FIGNER

By all means.

GOLDENBURG

I awaited your arrival not wishing to repeat myself as my instructions comprised - were addressed to both of you.

APTKEMEN

Instructions from whom?

GOLDENBURG

That is for the moment, immaterial.

PTKEMEN

I see

GOLDENBURG

No comrade, you do not see but that again for the moment is-

APTKEMEN

Immaterial.

GOLDENBURG

I must first acquaint you with - forgive me but are we likely to be overheard?

FIGNER

You may speak freely.

GOLDENBURG

I am the bearer of great and tragic news.

APTKEMEN (TO VERA)

I wish his style was less elevated. Is he drunk do you suppose?

GOLDENBURG

Always I have found it strange and ironic that tragedy so often uplifts the heart a hundred times more than the most stupendous success. That is very Russian do you not think?

APTKEMEN

No it is a very common failing.

FIGNER

I beg you, tell us this news.

GOLDENBURG

As is well known to you your friends, your comrades, undertook to return to Russia to spread the light of - enlightenment amongst the people. It was an heroic decision.

FIGNER

My sister was amongst them.

GOLDENBURG The name of Lydia Figner is not unknown to me or in fact - to anyone. To continue -

FIGNER Please if you have news of her -

GOLDENBURG Accompanied by Mikhail Chickoidze, Ivan Dzhabadan and - I forget momentarily the other man.

APTKEMEN We are aware of all this.

GOLDENBURG A great man Dzhabadan, impulsive perhaps but nevertheless a great nationalist. My mothers family come from Georgia. accompanied as I have said by the before mentioned they returned to Russia and within a matter of weeks, nay within days, they began their labours.

APTKEMEN Spreading the light of enlightenment?

FIGNER Mr. Goldenburg-

GOLDENBURG Gregori.

FIGNER I think it as well to let you know that we have been in communication constantly with -

GOLDENBURG Might I enquire as to how long it has been since you last heard from your comrades, if you will forgive the interruption.

APTKEMEN A month ago from Lydia.

GOLDENBURG Many things can occur within a month.

FIGNER I demand that you tell us now what has happened.

GOLDENBURG I was hoping to in a way gently to acclimatize-

APTKEMEN Have they been arrested?

GOLDENBURG Succinctly and forgive my abruptness - yes.

(PAUSE)

GOLDENBURG But as I remarked earlier these reverses, tragic in themselves must fuel and feed our resolution. They cannot be viewed as futile casualties. And who can say, they have not as yet come to trial. Indeed there has been no mention at all of any trial and that may perhaps of course mean something simple such as administrative exile. A hardship, I grant you but weighed against imprisonment, as light as a feather .

APTKEMEN On what charges were they arrested?

FIGNER How, how could it have happened, were they betrayed? How?

GOLDENBURG Such courage as they possessed, still do possess, has as it were a negative aspect. It is not, you will appreciate, the easiest thing for women such as yourselves to appear inconspicuous working in a Moscow factory - a rope factory it was. And the work, quite frankly the work itself nearly killed them. They achieved all they could, locked up all night in the workers barracks reading tracts and so forth, discussing. But for a woman to be able to read at all is no common thing among such people and so they drew, as it were, unfavourable attention to themselves.

FIGNER Does he mean they were all arrested, Lydia, Sofya, Betya....?

GOLDENBURG But - and this is why I have come to you, the work they managed to achieve and let us say it under the most difficult of circumstances did bear fruit. Workers were recruited, necessarily a few but the beginnings are there, we have the foothold.

FIGNER Lydia is only eighteen, even Sofya Bardina is just into her twenty third year.

GOLDNEBURG Bardina herself was very clear upon this point. We propagandize the workers who are often in the city for only a short while, one year perhaps two and then they, returning to their home villages, propagandize the peasants. Thus is achieved at one stroke-

APTKEMEN Can we not discuss that later. Your news is a terrible shock, remember Lydia is her sister.

GOLDENBURG Do not grieve comrades remember always that Russia will be redeemed by the sacrifice of her revolutionary youth.

APTKEMEN Might one ask Mr. Goldenburg-

GOLDENBURH Gregori.

APTKEMEN What was your role in all of this?

GOLDENBURG

A late comer alas. I had been engaged in the distribution of pamphlets, the forbidden books and etcetera in Kiev and outlying provinces. It was during one of my visits to Moscow to collect such materials that I chanced upon your comrades. Too late unfortunately to proffer a more experienced knowledge. Their courage was beyond question but perhaps they were too long away from Russia, a more careful organisation would have, only maybe of course, ensured-

FIGNER

Does he know where they are, in which prison Aemelia?

GOLDENBURG

Their spirits have not faltered for one particle of a second, not one morsel of time. Except that is for Betya Kaminskaya who succumbed to a most terrible melancholia and by the influence of her father was released into his protection.

APTKEMEN

She would dread that more than anything.

FIGNER

Poor Betya.

GOLDENBURG

To Continue, contact with them has been established, a letter, small handwriting, thin paper and smuggled out by a warder bribed by myself. Unfortunately he is a drunkard and not reliable. In this letter it was stressed by our comrades the absolute importance of continuing their work. What could be worse than to lose such a dearly bought contact with the workers? Nothing. And so, dear ladies, in the name of your incarcerated comrades, I summon you back to Russia to continue their noble endeavours.

APTKEMEN

What? but that would be madness, are there not people there? Remember we have not set foot in Russia for over four years, are there not others in Moscow now far better suited to this work?

GOLDENBURG

In one word and quite frankly, no. The workers must trust those who come to replace their lost - mentors if that is the right word. Lydia particularly was well loved by them her sister will be greeted by a warm - with open arms. Certainly it needs -

APTKEMEN

Vera?

will

GOLDENBURG

A strong and dedicated* but I do not doubt you.

VERA I don't fully understand.

GOLDENBURG Hold fast to the example of your sister, search your heart, remember -

APTKEMEN One thing I remember very clearly is the struggle each of us had to break free of our ignorance and gain a measure of self respect. I speak as a woman Mr. Goldenburg.

GOLDENBURG You address yourself to a firm ally on the Woman Question, Miss Aptkemen but-

APTKEMEN Then you will be aware of how we are despised for our lack of practical intelligence and to ensure that men can continue to despise us we are denied education, work and even a place to live without the permission of our fathers, husbands, brothers.

GOLDENBURG I am in absolute accordance -

APTKEMEN It is for that reason essential that we gain an education here as we are denied one in Russia. Without self respect and without knowledge we can contribute nothing of value to the revolutionary cause.

GOLDENBURG My dear comrade, of course, of course who could, except a madman or an autocrat, disagree with a solitary syllable of your magnificent speech. And you are pioneers, absolutely pioneers. But in relation to your return is this strictly relevant?

VERA In only six months time I will have my degree and have the right to proclaim myself a doctor. I have dreamed of that since I was nine years of age.

GOLDENBURG Doctors now, very necessary, we are purely physical beings I hold with no nonsense about the soul, the Divine or whatever. But at the moment Russia needs revolution and not poultices and patches. Well said.

APTKEMEN You must have more than words to offer the people, they need, as a matter of life or death, they need practical help.

FIGNER What is the use talking, perhaps it is as simple as this. I am afraid to return. I doubt that I have the strength to ensure the hardships I will have to undergo. I am afraid that is all.

PTKEMEN

Vera, it is not as simple as that. Besides what is wrong with a little fear it is certainly better than being a fool. We have spent years gaining knowledge and skills and I for one am not prepared to throw that all away on the instructions of some bombastic man who I do not know and never heard of before today.

GOLDENBURG

I object to bombastic man.

FIGNER

You are sure Amelia. I cannot be that certain of myself.

GOLDENBURG

It is not I who call you back to Russia I am merely the embodied voice of your comrades who are lying now at this moment in damp and solitary cells.

APTKEMEN

Where is this letter then? I would like to read it and judge for myself what it is they ask of us.

GOLDENBURG.

Clearly, obviously I could not bring it with me. I am not such a fool as that whatever you may think of me Miss Aptkemen. No, you will just have to trust me and if you cannot then I will depart as I have much work to do and many people to see.

FIGNER

Do not be angry Mr. Goldenburg. Miss Aptkemen is overwrought as I am.

APTKEMEN

And if we return what will be achieved they did not? Two more arrests will do good to no one.

FIGNER

Supposedly we had decided long ago to expect nothing for ourselves. Accepting that for us there would only be imprisonment, exile, even death. By what right to we hesitate?

APTKEMEN

We are too few and too ineffectual and I will not be another victim and for nothing.

FIGNER

We are four years away from Russia, have we forgotten everything?

APTKEMEN

I remember too much of that place.

GOLDENBURG

In another month that could be called treachery.

FIGNER

Do not presume to judge her, Mr. Goldenburg, you know nothing of her life.

APTKEMEN

And I would prefer him to remain ignorant, of my life at least.

GOLDENBURG

Ah but you are so wrong so tragically mistaken my dear young lady. Now if ever the time was ripe, if ever there was a call from destiny we are called now. There are not tens, twenties, not hundreds even but thousands of young people who have dedicated themselves to the freedom of Russia. They pur, swarming into the countryside, full of faith, eager a great tide is sweeping away the sins of our forefathers.

APTKEHEN

If that is the case then why are we needed.

GOLDENBURG

I have explained that to you, that is your work on the great work that so many have undertaken. Because you, due to your connections-

FIGNER

Do you truly mean thousands? We have heard not of that here in Zurich.

GOLDENBURG

From the gymnasiums, the institutes, the universities, sons and daughters of the gentry, even schoolboys. They have thrown away their old lives and gone to the people saying "Now you must rise. Your freedom is a sham. Where is the land that you promised, that is yours by right? Oh great people of Russia.- "

FIGNER

Can it be possible, Amelia if all this is true!

GOLDENBURG

The hour has struck. The peasants are flocking to the red banners of the revolution. The Ukraine is ready. Kiev is ready. Moscow and St. Petersburg need only the tiniest of sparks-

APTKEHEN

And what does the Tsar do during all this, does he run an underground press for us in the Winter palace? And the Third Section have they all exiled themselves to Siberia?

GOLDENBURG

Comrade, this is French cynicism. I have seen this a thousand times good people corrupted by bourgoise sneers. Leave this foreign place, it corrodes the heart.

FIGNER

If there are so many they cannot imprison and exile them all, even for them it would prove impossible. And with such an outcry against them surely even they must relent-

APTKEHEN

Vera do not start daydreaming it is a dangerous occupation and a disappointing one. Perhaps it would be easier, Mr. Goldenburg, if you have us hard precise information all this sounds too much like wishful thinking.

GOLDENBURG

There are a million, one million and one incidents that I could inform you of that would stir the blood-

APTKEMEN

I wish for neither blood nor stirring. I have asked you for facts.

FIGNER

His enthusiasm is honest Amelia, I am convinced of it.

GOLDENBURG

I will oblige you with the greatest pleasure, Miss Aptkemen. I will tell a story in which both the intelligensia and the peasantry displayed unexampled levels of courage in the most difficult of situations. It occurred in Saratov Province famed forever as the birthplace of Strenka Razin that great peasant leader and leader of rebels.

APTKEMEN

Razin died three hundred years ago.

GOLDENBURG

In one of the small villages - I forget momentarily the name of it but anyway the name is immaterial - lived a local priest, a widower who had five children. Now the oldest of these was a young man called Ivan who decided to go to Kazan university to study law. This was naturally against the expressly stated wish of his father who had decided to send him to a seminary. While at Kazan, like any true son of Russia he became involved in the student unrests and protest and was eventually expelled. On his return to his fathers house he went to great lengths to educate his oldest sister Darya and fired her with such a love of the revolutionary cause that she insisted on accompanying him. He decided on a village, two hundred miles from his home and settled immediately to work teaching the peasants and offering them his sister's simple medical skills. Unfortunately this activity did not go unnoticed by the local priest, a debauchee and small landowner. They had been there only a matter of two months before they were denounced and in police custody. The matter was further complicated by the fact that Ivan, with superlative contempt had burnt his identity papers and obtained false ones that gave his rank as that of a liberated serf. Such was his wholehearted identification with the people. But this sadly was to prove his downfall because the police inspector who was entrusted with his interrogation was no fool. To begin with he said to him.

SCENE II

(LOCATION: POLICE STATION IN A VILLAGE IN SARATOV PROVINCE

CHARACTERS: GOLDENBURG/INSPECTOR, IVAN KRASKOV, DANYA KRASKOV,
PAVEL - observed BY VERA FIGNER AND AMELIA APTKEMEN)

(IVAN KRASKOV AND PAVEL THE PEASANT ON STAGE)

GOLDENBURG (AS INSPECTOR) "Now young man, suppose you tell me, in your own words mind, who you are and what it is you are doing in our little village huh?"

(AS HIMSELF) At first Ivan refuses to speak not a word but then Pavel, I think his name was, Pavel the peasant whose house he was residing in and who was naturally arrested with him, opens his mouth and begins.

PAVEL You see your honour, we were having tea at the time. A little salted herrinꝰ and the old woman has the samovar bubbling just nicely when woof - the door burst open and suddenly no one can see for police.

GOLDENBURG (AS INSPECTOR FOR THE REST OF THE SCENE) Shut up Pavl.

PAVEL Forgive me your honour.

INSPECTOR Just sit there quietly now whilst I talk to this young gentleman (TO IVAN) Let us be honest with each other. Let us talk man to man in a frank and open fashion. These identity papers, quite truthfully, they are a joke, my little daughter could forge better papers than these.

PAVEL May God and all his holy saints protect her now and all the days of her life.

INSPECTOR And even in bast shoes and with your beard grown peasant fashion if you are an ex-serf then I - I am a sausage.

PAVEL Oh very good, your honour, very good! A garlic sausage.

IVAN My name as I told you already, is Myshin and I was born in a little town near Kazan city, since the Emancipation I have wandered in many-

INSPECTOR

The telling of lies is a great sin, and shames any intelligent man, especially when one lies as badly as you do. I think that I can guess what you are, you are most probably the son of a civil servant, perhaps even the son of a landowner, not a great landowner obviously. Do you speak French?

Ivan

No, I speak Russian.

INSPECTOR

And you have taken it into your heart for one reason or another, debts or women, to come to our village, to love the peasants, to be at one with them all of you resting together on the bosom of Mother Nature, huh? Now that is not only very foolish, it is also very dangerous, you disturb ^{them} you see. Not intentionally perhaps but your ideas, your feelings about life are so very different, it is like vinegar in cream, you make them sour and dissatisfied. You understand me, of course.

PAVEL

Might I say a little word very humbly your honour?

INSPECTOR

Ah Pavel I was almost forgetting you.

PAVEL

He says nothing to anyone in the village not a word. He does not even drink vodka though a little glass does no harm to anyone. He may smoke, your honour, but he does not chase after the women. That I think is very strange but maybe he is shy. I had a cousin once, one of the Count's men, whose eyes watered so badly every time he saw a pretty woman he couldn't see them at all. Went mad in the end for all he was a good worker.

INSPECTOR

That's enough Pavel.

PAVEL

Yes, Your honour.

INSPECTOR

(TO IVAN) Now, my dear fellow, if you will just trust and rely upon me than all this can be cleared up and no harm done. A youthful prank, something to smile over in later years. Otherwise if you insist in prevaricating with me, then I will be forced to assume your actions are not an innocent escapade of hot headed youth but perhaps something a little more sinister. What do you say now? (PAUSE) Now things begin to look grim for you, you do not realize how grim. Forging papers and agitating the peasants and both will be proved, are very serious offences. Siberia now, what do you think of that?

IVAN I hear it is very cold.

(THE INSPECTOR HITS AND THEN KICKS HIM)

INSPECTOR Ah dear me and I had so hoped that this could be settled with a nice quiet chat among friends. It all means more work for me you know. This is a calm village. I won't say happy, what right have sinners like ourselves to be happy but we rub along. I can sleep at night with a calm mind and an easy digestion.

IVAN One day - one day -

(PAVEL KNEELS BEFORE THE INSPECTOR CLUTCHING HIS KNEES)

PAVEL Forgive him your honour, forgive us all we are all fools and sinners like your honour says. In the name of the Virgin have mercy on us. In the name of St. Catherine and St. Nicholai be a father to us a stern and merciful father.

INSPECTOR Now, careful, be careful of my trousers, fool, don't paw at me with your filthy hands.

PAVEL I wasn't expecting to see you sir, or I would have washed them. I would have washed all over and trimmed my beard.

IVAN Do not kneel to him Pavel!

INSPECTOR And why should he not kneel, it is a mark of respect to one who has the power of life and death over him. We kneel to our parents, to our Holy Father the Tsar and all of us kneel before God. Do you not believe in God young man or are you also an unbeliever a French pagan as well as a criminal?

IVAN How could a peasant like myself not believe in God? That would be an offense against the natural order.

INSPECTOR "An offense against the natural order" What does that mean Pavel. I would like you to explain that to me.

PAVEL It means - it means, that I am a very ignorant man, your honour.

INSPECTOR Just so. And who is the young woman who arrived within a week of your coming? Darya Kraskov she says her name is.

IVAN Charge me and have done with it.

INSPECTOR

Now there is the great fault of the young, impatience. The world has managed to go on thousands of years and you, born yesterday, want to turn everything topsy turvy. Everyone, except you of course, is either a fool or a scoundrel. When you are in the world a little longer you will learn. People are not evil but wayward and need a strong hand and a firm will to guide them or else we would have chaos.

IVAN

Moral lectures from a police official.

PAVEL

Christ himself had dinner with a tax official, didn't he your honour? Who are we to judge? What will be will be, let us make what we can of that.

INSPECTOR

It is looking worse and worse for you, a liar, a forger, an agitator and a self confessed unbeliever. If that is all I can find to say of you in my report - well I have given you chances enough-but I am a kind hearted man and will ask do you know anything of this woman? (PAUSE)
For myself I like them a little plumper something to wrap yourself round on a winter's night. Is she your mistress?

PAVEL

It gets terrible cold here in winter. I remember, one time, when some poor old soul went down to the forest for a bit of wood and never came back at all. We found her months later frozen stuck to a log. We had to bury it with her.

INSPECTOR

You're talking nonsense I can remember no such incident.

PAVEL

It must have happened in my father's time your honour He had a wonderful memory.

IVAN

Let's get it over with

PAVEL

And drink! How that man could drink. Why he used to drink the blacksmith senseless and that took some doing. Now I've seen him, as an old man mark you, polish off a whole half gallon of good vodka at one sitting. Hung himself in the end though its not such a sin when you do it drunk more of an accident.

INSPECTOR

This is all beside the point, idiot.

It's either blows or insults

INSPECTOR

And as for you, young man you have come as near to wearing my patience as is good for you. Again, and for I promise you the very last time, who is Darya Kraskov? Why did you come here? And perhaps, who sent you here?

IVAN

There is nothing I can say to you.

INSPECTOR

That's fine that is, that's really very good. Well I wish you long life and happiness in your new home in Siberia. Of course as your papers so explicitly state you are only a peasant, entitled to no privileges or mitigations of sentence. You will be treated as a common criminal. Perhaps you will enjoy that long trek through the Ural mountains, perhaps you will find it scenic and anyway you won't be lonely. Pavel here will accompany you. Now sit here quietly and think what you are about. Meanwhile I will be gone to fetch Miss Kraskov and then we will all sit here and have a real heart to heart, huh?

(THE INSPECTOR LEAVES)

IVAN

Dont be afraid, Pavel, he threatens you only to force me to speak.

PAVEL

So what anyway, I'm too old to worry. Mostly like he does mean it, he's a nasty little bastard one of them who would stick a knife in you with tears streaming down his face.

IVAN

Darya will say nothing.

PAVEL

He knows all he needs to know already, he's just showing off to you, impressing you with what a clever fellow he is.

IVAN

He can have had no time to investigate me, no he is bluffing I am convinced of that.

PAVEL Ivan Kraskov you are a very clever fellow and can read and write and speak in languages nobody's ever heard of. But you've a bad head for this kind of business. What peasant since the world was made ever spat and snarled when a master beat them? What peasant in all of Russia would smirk and act superior with a police official? You've no head for it. You should have stayed at home. At least he can rest assured that you are no part of a conspiracy. Who'd conspire with a nice boy like you? Except an old fool like me.

IVAN Pavel you must forgive me.

PAVEL Those books of yours, I've got them hidden and no one but me knows where not even the old woman.

IVAN When I was in Kazan I used to daydream constantly of how I would rouse the people, awaken their long suppressed anger against their oppressor. Thousands would flock to hear me. And what have I done, taught four children the alphabet whilst my sister bandaged old women's legs.

PAVEL You've no call to lose heart, Ivan. That's the trouble with your lot, you catch alight fast enough but you've gone to ashes in a moment. Like I say you need steadiness. In the end all that's needed is for the people to be brought to believe it can happen and every nobleman would wake up with a cut throat and we'd take back our land. That's how simple it is, isn't it. My God, I could do with a drink it's a sin to send a man to prison sober.

IVAN I don't understand you sometimes, Pavel.

PAVEL Don't you sir? That will be because I've a poor way of expressing myself. My mouth runs off with me. I hardly know myself what it'll be saying next. And if I don't know what I'm saying I'm not likely to say it very well. Stands to reason.

IVAN What will happen to Darya?

PAVEL Exile, it would be exile at the worst she's a woman and she has her own papers. Truly Ivan, if you had any sense you'd tell him who you are. I wouldn't know how many hundreds of miles it is from here to where we're going but you'll not be strong enough to walk it. If you speak up now, it could be a railway journey off to somewhere a lot softer than Siberia. Play up to him.

IVAN And how would I do that?

Pavel Burst into tears, kiss his hand, your lot goes in for hand kissing. Tell him that thanks to him you have seen the errors of your ways, be a prodigal son, call him your father, repent. Tell him you respect him as a father, love him as you do yourself. Swear to reform, throw yourself on his indulgence and mercy.

IVAN I would die rather.

(THE INSPECTOR AND DARYA ENTER)

INSPECTOR Before I offer you a chair Miss Kraskov would you do me the honour of informing me of the identity of this young man?

DARYA I believe that his name is Myskin.

INSPECTOR Then you believe more than I do. Myskin, Myskin, I am amazed that an educated man such as you would chose so ugly a false name. German is it? However let us get down to business. Miss Kraskov, would you do me the courtesy of telling exactly why you came to this God forsaken spot? And why it is you spend your time with the most ignorant and uncouth of our small population? Many young ladies I know have tender hearts and engage themselves in charitable work -

DARYA I am not a young lady.

INSPECTOR

I am getting very bored with this business Miss Kraskov.

DARYA

My father is a priest but he is a poor man and I was born into poverty and ignorance. What kind of life I would have was clear to me by the time I was seven, it would be my task to bring up my brothers and sisters and to stay with my father in his old age. I could not consent to spend my life as a drudge and a slave. Then in time I realised that my life was not exceptional and that many people lived with less dignity than animals. Who did this benefit I asked myself and how could it be changed.

INSPECTOR

So you ran away from your responsibilities and came here imagining this was the ideal place to begin changing the world, that is what you wish me to understand is it?

DARYA

What you may understand is not my concern. My concern is with the poorest and most oppressed I would like them to understand that no one has the right to make their lives ones of suffering and pain.

INSPECTOR

You will appreciate that it is very difficult to take such sentiments seriously especially coming from a young lady with no experience of the world. My advice to you is to return -

DARYA

I have no desire to have any advice from a man such as you . Someone who crawls before the gentry and preys upon the peasants, you are a despicable man, Mr. Kutov.

INSPECTOR

You are mad, Miss Kraskov, and mad dogs are shot to prevent them infecting others, now what shall we do with a mad bitch?

IVAN

Do not dare to speak to her!

DARYA

He is not important. out of that uniform he is a nonentity.

INSPECTOR

I have been very patient with you, too indulgent but there is an end to all good things. My name is Vladimir Ivanovitch Kuta, remember that name so that you have something to weep over and curse over in the long weary years of your imprisonment. After today, it is doubtful that I will give you even a seconds thought. Then we will see who is the nonentity. You shall be mown down and burnt like weeds, whores and unbelievers.

PAVEL

Don't upset yourself now, your honour, you'll bring on one of your nasty turns and the doctor's drunk again. He has been all week.

INSPECTOR

And as for you, you vermin -

PAVEL

Yes your honour?

INSPECTOR

And let it be understood that I have not been fooled not even for a moment. I can see very well just who you are, Mr. Kraskov, oh yes. But that is all too late now. Insolence such as yours does not go unpunished never in this world. You will be charged under the name of Myskin.

IVAN

I am not afraid of you.

PAVEL

A pity that.

INSPECTOR

You were offered, renegade and traitor that you are, you were offered mercy if you repented but now you will be judged. And by my influence you will be treated as a common criminal with no privileges and no hope of reprieve. No hope at all. What do you say now Mr. Clever Boy Kraskov?

DARYA

You will not succeed, I will fight for Ivan -

INSPECTOR

How, Miss Kraskov, you will be miles and miles from any civilized place and do you think the authorities have any lack of exiles petitioning them about 'injustices'?

IVAN

Do not lose heart Darya perhaps-

INSPECTOR

Enough, enough no pretty speeches I beg you, you will have opportunities innumerable opportunities to practice your eloquence on the robbers and murderers in Kara prison. Get out, I have work to do.

IVAN AND DARYA LEAVE. PAVEL SPITS ON THE FLOOR BEFORE LEAVING)

SCENE III

(LOCATION: A TRAIN TRAVELLING THROUGH GERMANY
TO MOSCOW)

CHARACTERS: VERA FIGNER, ALEXET FILLIPOV)

(VERA READS THROUGH THE LETTER SHE IS WRITING TO
HER HUSBAND)

VERA

My Dear Alexei,

How am I to write this letter? I am afraid that already we have said too much and nothing can change the way we parted. Why am I writing to you then, exhausted on this train and hundreds of miles between us? Oh Alexei who was that cold and angry man I argued with only one day ago in Zurich? Who spoke to me in such dry and half contemptuous language and was so very confident that he could, perhaps, force his foolish wife to bend her will to his? It could not have been you Alexei, I cannot believe it was you. And this letter is not written for that stranger to read.

Do you remember the summer gardens in Kazan, the governor's ball and our first meeting? We sitting like any demure and well brought up young lady waiting for her first partner to ask her to dance? How I hated it and hated that obsequious fop of a governor with his risqué little jokes in bad French. My father was furious that I sat all night next to you, dancing with no one and worst of all, discussing politics. What fine ideals, what brave and confident dreams we shared that night. And you married me not just for love I thought, but to free me. Without your help and your generosity I could never have come to Zurich to study. You applauded my aspirations, you said that above all you loved me for my independence. Of course we were young but I kept on believing in you and refused to see or understand that in only three years all that had changed.

ALEXET

I am amazed Vera that a woman of your intelligence can contemplate even for an instant, returning to Russia to agitate and confuse some half washed, brutal peasants in a Moscow rope factory. It is patently ridiculous.

VERA

I dreaded that you would become bored and discontented in Zurich. I need not have been concerned within a very short time my handsome and well educated husband had the entre to every fashionable salon in Switzerland. But how could I complain or remonstrate with you, you had left your home for my sake; and the time we could spend together was limited by my studies. But could you not have found some work worthy of you?

ALEXET

It is understandable that the news of your sister has unbalanced you a little.

VERA

When your family came to visit they were delighted by the changes they observed in you. How could their approval not offend you? It sickened me and it grieved me. At least I should be grateful that you 'permitted' me to continue my studies at the university.

ALEXET

I will not permit you to return to Russia.

VERA

Alexei, I was determined not to write to the man you have become but to the friend I remember so well. It is impossible because that friend no longer exists.

ALEXET

As rational and civilized beings we must place our hopes in constitutionalism, in gradual reform. The Tsar himself has recognized this. Russia has changed more within these last fifteen years than since the time of Peter the Great. Item, the emancipation of the serfs not as thorough ~~gong~~ a reform as one might have wished perhaps but - Item, the completely new and comprehensive codification of the penal code giving Russia one of the most advanced legal systems in the whole of Europe. That is no small achievement. Now in my view we should build on what we have already gained. Precipitate action will force reaction, surely that is obvious?

- VERA Even your voice changed, even the way you coughed, you clear your throat the father of a family, like a general addressing his troops. See I cannot stop quarrelling with you.
- ALEXEI And what of me do I merit no consideration?
- VERA You mistook yourself, it was a wife, it was that demure and well brought up young lady you met at the governor's ball in Kazan, it was her and not me you wanted.
- ALEXEI I absolutely refuse to permit you to return to Russia alone.
- VERA It was her and not me you wanted (SHE STOPS READING AND TALKS TO HERSELF) My head, how it burns. Am I wasting my time, should I put everything from that life behind me? (PAUSE) Why wouldn't she come?
- ALEXEI Miss Aptkemen has more sense than to run off on a fool's errand.
- VERA It hardly matters if I am a fool. You no longer know me so your opinions of me are worthless (SHE WRITES) "as to your opinion of Mr. Goldenburg -
- ALEXEI If Mr. Goldenburg is in any way representative of the calibre of persons attracted to your cause then I tremble -
- VERA (SHE WRITES) Perhaps he is not personally charming, in many ways I find that a welcome relief, but he is sincere-and dedicated to something other than himself (SHE TALKS TO HERSELF) No, no it is bad enough justifying myself but I will not start justifying others. You may think as you please about him. Come now remember this was intended as a kind farewell. (SHE WRITES) Alexei, I beg you do not be bitter or feel remorsefull towards me. It would be best if you can forget that I ever existed in your life. Yes, as though the four years of our marriage was a dream. Can you do that Alexei? It would be the wisest course.

ALEXRI/

Do I merit no consideration? As your husband surely I have the right to at the very least, request some explanation of your actions. And what of me, do I merit no consideration. As your husband surely I have the right.

VERA

If you wish to divorce me please do so, you have the right to try and find your happiness elsewhere. I have not and will not tell you of my plans I do not wish to embroil you in something that is distasteful to you and may also involve risk. And so there is, at last, nothing more to say. I wish you well, I have always wished you well. This letter will be posted in Berlin and by the time it is in your hands I will be in Moscow.

SCENE IV

(LOCATION: MOSCOW

CHARACTERS: VERA FIGNER, A DOORKEEPER)

VERA This Councillor Schelapin's house?

DOORKEEPER What does it say over the door?

VERA Then you must be able to recollect if a Mr. Dzhadadari rented a room, it would only be a matter of a few months ago. I had understood that a friend of his was still resident here.

DOORKEEPER Had you? Well there's no accounting for what you might understand young lady.

VERA Please, can you at least tell me if you recollect the name.

DOORKEEPER Which name would that be?

VERA Mr. Dzhadabari.

DOORKEEPER Where's he from the, a foreigner is he? Its never wise to have much to do with foreigners, especially if they're German.

VERA He's from Georgia.

DOORKEEPER Is he now? Well, its none of our business where we're born or who we're born to we didn't choose it or else we'd all be Tsar's son.

VERA All I wish to know is if you remember him or if a friend of his is living here now?

DOORKEEPER Run off and leave you did he? Well we get a lot of officers staying here, or we did once upon a time. You never knew if it was day or night with them in the house. But the landlord wouldn't have it in the end, he turned up one day, two weeks after Shrove Tuesday and chucked the lot of them onto the streets. Them being officers they couldn't be expected to stand for that so only a matter of a week later they caught up with him and gave him the trashing of his life. Didn't do them a bit of good, he wouldn't take them back. Never paid a rouble in rent you see and there's nothing old Schelapin loves more than a fat wad of roubles' (PAUSE) I think I do remember the name now I've mull'd on it a bit. He wasn't an officer at all.

VERA I never told you that he was.

DOORKEEPER I'm a very busy man you know. I haven't the time to stand here gossiping with nice spoken young ladies who've probably never known a day's hunger or thirst in their lives.

(PAUSE. VERA TAKES OUT SOME MONEY AND HANDS IT TO HTM)

DOORKEEPER He'll be no use to you now, not where he is. Take my advice, I've lived in the world long enough, some would say too long, just pick yourself a nice rich young ninny, make up to him a bit and before you can turn round you'll be safe and married. And if the baby comes early well that's God's will.

VERA That is not - that is not at all why I am searching for him. I am trying to locate some old friends of mine that is all. I have been away from some time.

DOORKEEPER I thought those clothes had a foreign look about them but I didn't like to say.

VERA To be honest with you I'm beginning to feel a little desperate. I've already called at five houses this morning and have been able to contact nobody. I was specifically told that a Mr. Ag-

DOORKEEPER

Well you'll not find it so easy to see him this Dzhabadari fellow not unless you fancy a trip up to the House of Detention. And I doubt there'd be even room for a visitor in there its so jammed packed with people, women as well by all accounts. Well he'll not be coming back here, never in my lifetime. And why should I care what happens after that?

VERA

I know all this, what I wish to know is did a friend, a gentleman take his rooms after his arrest. I was told particularly by Mr. Goldenburg that Agranov was living here now. Please can you tell me if this is true. I am very tired, I beg you to help me.

DOORKEEPER

Then why start off with Dzhabadari when you want to find this other fellow, Confusing for both of us. Agranov, and who said he lived here?

VERA

A Mr. Golden - his name doesn't matter what matters is that I speak to Mr. Agranov immediately and he must live here, I was given his address only four days ago.

DOORKEEPER

Shouldn't believe all you're told, it's a fool's habit. There isn't, wasn't and God willing there never will be a Mr. Agranov living in this house.

VERA

I must ask you to permit me to enter the house and make my own inquiries.

DOORKEEPER

Ask away, there's no offence in that. No what I can't figure is why a young woman of your class is running around after the likes of these wild fellows. And what I also wonder is - what would your cherished parents think if they were to hear of it? To put it another way, what did you say your name was?

(VERA WALKS OFF - EXITS)

DOORKEEPER

Pity.

SCENE V

(LOCATION: ST PETERSBURG IN A SAFE HOUSE
CHARACTERS- ANDREI ZHELYABOV, NOCHALAT KEBALACHICK,
GEYSA GELFMAN, SOFYA PEROVSKAYA, AND LATER VERA FICHER)

ANDREI Wrong, wrong, wrong, wrong.

SOFYA We must have that money Geysa and by this evening.

GEYSA But from where, unless you ask your mother again?

ANDREI All that you say Nicholai is completely correct and
absolutely wrong.

SOFYA I daren't take another Kopeck from here, she has sold
half her jewels for us already and dear papa-

Nicholai Explain yourself.

SOFYA Has promised her that he will personally see to it that
I am exiled to his estate in the Crimea if one more thing
goes missing from his house.

ANDREI You will remember that after 'the glorious news of the
emancipation' there were riots in Bedna, spontaneous
ones at that .

NICHOLAI Thirteen years ago.

ANDREI Very well yes, that is not the point. In Chirgin and only this year, three thousand peasants, on their own instructions, threw themselves headlong against the army. And at this moment in Kiev, 200 workers are ready and organised, 200 at the least. What then are we waiting for?

GEYSA Andrei, we are busy now.

ANDREI Ah to hell with it, I hate Petersburg.

GEYSA There's no harm in you talking but please stop walking up and down and flinging your arms everywhere-

SOFYA It will have to be the Andreev sisters again, they should be able to find us three thousand roubles for tonight.

ANDREI Will I make more tea?

GEYSA Just sit still like a good boy.

ANDREI What do we need these three thousand roubles for?

NICHOLAI We are expecting four young students here tonight. They are good comrades and have just been expelled from the University on Wednesday. Two are from Novgorod, one from Ioutkutz and the last from Minsk -

ANDREI What a lovely exact man you are Nicholai.

NICHOLAI Feeling that there is little they may achieve here they have decided to return to their home provinces and-

ANDREI Talk and talk and talk. Very well. We will all get lockjaw from talking.

NICHOLAT

Very probably.

GEYSA

And you will be the first to get it.

ANDREI

But what, in the name of God, is the use in sending a parcel of schoolboys out and roaming the countryside when they are certain to be arrested within a week and lost to us. Can anyone answer me that?

SOFYA

There is nothing we can do to prevent them going.

GEYSA

And it is better by far that we give them some guidance, warn them of the dangers. Hopefully we can send them somewhere we have contacts and so they may be of use.

ANDREI

To my mind its Herzen and Bakhtenin and all those chatter-boxes who have us in this mess. They are the ones-scribbling seductive ideas far away in Europe and turning these young people's heads. We should be arming the peasants and not playing wet nurses to these wide eyed boy heroes.

NICHOLAT

The number of peasants prepared to rise at this moment is pitiful. You know this. Unless we are organised ourselves how can we organise the people?

ANDREI

The people do not need us to organize them, at most they need us to guide their hand so that the blow they strike-

SOFYA

Andrei, fetch the papers from the other room. The inks will have dried and it is not wise to leave them to open view.

ANDREI

At once Sofya.

(ANDREI EXITS)

SOFYA These Ukrainians! He has not slept in 36 hours and my head feels as though he has not stopped talking in 36 hours.

NICHOLAI Nevertheless, he is a great asset to us with his particular experience of the South.

SOFYA Of course, will I go now to try to get the money we require?

GRYSA I would wait a while, the night is still too clear. When the rain thickens then will be the time to go.

(ANDREI RETURNS)

ANDREI Here are the passports Sofya, they are improving. Now will I run to fetch this money? Just give me the address and I'll be going.

(KNOCK ON THE DOOR, FREEZE THEM ALL TAKE UP PREVIOUS ARRANGED POSITIONS, E.G. ANDREI LOOKS OUT OF WINDOW, NICHOLAI READS PAPER ETC.)

GRYSA Please to enter.

(VERA WALKS IN)

SOFYA -and so afterwards I went back to her and told her just what I thought of her 'fresh' chicken, mistress. I told her it would have turned a goat's stomach and the master nearly had to call the doctor to you.

GRYSA Yes, thank you, that's quite enough.

SOFYA And then she had the gall to tell me that I must be mistaken, that it wasn't from her I bought it. As though anyone could forget that ugly mug, a camel would be ashamed to own a face like that.

GEYSA We have a visitor Agfya. Yes, you are looking for someone?

VERA Perhaps I have the wrong apartment. I am looking for a Miss Gelfman.

ANDRETT And what might your name be, Miss.

VERA Vera Figner. You won't even have heard of me I've not been in Russia for many years. I only returned two weeks ago.

ANDRETT A foreigner are you?

VERA No, not at all, I was in Zurich to study.

ANDRETT Zurich in Switzerland? a lovely restful place I hear.

VERA On my return I went first to Moscow, my sister had been living there.

GEYSA And what is this sister's name?

ANDRETT What brought you to Petersburg?

VERA I do not know exactly where my sister is. I believe her to be in the House of Detention.

ANDRETT What was her name?

VERA

Lydia, Lydia Figner. Also imprisoned were Sofya Bardina, Betya Kaminskaya and many others, all my friends.

NICHOLAI

That is a very terrible shock for a homecoming.

VERA

No I knew of it before I ever left Zurich, a gentleman informed me there and by his persuasion I returned to Russia. I was to continue my comrades work in the factories, but all the addresses he gave me were useless. I spent days and days wandering through Moscow nearly at my wit's end. Then a student who I knew and who had been acquainted with my sister chanced to meet me at - that doesn't matter, he gave this address and the name, Miss Gelfman. So I came to St. Petersburg, why not?

NICHOLAI

Tell me, please, what was the name of the gentleman you met in Zurich?

VERA

Gregori Goldenburg he said his name was.

ANDREI

Ah Goldenburg.

VERA

Do you know him? I was beginning to feel -

ANDREI

A strutting idiot who should have his mouth sewn up, well do not blame yourself for being taken in by him. Without offence Nicholai there is another man with a mania for organising people and see where it has left this poor young lady.

SOFYA

My name is Sofya Perovskaya, this is Nicholai Kibalchich, Andrei Zhelyabov and Geysa Gelfman. I share your grief at the arrest of your comrades. It has also proved difficult for us in Petersburg to infiltrate workplaces and factories. At the moment we have returned to making our main propaganda effort in the countryside (PAUSE) Certainly on your own it would be very hard to achieve much success. But if you wish to continue your comrades work we will offer what help we can. What have you decided to do?

VERA

Decided to do? I haven't decided anything.

ANTHONY

Have you skills? What was it you studied in Zurich?

VERA

I was studying to be a doctor but I left before completing the course. Most of my friends returned after the Edict. You will have heard of that? All female students studying abroad were recalled home -

SOFYA

On the grounds that your morals were being corrupted.

GEYSA

Any woman who thinks freely for herself will be called a whore. We can expect that.

SOFYA

Do your family know of your return?

VERA

They will have nothing to do with me.

SOFYA

Good, and so you would not be adverse to travel?

VERA

At the moment I cannot imagine my life without it.

SOFYA

We are sorely in need of skilled medical workers.

ANDREI

And where will you pack her off to? Does she have a word to say in all this? Speak up, do not let this very admirable organizer bully you off to God knows where.

SOFYA

There is no question of -

VERA

I would like to go to Saratov Province.

ANDREI

No that's old country, it's in the South we're making history. Up there it's just dead bones and not a ghost in sight.

NICHOLAI

I think we are giving our comrade a false impression, inadvertently of course. That would be doubly cruel after the unfortunate experience with Goldenburg. Of which I would like to learn more at a later date. It might assist you comrade if I clarify any confusions that might have arisen.

ANDREI

Listen to this, Vera, it will be a positive poem of exactness, with no words out of place and no flights of fancy. How does he do this? Never ask me that I am a simple Ukrainian and these Petersburgers are too sharp for me.

NICHOLAI

We are in no sense whatsoever an organizing committee but merely experienced workers in the field of propaganda and agitation attempting to give some shape and coherence to a spontaneous movement of mainly young people who are fired with an idealistic concern for the people. Am I clear so far?

GEYSA

Forgive me Nicholai but I think it is not a good idea to talk politics to someone who is half asleep.

ANDREY

And she looks hungry. Are you hungry? Pancakes?

VERA

No thank you. I have eaten but you're right I am tired. I have no wish to take up more of your time you will have many things to be doing. If it is possible, if you have the contacts, I would like to go to North Saratov Province as a paramedic or even a teacher, the job doesn't matter.

SOFYA

I am curious as to why Saratov, does your family come from there?

VERA

No, not there (pause) On our estate, like every estate, the peasants wouldn't talk with the daughter of the master. Too much of what I know of the life of the people I have read in books, books not even written by Russians. If I am to understand their lives then I must share it with them.

GRYSA

The rain is getting worse, it is probably time to be going Sofya, my dear, before our students arrive.

ANDREY

And I will accompany you.

SOFYA

There is no need for that, the distance is not very great. I will not need protection.

ANDREY

But I would enjoy the walk and this room, believe me, feels to be getting smaller and smaller and I am quite definitely getting larger and more ferocious. So a walk will cool me.

SOFYA

You will be able to rest here, on the couch for a few hours at least. We will arrange things better later. Nicholai if the students arrive before our return, please take them into the other room, our guest needs to sleep.

NICHOLAI I will go there now and continue my translating of Herr Hegel. Goodnight Vera, may you sleep well.

(NICHOLAI EXITS)

ANDREI So off we go, where is your coat Sofya?

SOFYA I will wear Nicholai's, but I remember you haven't one perhaps -

ANDREI To hell with coats rains only water and water never killed a man except when he's drowning.

(SOFYA AND ANDREI EXIT)

GRYSA Will you lie down and sleep now? The couch is hard but not uncomfortable.

VERA Although I am very tired I think I am past sleep. I would just like to sit still and gather my thoughts for a moment.

(PAUSE)

GRYSA Would you wish to talk for a while? Forgive me, but you look very confused and are feeling lonely maybe, do I intrude?

VERA Not in the least and yes I would like to talk with you. These last three weeks have seemed to pass in a fever, a delirium. I do not mean that I have been ill, I am never ill. I have felt something like a parcel left continually at the wrong address and then immediately redirected. That sounds a little fanciful, doesn't it?

GREYSA

I have been a courier myself now for eighteen months and never a week in the same place. Going back and forwards across the border with packets of pamphlets sewn inside my skirts, exciting to begin with and then just wearying.

VERA

Can you not take on some other task, at least for a while?

GREYSA

Being a Jew it is the best work for me, very often we use the smuggling routes made by my people. It is always wise for us to have a secret way out of any country we live in (PAUSE) It will not seem to hard this life of ours after a while, many are forced to live it, there is no shortage of good company.

VERA

I don't doubt I will get used to it in time, I was supposed to be preparing myself all those years in Zurich but I realize now that I was just passing my time in a pleasant dream over there. I had forgotten Russia.

GREYSA

Tell me something of your life, this is not questioning you understand but it is a help when we understand one another.

VERA

I was born at my family's estate. It is a small estate, three hundred souls in the old reckoning, not very far from Moscow. It was a beautiful place, good land and forests, great forests of birch trees. When I was a child and understood nothing it seemed like paradise. I had an uncle, a liberal of the old school and he brought me to understand very slowly and very reluctantly that all we owned, the easiness of our lives, was ours only at the expense of terrible suffering. And more selfishly as I grew older I became aware that my life, if I was to follow the pattern laid for me would be unendurable. Neither I nor my sister Lydia had any desire to be women of society, ladies of fashion. My decision to go to Zurich was to both free me from the prospect of that life and to help those who had been brutalized and oppressed. It was a nice dream.

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VERA

There was no need for Kolya to do that, it is obvious that I will be needed there. I will go upstairs and pack. If you are questioned say I told you that my mother was taken suddenly ill and I was called to her bedside.

VOLOSHIN

Very well.

VERA

Have your carriage here in an hour, will you Frederick. I wish to leave as soon as possible.

VOLOSHIN

You will be greatly missed.

VERA

Thank you.

VOLOSHIN

Vera - Vera are you so very certain that this is the wisest course of action?

(VERA GOES UPSTAIRS)

GEYSA

Much of this is like Sofya, except her family were very, very rich. Can you believe our good comrades father was, only four years ago, the Governor of St. Petersburg. Now him she really hates, sometimes it frightens me how much she hates him and as for him, he pursues her like a man with a vendetta. Since she was seventeen she has changed names, addresses to avoid him and if he found her she would be sent off to the Crimea, to one of his estates and never leave again. A strong woman as you can guess, she has worked at everything, lived in the earliest of the communes, set up a book binding collective, even as your sister she went to a factory and survived five months before being forced to leave from the suspicion of an overseer. And in all this she had completed her education -

VERA

Educated herself, here in Russia?

GEYSA

For a little while , some professors from Petersburg University ran courses for women until stopped. At that time, I first met her then, Sofya was strongly involved in the women's question. She would have nothing to do with mixed groups. Not until she understood political economy would she work with men.

VERA

She seems a very admirable woman, it is impossible not to be impressed by her. I could never be so confident but then I do not in anyway aspire to be a leader as she is.

GEYSA

Whatever she is, she is out of necessity and who can guess how circumstances will form us or our actions. Besides as Nicholai is always saying there are no leaders and we must all make the decisions and make them quickly. Time, like many other things, is not to be counted on our side (PATSE) Perhaps you will sleep now?

VERA

No, not yet. I want to hear about you all. Tell me about Nicholai.

GEYSA

Oh he is a very secretive man or more fairly perhaps he's not a chatterer, such as Andrei. By the way you must not mind him. He has great energy for talking but also a great capacity for work. He cannot bear to idle and frets here in Petersburg away from his homeland.

VERA

He is not Russian?

GEYSA

No, he is a Ukranian, not a Russian. Very few Russians are Russians. He is also a peasant, an ex-serf and the son of a serf.

VERA

Have you known him long?

GEYSA

In a way yes, he was in the prison with my husband. Not my married husband, there was no time for that but a husband nevertheless. He is dead now but I had a child from him, a girl. It was a terrible place, he died of the lung disease.

VERA

What is her name your daughter?

GEYSA

I have not seen her in years, she is growing up in Kiev with good people where she will be safe. But you asked about Nicholai, who is also well acquainted with prisons. His is a strange story. When he was at the university he was not at all interested in political matters, he was a chemist, a very clever man. One day a friend of his by accident leaves some papers, manifestos of some student group in his apartment. There is a raid on the house and Nicholai is caught. He is a man of principle and says nothing, refusing to disclose his friend's name. He is sentenced to three years solitary confinement in Krakhov. After that when he comes out, after having read all the books he can and thinking alone, he comes out a revolutionary. With such treatment and given so arbitrarily we will never lack for recruits.

VERA

Unless they are crushed by such terrible experiences.

GEYSA It is as well to know what we may be called on to endure.

VERA And if the revolution doesn't come in our lifetime what will justify this suffering and these sacrifices? It would be a joke to make the devil laugh.

GEYSA More likely the Tsar, or Boris Melika/or Count Pahlen, but they are not laughing yet. If we are destroyed there will be others to take our place, never fear.

VERA I try not to be afraid.

GEYSA When you are working it will be easier. It is difficult not to be disheartened when you are tired and have travelled far. Only one more journey and then - where is it you wish to go again?

VERA To Saratov Province, have you ever heard of Darya and Ivan Kraskov?

GEYSA No, are they friends of yours working there?

VERA I have never met them. Gregori Goldenbrug told me their story whilst we were in Zurich. They worked there until they were arrested, they sounded to be very brave people but not cautious enough. At least I have a skill to offer and can disguise my contact with the peasants behind my poultices and patches.

GEYSA Now I think we have had enough talking. There are black circles round your eyes and your skin is too white. For the moment I will be the doctor and tell you it is time for you to sleep now.

VERA

It is the best thing for us to do now, isn't it? We will have more chance of success with the peasants in the countryside than we can hope for in the factories? I do not wish to abandon my friends work in Moscow-

GEYSA

We must work where we can and when we can, we are given no time for thinking of strategies. That we are forced to leave to the emigres who bombard us with them. No, they often give useful advice but we deal in Russia, in unknown territory and their theories are all of Europe. Enough, enough, you must sleep now. You will not be able to stay here after tonight, there is too much risk, so rest while you can. No more conversation. I will be in the next room. Goodnight Vera.

(GEYSA EXITS. VERA GOES TO SLEEP)

SCENE VI

LOCATION: VERA'S HOUSE IN SARATOV PROVINCE.
 CHARACTERS: VERA FTGNER, ANNA, HER MOTHER, AND TATER
 MAXIM AND DR. VDOSHIN

(VERA IS ASLEEP)

ANNA Why is it mother, that all of us, even this nice lady here
 look so horrible asleep?

Mother Ssh now, do not be restless.

ANNA Like a pile of old rags except for the big soft mouth, it
 makes me feel sick.

MOTHER Who could begrudge anyone a little time away from this
 world? Asleep we are all God's children, what harm can
 we do one another then?

ANNA We can sin even in our sleep not you, you dream of nothing,
 just grass and mushrooms but I - I do very terrible things
 dreaming. Shall I tell you?

MOTHER Is it true that the devil has power to send us dreams but
 always God -

ANNA What do you know of the devil? He does not trouble himself
 with people such as you. He has a keen nose and scents
 out his own kind.

MOTHER Anna, will you not speak with the holy father, he has ways -

ANNA Hmm? With a belly stuffed fat with the good things of life
He does not care about my soul he is more concerned as to
whay I have under my skirts.

MOTHER I beg you -

ANNA Let us go home, Let us go home, the room smells of camphor.

(ANNA TAKES HER MOTHER BY THE HAND AND ATTEMPTS TO DRAG
HER OFF)

MOTHER Miss Figner, Miss Figner awake I beg you. I am here with
my daughter.

VERA Who is that? Who is that calling?

MOTHER An old and troublesome fool.

VERA Forgive me.. I must have fallen asleep. How can I help you?

ANNA We came very quietly not wishing to disturb you, we came to
give you some strawberries. I picked them this morning,
hundreds and hundreds of the. All red, the first of the
season.

VERA Strawberries?

ANNA Mother, where are the strawberries, find them.

MOTHER She is very troubled again, my lady. She is out at night
roaming by the river.

ANNA What is wrong with the river, you drink it, don't you?

(MAXIM, A PEASANT, ENTERS)

VERA Sit quietly a moment Anna whilst I attend to Maxim.

MAXIM Good morning to all here.

MOTHER God's blessing and that of his holy saints.

ANNA And the devil's and all his little demons.

MAXIM Be silent, you slut.

VERA You must not speak to her in that way, the girl is troubled and should be treated gently.

MAXIM As you say Miss,

VERA Now, have your ribs pained you these last two days, the swelling should have receded a little -

MAXIM Pain is pain, what does it matter?

(VERA EXAMINES HIM)

VERA Maxim, have you read that book I gave you on your last visit?

MAXIM Book?

VERA I would be pleased to read it to you if you are finding it goes too slowly reading alone.

MAXIM I LOST IT .

VERA How could you lose it? Where did you lose it?

MAXIM If I knew where it was lost then it wouldn't be lost would it?, Miss Have you finished? Here are twenty kopecks.

(MAXIM EXITS)

VERA There's no need for payment - Maxim?

MOTHER It is the loss of the baby has preyed on her mind, my lady. For all I tell to rejoice in the two she has living. They are such dear ones Mitya and baby Anuska. I am an old woman with no sons and a mad daughter, soon I must be my bread from the streets and who will care for these little ones? Morning and night I pray to god, to the virgin, to all his Holy Saints -

ANNA Russia is full of old women grumbling away to God but I do not pity him.

VERA ANNA, my dear, I have explained to you that it was through no fault of yours that the baby died. It had an infection, a sickness in it's chest-

ANNA What do I care? Tell me this, why shouldn't I tuck the other two, Mitya and Annuska, under my armpits and jump into the fire? It's better than simply dying away from boredom. Take me to Moscow I beg you, take me away from this place, I could be your lady's maid. I know the duties, I was one once you know.

VERA I know.

ANNA In beautiful fine dresses when I served the Count's daughter, until she married and I ended up living with this old fool here.

MOTHER The doctor says -

ANNA Let us hear no more of the doctor. Tell me a story Vera.

MOTHER (STRIKING ANNA) What are you thinking of, forgive her, my lady, she does not mean to be forward.

ANNA I am a good girl. I would be good anywhere away from this place.

(DR VOLOSHIN ENTERS)

VOLOSHIN This letter came for you last week, Miss Figner, that fool of a post master forgot to deliver it.

VERA Thank you Mr. Voloshin, will you sit down?

ANNA And here is the drunken doctor again, what are you doing here?

VOLOSHIN You are looking very tired my dear. I have told you time and again there is no point in exhausting yourself. Who cares what we do for them in this place, its the end of the world, we may as well not exist at all as live here.

VERA Why then do you not take your own advice and go where you believe you could be useful?

VOLOSHIN Because I am too worn away and used up to be useful anywhere so I may as well stop where I am.

ANNA That's enough, I'm going.

(ANNA EXITS)

MOTHER Thank you for your gracious time, my lady.

VERA This evening I will come to your house and we will try then to find some way of helping her.

MOTHER May God keep you both in his care.

(MOTHER EXITS)

VERA Nearly every day she comes here with Anna and there is never anything I can do to help.

VOLOSHIN Who was the father of her last child?

VERA Who can tell? That is not important. I suppose I should be grateful that they, the ones I can do nothing for, come to see me. They are nearly the only ones who do. Why after eighteen months here does no one trust me? Is it because I am a woman?

VOLOSHIN And a stranger.

VERA But you -

VOLOSHIN I have lived here for fifteen never ending years. It is the fault of your people that things have changed, before this place was dull enough God knows but the peasants were not so suspicious.

VERA What do you mean? What have we done?

VOLOSHIN No, we will not argue again, you are the only person here it is possible to talk to, I cannot risk an argument (PAUSE) Equally I cannot resist one. Those friends of yours who were here two years stirred up a positive hornet's nest.

VERA Not friends, I have explained that to you before.

VOLOSHIN I accept the correction but the point remains that peasants who became friendly with them got into very hot water with the authorities. Not just Pavel who ended up walking all the way to Siberia with that Kraskov fellow but others as well. They are practical people, the peasants,, why should they risk their lives and their families happiness for your 'fancy dreams and idle hopes'

VERA But nothing could be worse -

VOLOSHIN Agreed. Vera, you have permitted me to call myself your friend and I am grateful for that. As your friend then, nothing more than your friend can I not -

VERA Frederick, please.

VOLOSHIN Come then, we had best go on our rounds before we figure in any more of the local gossip sitting here alone and you unchaperoned. Come.

VERA Perhaps I had better read my letter just if you can wait a moment.

VOLOSHIN Certainly, waiting around idle as the devil is something I'm good for. Shall I dawdle in the doorway or moon about in the yard?

VERA Just sit down Frederick and be comfortable

(VERA READS THE LETTER)

VOLOSHIN Where you are wrong and completely wrong, is that you persist in believing that this our Holy Mother Russia is European, civilised. It is not, it is an Asiatic country. Ideas of progress and evolution simply do not apply here. Thats unfortunate for us, the educated whose learning is exclusively Western because here we are unnecessary, our understanding unwanted and our attempts at action completely beside the point. How do you and your friends imagine they can help 'the people' when you have the minds and the hearts of foreigners. Answer me that?

VERA Be quiet.

VOLOSHIN We are not rational creatures and our desire to save the world is usually pernicious. Now you are as well trained as I am in physiology and so forth what mysteries are left? We are a strange hybrid of animal and machine, inefficient and only fitfully conscious. And clearly we are not perfectable. Why then, understanding this, do you torture yourself with these visionary futures? (PAUSE) Not that I was any different. Not that I don't despise what I am now. You lack the courage to despise yourself. Russia does not change, it is the same story told again and again by each generation. What we see as history is merely a change in style. God the frenzies, the agonies I went through when I came to realize that I and all our intellectuals were useless, utterly useless, an historical accident. It was very painful for a young man of twenty four who was to be the Russian Robespierre. I thought of suicide, in the end I became a doctor.

VERA For God sake will you be quiet!

VOLOSHIN

What?

VERA

What has all that to do with anything, its just self indulgence. How can you expect me to have patience with that?

VOLOSHIN

I am very sorry.

VERA

Read this

VOLOSHIN

I have no wish to read your private correspondence.

VERA

Read it!

(HE BEGINS TO READ THE LETTER)

VERA

Aloud, read it aloud. I want to hear it again.

VOLOSHIN

Comrade,

We have suffered the most terrible calamity and I must tell you of it bluntly. Since July we have had over 400 comrades taken, arrested in every Province in Russia. I do not know if this letter will ever reach you. I am one of the few passed over and left at liberty in Petersburg. I beg you if you are still free to be most cautious and most circumspect. Last week Sofya Perovskaya, Andrei Zhelyabov, Ivan Brogdanovich, Geysa Gelfman, Yuri my own brother and many others, dear friends of mine and yours were taken. I am too afraid to leave my apartment but friends who visit tell me -

VERA

May God curse them.

VOLOSHIN The names here - these people are your - comrades?

VERA What?

VOLOSHIN I am very sorry but perhaps the news may be exaggerated, whoever wrote this may -

VERA Don't be a fool. Here, hand me back the letter, the rest of it doesn't, wouldn't interest you. I must remove myself from this place as fast as may be. Not that I have achieved anything here that merits their interest. You must drive me to the town this afternoon. I will take a train to Kazan and from there to Petersburg.

VOLOSHIN Drive you?

VERA I cannot walk that distance.

VOLOSHIN No, of course not, I will be happy to. This afternoon did you say?

VERA They didn't capture the press at all events, thank God for that.

VOLOSHIN Would it not be wiser to remain here, inconspicuously until the storm is past?

VERA I have no wish to remain here a moment longer.

VOLOSHIN The letter - did the writer of it request you to return to Petersburg?

ACT II.

SCENE I

(LOCATION - A CONFERENCE ROOM IN THE MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR.
CHARACTERS: GRAND DUKE KONSTANTIN (BROTHER TO THE TSAR)
COUNT PAHLEN (MINISTER OF JUSTICE); LOUIS MELIKOV (MINISTER OF
THE INTERIOR)

GRAND DUKE One reads these papers, and believe me I have read them
 thoroughly, but one is left almost as confused as one
 started out.

PAHLEN Allow me to apologise, Grand Duke -

GRAND DUKE This is in no way to comment on the lucidity and exactness of
 of the reports submitted by your department but nevertheless -
 (PAUSE)

PAHLEN If I might be permitted?

GRAND DUKE By all means Count Pahlen.

PAHLEN I believe that what we are witnessing in the seditious actions of
 these young people is directly the result of misguided attempts
 to liberalize the education system. They are encouraged even
 assisted by professors at the universities who have not been
 vetted for their post with the strictness that one would wish.

GRAND DUKE Possibly, insofar as one can attribute these actions exclusively
 to the student body but that is surely the point - how many of
 these people attend or have attended the universities? As an
 example, the women involved cannot have -

PAHLEN Whores.

GRAND DUKE Their Morals are certainly debauched.

PAHLEN If it will not offend you I will mention that we have various witnesses who will attest that these women, they sully the very name of womanhood, have sold their bodies on the Nervsky Prospect like common prostitutes in order to finance their activities. This we will prove in open court and it will lose them any sympathy they may have attracted. Also we have other witnesses -

GRAND DUKE This is very shocking, but if we might return for a moment to an examination of the causes of this - phenomena. It is essential that we understand the causes if we are to deal effectively with - you understand me, Melikov.

MELIKOV You are very kind Grand Duke. In my understanding of the 'phenomena', it might be more appropriate to substitute the word 'causes' for 'influences' with your permission. (THE GRAND DUKE NODS) Under the general heading of influences we could include Count Pahlen's comment on the universities, we must also remember the authority of men such as Henen, Lavra, Bakunin with these young people.

PAHLEN They should never have been granted permission to leave the country in the first place.

MELIKOV The decision was not mine, you will recall.

PAHLEN It was taken at the time that you were a provincial governor and had not gained your present eminence, that I remember well.

MELIKOV Also one could mention the war with England in the Crimea which had its part to play in weakening our young people's belief in the invincibility of the autocracy. That must be said Grand Duke and a man of your experience will forgive my bluntness.

PAHLEN The honour of Russia will be redeemed in due course.

MELIKOV Our defeat can easily be attributed to the lack of heavy artillery. Until we have ensured that the mines and factories in the Urals are operating efficiently - but this is all by the way and the Crimean War was over ten years ago. Perhaps we should not dwell on it, minister.

PAHLEN I did not begin the discussion.

MELIKOV No my point is this, Grand Duke, It is of the extremest importance to understand what has influenced these young people and how and why. Because, we we all are well aware, anything that can be influenced in one direction may surely be influenced in another. Therefore one must enter into the psychology of our young revolutionaries -

PAHLEN Psychology!

MELIKOV Yes, because despite appearances to the contrary they are not lost to us as yet, at least the vast majority are not. Firm but paternal treatment will bring many of them to repentance.

GRAND DUKE I would like you to explain your ideas a little more fully Melikov.

MELIKOV Firstly we must isolate the real agitators and detach the hesitant. By the hesitant I mean not simply those arrested who we can win back but the silent supporters of this movement among the intelligensia. Harsh and indiscriminate treatment will or at least may rebound against us. We must be firm but we must be careful.

PAHLEN I am astonished that the Minister of the Interior is advocating this approach. Forgive me, but I was not aware that we were standing on the threshold of a general insurrection. These people represent a tiny proportion even of their own class; the countryside is by and large at peace, no war threatens -

MELIKOV

Perhaps the Minister for Justice is not so well informed as to the state, the general state of the country as one might wish.

GRAND DUKE

Gentlemen!

MELIKOV

I would like to point out that the general dissatisfaction of the peasant classes after the emancipation has not died down, indeed it increases, and these people may serve as a catalyst to that dissatisfaction. That is precisely their intention.

PAHLEN

For my part I never supported the emancipation measure, it gave rise to foolish aspirations among our serfs. They were well enough as they were. Now being masterless they are confused and bewildered and willing to listen to any nonsense. We may both agree on that I hope.

MELIKOV

To an extent.

PAHLEN

And that is why they must be crushed promptly and ruthlessly.

MELIKOV

Who?

PAHLEN

Perhaps I should remind you that both the Tsar and Crown Prince Alexander are of one mind upon this point.

GRAND DUKE

Nevertheless my brother the Tsar has asked to peruse the results of our deliberations before committing himself to any firm policy.

Pahlen.

Indeed he has, Grand Duke and I beg you will forgive my vehemence

GRAND DUKE.

I am willing to listen to your opinion.

PAHLEN

The trial of these criminals falls within my jurisdiction and I would like to advise our judges to pass the severest sentences possible. That is to my mind the most effective way to deter others from joining the ranks of these traitors.

MELIKOV

It is unfortunate that in certain instances the written testimony of your witness against the accused appears to totally contradict itself. Perhaps it would be wisest to bring to trial only those who are manifestly guilty.

PAHLEN

The witness merely provide the circumstantial details, remember the legal reforms do not affect this matter. The judges will pass sentence as we direct them. If any escape the full rigour of the law we have recourse to administrative exile and finally the Tsar himself has the power -

GRAND DUKE

Thank you Count Pahlen, I am afraid that there is little doubt that your advice will be followed. However, personally I am still bewildered. Who exactly are these people and what is it they hope to achieve in their senseless agitation of the rural poor? On that question we have come no nearer to an understanding. Will we ever, one wonders?

(THE SOUND OF THE PRISONERS IN THE HOUSE OF DETENTION BANGING WOOD AND METAL IN RHYTHM, COMMUNICATING IN CODE TO ONE ANOTHER)

GEYSA

I wonder that they do not come and stop us, perhaps they know our code and this is an easy way to overhear our conversations. Perhaps they hope we will give them more evidence for the trial (TAPS) Does anyone know date of trial? (SILENCE, SOMEONE TAPS A REPLY, GEYSA LAUGHS) At least we are all together and that keeps our private fear away.

(SHE STARTS TO SING OTHERS JOIN IN AS THEY HEAR HER.
SONG CUT OFF BY COURT SCENE)

SCENE II

LOCATION: COURTROOM.

CHARACTERS: DEFENCE LAWYER, PROSECUTOR, WITNESS,
INSPECTOR GORCHAKOV, SOFYA, GEYSA)

(GEYSA, ANDREI, SOFYA, WIDELY SEPARATED ON STAGE,
KNEELING, ONE OF THE WITNESSES GIVING EVIDENCE.)

DEFENCE LAWYER I will ask again, which of the accused do you allege
to have made this remark concerning the Tsar?

WITNESS Well sir difficult to say sir. I can't see through
wooden doors now can I sir? Anyhow they all agreed
with it.

DEFENCE LAWYER You cannot see through wooden doors but you can identify
a voice through them, especially if there's money to be
made. You are a police informer are you not?

WITNESS Anyone in my line of business must be wide awake to any
goings on, of course we do, otherwise we might be in a
bit of trouble ourselves. Its a very responsible job,
I have sir.

DEFENCE An exhausting life being a doorkeeper and a part time
informer, still you are looking well on it.

WITNESS Thank you sir, I do my duty.

DEFENCE

Your honour, this has been a very long and a very tedious trial. The prosecution has brought in witness after witness to incriminate my prisoners and hardly one of them has delivered the kind of substantiated ~~piece~~ of evidence that would convince the most credulous person imaginable of their guilt. I do not refer exclusively to the three defendants in court today but also to the other one hundred and ninety persons who have been subjected to judicial enquiry.

PROSECUTOR

What about the books eh, forbidden books specifically forbidden books, and leaflets filled with all kinds of wild invective and insane accusations. It turns one's head to read them. And I must object strongly to the calumny laid against the prosecution witnesses, loyal and upright Russians to a man. They may be a little confused a little overwhelmed in the presence of the court, a very proper attitude unlike the brazen defiance and assurance of these treacherous and blood-thirsty -

DEFENCE

If the parade of sly, venal, half drunk ruffians who have lied and contradicted themselves in this court for the last two months are loyal and upright Russians then may God have mercy on Russia.

WITNESS

What was that? What did he say?

ANDREI

He said you were a sly venal, half drunk Ruffian

PROSECUTOR

Silence! Will you be silent, sir!

SOFYA

My God what a farce.

PROSECUTOR

A farce, did you say a farce?

ANDREI They all seem a little deaf, don't they? Probably the judge hasn't heard a single word since the trial began but then he doesn't need to.

PROSECUTOR As for you madam, don't imagine we are unaware of the kind of woman you are. A disgrace, oh yes a positive disgrace to your whole unhappy family. Gallivanting all over Russia with these lovers of yours, screeching your nonsense with a red face at honest peasants. Keeping company, a woman of your position one of the most illustrious families in Petersburg, keeping company I say with ex serfs.

ANDREI He means me, Sofya.

PROSECUTOR Disgraceful.

ANDREI Even here, even in Russia we are entitled to make our defence.

PROSECUTOR Speak then by all means we have nothing to hear from the ravings of a rabid animal. Speak, come sir defend yourself.

DEFENCE You may choose to make your defence later Andrei Zhelyabav if you so desire, do not be goaded.

ANDREI

What do I need to defend? What actions have I or any of my comrades committed that need defending? We have done nothing of which we should be ashamed, we have tried to help our poor country to lift it free of the dirt and filth it is chocked with (PAUSE) Do you really believe that the people, the peasants and the workers are such fools that they do not recognise their own poverty and recognise that your riches are the price of that poverty? They waited believing always in the goodness of our father the Tsar, they waited patiently knowing that he must hear of their suffering and take pity on them. And what was done? They were emancipated - without land, without rights but mostly without the land that they and their fathers have lived on and died on without that the freedom you gave was a mockery. Bowed down with grief who alone stretched out a hand to support them? We did, the young people of Russia, some of us members of your own class, does that not terrify you? And we will not be conquered, no matter what degradations, what torments you inflict on us, sheltering behind your soldiers bayonets. The revolution will come and no amount of brute force will kill it.

PROSECUTOR

Is that it then have you finished?

ANDREI

I have finished speaking.

SOFYA

You yourselves are the ones who will destroy the state. You have driven the people into poverty illness and crime. -

PROSECUTOR

The case against you has been heard, you have no further right to speak. The case against Andrei Zhelyobov has been completed, the witness having made his defence although he did not see fit to answer one of the charges laid against him. Your honour may draw his own conclusions as no doubt -

DEFENCE

May I remind the court that the prosecutor has no right -

PROSECUTOR We proceed now with the indulgence of the court, with the case against the next traitor a Miss Geysa Gelfman.

DEFENCE As a formality, knowing it will be disregarded by the prosecutor I must object to the term traitor. It will be remembered by some in this court that the accused are still on trial and have not yet been found guilty.

PROSECUTOR First we will hear the evidence of Inspector Gorchakov, a dilligent and long serving member of the police, who personally arrested and interrogated the - defendant - Geysa Gelfman. His testimony will be more than sufficient to prove her guilt conclusively. Inspector Gorchakov.

GORCHAKOV I am ready, sir.

PROSECUTOR Your evidence if you please.

GORCHAKOV It is a very simple matter, sir, one that needs no frills and flourishes. The woman prisoner before the court today known as Geysa Gelfman -

DEFENCE Known as, what do you mean by 'known as' ?

GORCHAKOV I beg pardon, sir?

DEFENCE You used to expression 'known as Geysa Gelfman' which implies that that is not her real name, doesn't it?

GORCHAKOV Yes, I suppose -

DEFENCE Well is her name Geysa Gelfman or not?

GORCHAKOV It is, sir.

DEFENCE Good, now try and speak more clearly Gorchakov, we waste enough time in this courtroom as it is.

GORCHAKOV Yes sir. The woman prisoner known as Geysa Gelfman was apprehended after certain information was received from a certain party, who is well informed on such matters living as he does near the railway station in question. He is also a Jew sir, which is even better.

PROSECUTOR Explain yourself more fully Inspector.

GORCHAKOV Well sir, they trust their own kind don't they?

PROSECUTOR The woman prisoner is also a Jew is this what you mean?

GORCHAKOV Exactly sir. Anyway he came to me of his own accord, I stress, of his own accord.

DEFENCE Why do you stress that?

GORCHAKOV Because of slander, sir, slander and infamy.

PROSECUTOR Continue, my good man, you received certain information concerning the prisoner.....

GORCHAKOV

For some time - for some time we, that is the police, had been aware that illegal publications, banned books and so forth were being smuggled over the German border which is only twenty miles from the town. We knew this but you see they are cunning devils that should be understood and then them being a pack of Jews - half of them never speak Russian at all. And they're always marrying one another and that makes 'em more closemouthed than ever. It was a positive nightmare you might say. So when this Jew offered of his own accord to supply us with the information, tell us who and where and why naturally we were -

DEFENCE

I would be very interested to learn exactly why this man was prepared to volunteer this degree of assistance to the police.

GORCHAKOV

Difficult to tell sir, they don't think like we do, do they?

DEFENCE

You did not threaten, coerce, bribe or blackmail?

GORCHAKOV

Of course not, sir.

GEYSA

Liar!

PROSECUTOR

Continue , Inspector.

GORCHAKOV

Well then it was just a matter of waiting which we did and then, it was on a Thursday evening, word came to us that a woman, travelling alone on the train to Petersburg, was carrying, sewn up in her skirts, illegal newspapers printed in England. That fellow wrote them, I forget his name for the moment, German sounding -

PROSECUTOR You apprehended the prisoner and found copies of "The Bell" a subversive, bloodthirsty journal written by the emigre Herzen, sewn into her clothing, that is so, isn't it?

GORCHAKOV In a nutshell, yes.

PROSECUTOR Incontravertably, undeniable and absolute proof of her guilt.

DEFENCE During your interrogation of the prisoner did you or did you not offer physical violence.

PROSECUTOR That is an irrelevant issue and cannot be raised in this court.

ANDREI We will raise it elsewhere.

GEYSA I wish to speak now as is my right. As to the charges you have brought against me I would be a fool to deny them. As for the brutal pig of a policeman I would wish to forget him if I could. Myself and my friends are peaceful propagandists whose aim is to make known to the people that a better and more just society is their right. A society that would abolish forever priveleges and the cruel division between those who have and those who have nothing, not even dignity. A person cannot live without dignity. It is true that we may be utopian but we are not bloodthirsty I have wished no harm, done no harm to anyone. These ideas that are so terrifying in Russia are ordinarily discussed in the West, they are not even considered so very radical. But censorship which is used not only to silence our voices but also to stifle our thoughts cannot ever be the success you hope for. In Russia people do not need to read books to learn about Tyranny, that you teach them every day. What they need is to know that other poor people in the world have struggled to see what victories they achieved and sadly to take warning from the ways they were deceived and fragmented. This would give them strength to learn from other experiences, this would give them hope. You do not want that, of course not, you wish us all to be apathetic, hopeless and compliant. This law that I have broken - well I do not ask for mercy, I do not desire your mercy. Me you may imprison but I belong to a large movement -

(SOFYA BEGINS TO SPEAK WITH HER)

GEYSA &
SOFYA

- and it will not be stopped by the most barbaric repression. No matter what you do, it will revive itself with redoubled force again and again and it will triumph. I am sure also that the time will come when our sleepy, half terrified country will wake up and be ashamed that it has allowed itself to be humiliated for so long and that it did not resist when its sisters and brothers were taken away and destroyed for no greater crime than being true to their convictions. And when this day comes the people will avenge us.

(GEYSA FALLS SILENT, SOFYA RECOUNTS THE END
OF GEYSA'S SPEECH)

SOFYA

Go on then persecuting us, physical force is still on your side but ours is the power of ideas and ideas - though you may regret it - cannot be locked away in prison, exiled or destroyed forever.

SCENE III

LOCATION - SAFE HOUSE IN PETERSBURG

CHARACTERS - SOFYA, DARYA AND IVAN KRASKOV, VERA)

(SOFYA FINISHES RECOUNTING GEYSA'S SPEECH TO DARYA WHO IS CHECKING IT) (PAUSE)

SOFYA That was all, as accurately as I can remember and then the judges read out their verdicts. I was amazed, absolutely amazed, that so many of us were acquitted. Although even the prosecutor had seemed embarrassed by the ludicrousness of some of the evidence against us. But for Geysa, of course, there was no chance.

DARYA I will set the type tonight and begin printing, we will need over a hundred copies, Vera's contact in the steel mill -

SOFYA I was to meet her here, when do you expect her to return? Where is she, Darya?

DARYA Only out for a while with my brother Ivan, he has not left the apartment in five days, do you think we should not have risked-

SOFYA It was because she was a Jew that it was imprisonment and not exile.

DARYA When do you plan to leave Petersburg Sofya?

SOFYA Leave?

DARYA

You if you stay in Petersburg you will certainly be rearrested and they will not repeat the mistake of acquitting you on the next occasion you stand in a courtroom. Andrei was wise to leave.

SOFYA

Where he is, is less safe for him than for to remain here. I have to stay, we need to think and plan and organise. Why am I so tired when there is so much to be done?

DARYA

Its the shock of being freed when you had least expected it. It is a great refinement in cruelty when you had steeled yourself for the very worst and then - they allow you to escape - a little. But it is only a reprieve Sofya that they hope will exhaust and demoralize you.

SOFYA

We have no time.

DARYA

Ivan, my brother, has been destroyed almost to extinction by their mercy. For two years I petitioned for his release from the prison so that he would be sent to serve his exile with me. For two years I petitioned. In the end he was released from the Kara and I sometimes believe it would have been better if he had died there and he had not been tormented by a miraculous deliverance.

SOFYA

What has happened to him?

DARYA

You will see soon enough.

SOFYA

Well we know now, as we always feared, that Russia, their Russia, is impervious to any change we could peacefully bring about. That is the lesson we are taught by the sacrifices of our comrades. And therefore -

DARYA Therefore, my dear Sofya, our choices become very limited. But when in the history of the world could the kind of changes we desire sneak in quietly and without fuss. You see how we have travelled, me a priests daughter reared to meekness and obedience -

(IVAN AND VERA ENTER)

IVAN Well, Well Well.

DARYA Sit down Ivan.

IVAN She bought me tobacco, Vera did, a whole ounce now thats riches.

DARYA I have just checked through Geysa's trial speech with Sofya to ensure I have it accurately. We will begin printing tonight ,also I believe we can expect a delivery of Bakunin for our comrade in the steel mill by the end of the week. I had meant to tell you that earlier.

VERA I have very bad news.

IVAN Can you not tell them later?

SOFYA What? Not more arrests?

IVAN Do you still find it in you to respond to all these calamities and tragedies? Well I for one have had enough of them.

DARYA Have you been drinking again?

IVAN Have I been drinking again ? You complain at me for being silent and complain again when I speak, there's no pleasing you. You'd prefer it if I was dead, then I would have been a martyr and a hero. But I hadn't the chance, you know its not my fault.

SOFYA If Vera has news -

IVAN And heres another one of them, Sofya isn't it? You terrify me, its true what they say about the women involved - Valkyries thats what you are though they're German. Darya I had that dream again last night.

DARYA Ivan you should rest, please let me take you into the other room.

IVAN We walked for two months before we arrived at the prison. It's odd that the colder it got the worse you stank. At night we'd come to a village and then we'd stand out on the road, lines of us all linked with chains and no one speaking. And they looked at us, the villagers, they would stand opposite us waiting. Then, it was usually Pavel would begin the song. We had to sing you see in return for the food they brought us. Even we have our traditions.

(HE SINGS THE PRISONERS SONG)

IVAN Pavel never sang in the prison, he couldn't, anyway he died too quickly before he had learnt to endure it. Hung himself just like his daddy. It took a long time for him to die, in the end a kind man held his legs for him and then I was alone.

(PAUSE)

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VERA

There is very terrible news from the Preobrazhenskaya, the House of Detention. A story that is hard to believe. Yesterday General Trepov, Governor of St. Petersburg -

SOFYA

I know him well, he was my father's successor.

VERA

He was walking through the courtyard of the prison. One of the prisoners did not take off his hat and bow to him. A young man, very young and sentenced to fifteen years hard labour in the mines. He was one of those arrested for demonstrating outside Kazan cathedral. When Trepov noticed that he had not bowed he went half mad with rage and ordered him to be flogged.

DARYA

He cannot do that it is against the law to flog a political prisoner.

VERA

Nevertheless it was done yesterday afternoon. He must have consulted with Count Pahlen as even he would be wary of so flagrant a contravention of the law. It was done in the courtyard. He was whipped until he was unconscious. They fear for his life. The other prisoners shouted and banged on their doors in protest then scores of warders came, breaking into the cell kicking and trampling upon them. Even the women.

DARYA

Flogged!

IVAN

They take everything away from us.

VERA

We cannot allow them to treat our comrades in so brutal and degrading a fashion. They think it likely he will die.

DARYA

But why would they do such a thing.

SOFYA

What was his name?

VERA

Bogolyabov.

DARYA

Trepov is hated already throughout Petersburg, even his own circle despise him for his brutality and coarseness. And how will this look in the foreign newspapers, the government has spared no pains to present an image there of an enlightened if autocratic state.

VERA

It is because they believe us when we protested our innocence and our peaceful intentions, can't you see? They truly did believe us and the question was never what will these revolutionaries do but only how best to destroy ^{us} by tolerance or tyranny. But even the liberals amongst them cannot be tolerant for very long. It is impossible, the situation and their power compels them to tyranny.

IVAN

Compels them to tyranny, very well said we have the makings of a good leaflet her.

DARYA

Ivan, please, this is no time for mockery.

IVAN

Indeed it is not, certainly it is not why then do you permit them to mock and jeer at you in this way. They are saying to you very clearly that you are powerless against them.

SOFYA

He is right, it is an act of disdain.

DARYA

Or an act of fear, perhaps?

SOFYA

Why should they fear us? Hundreds of our comrades have been imprisoned all over Russia and now not content even with that they beat and torture us as they please.

VERA

If we do not act now, we are silenced forever.

IVAN

That is all very well. But what does anyone suggest we do? What can you do? I mean it. What can we do?

SCENE IV

LOCATION: ANATOLY KONI'S HOUSE IN PETERSBURG.
 CHARACTERS - LORIS MELIKOV, HIS PERSONAL ASSISTANT
 ORIMSKY, THE COUNTESS, MISS KONI, ANATOLY KONI)

ORIMSKY What will we do? If only it hadn't been Trepov. He must be the most unpopular man in Petersburg. Even for him it was an astoundingly tactless act. The strangest part though is that his decision must have been sanctioned at the very highest level. The Justice Minister himself - ?

LORIS MELIKOV A very able man let it be said, unquestionably it was a mere oversight that he failed to be aware of the probably consequences of Trepov's "enthusiasm".

ORIMSKY Not all are gifted with your farsightedness, your excellency, that would be too much to expect even in Russia.

LORIS MELIKOV Well, lets get down to our business, remember it is important to create an atmosphere of informality.

ORIMSKY Informality, sir

LORIS MELIKOV My presence should appear unobtrusive.

ORIMSKY *Absolutely unobtrusive*

LORIS MELIKOV We must entice him, captivate him, he is not an unambitious man.

ORIMSKY Not at all sir, extremely forceful, some might say a little too forceful on some matters. Witness his implacable insistence on introducing trial by jury during the legal reforms in '64. Not an easy man to persuade to any course of action of which he does not approve. An intractable man, if you will permit me to say so.

LORIS MELIKOV Ah undoubtedly such a man would resist the usual temptations but could he so easily turn aside from the opportunity of parading his dearly loved sense of justice and within the legal system he himself devised?

ORIMSKY I had not understood that you intended him to officiate in this trial, your excellency.

LORIS MELIKOV Had you not?

(THE COUNTESS WHO HAS BEEN HOVERING NEARBY, INTERRUPTS)

COUNTESS Well you are certainly an unexpected visitor to these environs my dear Minister. You must tell your opinion of this - this outrage. Can there be more than one opinion? Who is this charming young man?

LORIS MELIKOV Countess, pray permit me to present my personal assistant, Mr. Orimsky.

ORIMSKY I am very honoured -

- COUNTESS Orimsky? Never mind. Tell me, there are the most terrible rumours circulating, is it true, I insist you tell me is it true that this young woman was his mistress?
- LORIS MELIKOV Forgive me, I cannot quite understand your exact meaning.
- COUNTESS Now between ourselves was she? (PAUSE) Come, now you know what I mean that young woman who shot General Trepov, was she or wasn't she?
- LORIS MELIKOV She most certainly was ^{not} General Trepov's mistress.
- COUNTESS And now you're laughing at me. I will not be provoked. Now simply, was she the mistress of Bob - God knows his name - the student, the one who was flogged. He should have been shot outright.
- LORIS MELIKOV I am afraid I must disappoint you, I really do not know. In her sworn statement she says she never saw or met him in her life. That is all I can tell you. Now I must ask you to excuse me -
- COUNTESS Zsulich, not a particularly romantic name but tell me is she very, very beautiful.
- LORIS MELIKOV I shouldn't imagine so.
- COUNTESS I have the most tremendous curiosity to see her, do you think that very foolish?
- LORIS MELIKOV Then it will be my privilege to present your ladyship with two tickets of attendance per day for the duration of the trial. And now you will have to forgive me, I have yet to make myself known to our hostess.

(HE BOWS AND LEAVES)

ORIMSKY It is rather a shame that it was Trepov she shot and not someone with a little more popular appeal. And then if he'd been killed and not merely wounded we would certainly be in a stronger position vis a vis the general opinion, don't you think?

COUNTESS What? Oh yes undoubtedly.

(SHE WALKS AWAY)

ORIMSKY Bitch.

LORIS MELIKOV My dear madam, I hope you will forgive me tardiness in expressing to you my very great pleasure -

MISS KONI Not at all - we are - we are very honoured and - proud to have you - to see you here in our home. Extremely so, Your excellency.

LORIS MELIKOV And might I also say, if it would not offend your husband, how very privileged we all are in having such a beautiful as well as such a gracious hostess.

KONI Good evening minister, I must say we hardly looked to have such an august member of the government at our very homely gathering.

LORIS MELIKOV Alas that so often the duties of state prevent one from enjoying the pleasure of such convivial society

ORIMSKY (TO HIMSELF) If they could only see what gibbons they look. Old Melikov with his creaking suspenders and little fat tummy. Her all flustered with a face as pink as boiled bacon and as for the husband - playing the stiff man of unimpeachable integrity - rub two kopecks together and he'd be rolling over on the carpet.

LORIS MELIKOV - a little word, that is all, I promise you that I shall not detain you for very long.

Miss Koni Certainly, please, certainly by all means.

KONI If your excellency would care to step into my study we will be able to talk at leisure.

LORIS MELIKOV Unnecessary my dear fellow -

ORIMSKY One day, one day I -

LORIS MELIKOV Might I introduce my personal secretary, Mr. Orimsky.

ORIMSKY Delighted to make your acquaintance. I have always been a fervent admirer of yours.

KONI Indeed?

ORIMSKY Fervent.

LORIS MELIKOV It is a sad business

ORIMSKY His excellency will be referring to the Trepov affair, it weighs heavily on all our minds.

LORIS MELIKOV Very disturbing.

KONI The young woman concerned has been arrested though.

ORIMSKY She virtually insisted on it.

LORIS MELIKOV It is a matter also, that must be treated with great delicacy.

KONI And with a strict adherence to justice.

LORIS MELIKOV Naturally.

ORIMSKY Naturally.

LORIS MELIKOV But there are peculiar and significant circumstances attached to this case, that make it more than ordinarily important that the presiding judge is a man of the highest probity and if possible without affiliation with any political faction, if you follow me?

KONI I believe I do.

LORIS MELIKOV The advice that a judge in this case might proffer to the jury in regards to the verdict must be seen as proceeding from an untainted source. I thought it advisable to ascertain your feelings on this matter before making any firm recommendations to the Tsar. And I am delighted and relieved tonote thatyou have no absolute objection.

KONI But I have not had time to consider -

LORIS MELIKOV IT would be a pity -

ORIMSKY A tragedy.

LORIS MELIKOV For a man of your ability to refuse such an opportunity. Many of us have been grieved that latterly you have not made that mark upon the world that your youth promised.

ORIMSKY Such a wonderful chance of coming to the favourable attention of our sovereign, the Tsar. Frankly, I envy you. Indeed I do.

LORIS MELIKOV Well, I can see your dear wife casting an anxious eye in our direction perhaps it would be as well to finish this little chat.

ORIMSKY For the moment.

LORIS MELIKOV I will send Mr. Orimsky to your charming house within the next day or two.

ORIMSKY A privilege, sir.

KONI As your excellency sees fit.

(HE BOWS AND WALKS AWAY)

ORIMSKY May I compliment you from the bottom of my heart, Your excellency a supreme example of skill and tact. We have him now, absolutely we have him trapped -

LORIS MELIKOV Trapped? .

ORIMSKY Forgive me, a figure of speech only.

LORIS MELIKOV He has been offered an opportunity to demonstrate his worth, this is all.

(PAUSE)

ORIMSKY I think I begin to discern the outline at least of your Excellency's intentions.

LORIS MELIKOV Well?

ORIMSKY It is a masterly plan if I understand it aright. A noted liberal such as Koni would do nothing to prevent a severe castigation and condemnation of Trepov occurring during the trial. That would inevitably implicate his immediate superior Count Pahlen.

LORIS MELIKOV That would seem likely, I fear Pahlen might well be very seriously embarrassed by his association with Trepov

ORIMSKY And if the outcome of the trial should, by any misfortune, fail to meet with the Tsar's approval, who is the Minister of Justice, who is responsible again, Pahlen.

LORIS MELIKOV Count Pahlen.

ORIMSKY If the verdict is the one the government hopes for then Koni will appear a coward and a renegade to his circle.

LORIS MELIKOV Alternatively if there is a verdict unfavourable to the government it will ensure a permanent end to his career. Truly his is an unenviable situation.

ORIMSKY

No matter how the verdict goes you will have successfully discredited the reactionaries in the person of Count Pahlen and the liberals in the person of Koni, leaving only the moderate middle ground so admirably occupied by yourself.

LORIS MELIKOV

It is a truism in politics that one must never neglect any opportunity for improving one's position, I have mentioned that to you before.

ORIMSKY

Indeed you have, your excellency, but I never tire of hearing you say it.

LORIS MELIKOV

It might prove advisable to have a discreet and accurate observer present during the trial in case any additional circumstances might arise.

ORIMSKY

It would be an honour, your excellency.

LORIS MELIKOV

Good, now I think it unnecessary for you to remain here any longer. You are, I know, a shy man and uncomfortable in society. I will make your apologies.

ORIMSKY

Thank you, your excellency. I will retire immediately.

(SCENE V)

(LOCATION - OUTSIDE THE COURT HOUSE DURING ZASULICH'S TRIAL .
CHARACTERS: VERA, SOFYA, ORIMSKY, THE COUNTESS, HER MAID)

VERA If only we could find a way to get inside, this waiting -

SOFYA God how I pity her - to endure such an ordeal alone and
treated as a piece of theatre, a circus attraction.

VERA There's someone coming out.

(ORIMSKY APPEARS)

SOFYA HE looks to be an amenable young man, ask him if there
is any news.

(VERA GOES OVER TO HIM)

VERA Excuse me, sir, I wonder if I could trouble you for a
moment.

ORIMSKY I have no time, madam, I am in a great hurry.

VERA Has there been a verdict? Forgive my abruptness I
have been unfortunate enough to have forgotten my ticket
to the trial today - today of all days.

(THE COUNTESS APPEARS ACCOMPANIED BY HER MAID)

COUNTESS - aghast, simply aghast there is no other word for it.
What is one to think?

ORIMSKY Forgive me for interrupting you Countess -

COUNTESS I beg your pardon.

ORIMSKY Perhaps you do not remember me, I was introduced to your ladyship three weeks ago last Thursday at the Koni household.

COUNTESS One meets so many people, now I look at you I do seem to recollect your face Mr er Mr

ORIMSKY Orimsky, Countess, I have the honour of being the personal assistant to His Excellency Mr. Loris Melikov.

SOFYA (TO VERA) Well, well

VERA - Ssh.

COUNTESS Then I suppose that we must thank you for this - fiasco.

ORIMSKY Me, madam? I am afraid -

COUNTESS You should be ashamed of yourselves, heartily ashamed.

ORIMSKY I am grieved to admit that I cannot quite follow -

VERA Forgive my interrupting your conversation I do not intend any impertinence -

COUNTESS Is this person attached to you, Mr. Orimsky.

ORIMSKY Indeed not, your ladyship.

VERA I merely wish to enquire if there has been any verdict as yet, that is all, then I will trouble you no more.

ORIMSKY The Zsulich woman has been found not guilty and acquitted. Now I must beg to refrain from pestering her ladyship any further.

VERA Not guilty! But that's impossible.

COUNTESS You might well be astonished, it is an outrage to any decent minded individual and an incitement for any of these lunatics to shoot who they please with impunity. The trial itself was a travesty, one would have been forgiven for assuming it was poor General Trepov that was on trial and not that Zsulich woman. Who was, by the by a most unprepossing figure and as plain as a, plain as a

MAID

Pikestaff, your ladyship?

COUNTESS

Don't interrupt me, my dear girl I am not in the humour for it. What will my husband say, he was warned again and again, a voice crying out in the wilderness. -

ORIMSKY

He has a very high reputation in government circles your ladyship.

COUNTESS

Government, I beg you will not use that word. It is the government that has brought us to this sorry pass -

SOFYA

Very true, they are responsible there can be no denying that.

COUNTESS

My God, here's another one of the Orimsky.

ORIMSKY

I never saw her before in my life, I can assure you Madam, Perhaps I should accompany your ladyship to your carriage before we are troubled with any more interruptions.

COUNTESS

I will have some very harsh words to say to your superior, you may warn him of that.

ORIMSKY

I am certain that this news will be the most terrible and unexpected shock to him, even though he is personally uninvolved with this matter. The prosecution of justice is the province of Count Pahlen, you will remember. What I find particularly difficult to understand is why he recommended that Koni should be the presiding judge, very strange.

COUNTESS Koni? - that man is either a fool or worse.

ORIMSKY Perhaps we should not discuss these matters quite so openly, though I would be extremely interested, extremely, in learning your opinions more fully.

COUNTESS If you would assist me in locating my carriage....

ORIMSKY It would be an immense honour, your ladyship.

(ORIMSKY AND THE COUNTESS EXIT)

SOFYA It is the most incredible, the most wonderful news I have ever heard in my life.

VERA I am so amazed I can hardly think.

SOFYA The people given even the smallest opportunity of expressing their real views are with us. There can be no doubt of it. What a set back for the government!

VERA Indeed it is.

SOFYA I could dance for joy.

VERA I wonder what they will do now?

(SCENE VI)

LOCATION - THE COURTROOM JUST AFTER THE TRIAL.
CHARACTERS: VERA ZASULICH, ANDDY KONI)

KONI The courtroom is empty, Miss Zasluch, you have no occasion to remain.

Zasluch Yes.

KONI Perhaps you are a little apprehensive of your reception outside? There is no need to be, the people gathered there are more than likely to be admirers of yours.

Zasluch IS it truly over then?

KONI As far as it concerns you, yes, you have been acquitted and now you are free. The jury found you innocent and that is the end of the matter.

ZASULICH This is madness.

KONI Surely you of all people can have no complaints of your verdict. Your lawyer presented a very skilful and subtle defence, admirable in its way, you have much to thank him for.

ZASULICH But I denied nothing, I wanted to deny nothing.

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KONI

Certainly the facts were irrefutable but the sympathy of the jury was yours from the beginning and that was played upon to great effect. Or perhaps it is enough to say that General Trepov is so universally disliked than an assassin, particularly female and of your class would be viewed with interest rather than with indignation. That is to say nothing of the glamour attached to your - profession, if I might use that word.

ZASULICH

How can you speak in such a fashion, there is no glamour in shooting a man.

KONI

No; indeed an that is entirely my view of the matter though I scarcely expected it to be yours (PAUSE)
It is possible to empathize with the reasons for your choice but impossible to condone the results.

ZASULICH

Believe me -

KONI

Yes, Miss Zasluch.

ZASULICH

What am I to do now?

KONI

Are you asking for my advice?

ZASULICH

You must understand that I abhor violence.

KONI

There is no need -

ZASULICH When I heard of how Boloyabov was treated, I was sickened physically. I couldn't sleep for nights, it was though I had a fever. I kept imagining tying him to the post and the sound of the whip, the cloth ripping, his skin ripping. And how humiliated he must have been to hear himself screaming like an animal, how ashamed. Nobody has the right -

KONI And yet you were prepared yourself to use violence, you were prepared to kill.

ZASULICH But outright and without cruelty and a man who deserves to die, one hundred times.

KONI Some might accuse you of adjusting your sensitivity to condemn in others what you absolve in yourself.

ZASULICH You misunderstand me, I am not attempting to absolve myself. I am guilty, God knows I am guilty and I expect - expected that I would pay in full. I was resolved. I was prepared to be shot or hung I was -

KONI We have not come to such a pass in Russia that we hang women. So my dear young lady, you expected to be made a martyr and now you feel thwarted?

ZASULICH No, it is not that either, I am not so romantic. I have no desire to be a martyr not in the least, but I was prepared for death that is what I meant. How could I care about the manner in which I might be viewed after I had died? Except to dread that others would and still might follow my example. Do you think -

KONI My advice, as you have requested it, is to quit Russia as soon as you are able.

ZASULICH What does that matter?

KONI The Tsar and most of his advisors will not be overly rejoiced at the result of this trial.

ZASULICH But you said I was acquitted.

KONI For a revolutionary you are being a little naive if you forgive me for saying so. This was a political trial and not only in the sense that you had intended it to be. Count Pahlen, Minister of Justice -

ZASULICH Hmm!

KONI Will be dismissed from office. I will be dismissed from office. Though what in God's name could they have expected me to do. I could not have quashed the jury's verdict, that would have been against the law (PAUSE) I have dedicated my life, my entire life, to instituting a legal system in Russia that would be the envy of the world. After years of lobbying, countless drafts my codification was finally ratified by the Tsar. And the showpiece was, by some exquisite irony, the introduction of trial by jury and it is by that I have been destroyed and my life's work destroyed. After this we will hear no more in Russia of trial by jury, the independence of the courts fragile as it was has been annihilated.

ZASULICH I am sorry for you, truly I am sorry.

KONI Thank you.

ZASULICH But if the reforms you managed to make were so fragile that one verdict that displeased the Tsar could destroy them -

KONI Institutions need time to accumulate authority, in ten years perhaps twenty the Tsar would have have found it as easy a matter to dismantle my legal code.

ZASULICH I think you are wrong.

KONI Do you indeed?

ZASULICH The authority of the Tsar is absolute, his power in Russia supercedes^{all} others until that is changed nothing can be changed. Any reform -

KONI Well I will have ample leisure in the future to consider this and similar issues.

ZASULICH I will go to Germany, perhaps Switzerland, I could not bear to remain here.

KONI That is a wise decision, there will almost certainly be instructions for your rearrest and immediate exile. Leave as soon as you can. Well it is time for me to return to my home.

ZASULICH I dread -

KONI I bid farewell, Miss Zasluch and hope -

ZASULICH

Do you believe me that truly I expected , I never expected to be released.

KONI

You are no longer on trial, my dear young lady, and I am no longer a judge. Goodbye Miss Zasluch.

(HE EXITS, ZASULICH HESITATES AND LEAVES)

ACT III

SCENE I

(LOCATION: LIPETSK, THE CONFERENCE OF LAND AND LIBERTY.
CHARACTERS: NICHOLAI, ANDREI, GOLDENBURG, SOFYA, VERA
KATENNA, DARYA)

(PEOPLE ARRIVING, SITTING DOWN, CHATTING)

NICHOLAI If it is agreeable to all present, I will begin.

KATENNA By all means.

GOLDENBURG We are all friends here.

NICHOLAI (READING) "As we are all aware the time is long overdue
for the populist movement to develop and exercise a
coherent strategy. Our failure to do this in the past
and our revulsion at the idea of hierarchical
organisations has seriously weakened our effectiveness.

GOLDENBURG You have put it, if I might interrupt you comrade,
you have put it in a nutshell.

ANDREI Go on, Nicholai.

NICHOLAI

For this reason I was delighted and heartened by the formation of 'Land and Liberty' at last we were co-ordinating our efforts into a new onslaught against the state. But - but the organisation has failed. It has changed nothing, it relies on worn out and failed strategies. We are still being urged to continue exactly the same kind of propaganda work that has achieved so little and cost us so much over the last 15 years. This despite the fact that the state assaults us with renewed vigour since the rise of Loris Melikov.

KATENNA

Comrade, when I was asked to attend this meeting, which I did reluctantly having no relish for secret meetings it was not to listen yet again to your criticisms of 'Land and Liberty'. These views you have expressed firmly and repeatedly over the last week. No, I came anxious to hear if the critic has anything to offer but criticism. Your proposals, comrade.

SOFYA

Katenna, please you should let him finish.

NICHOLAI

We are all agreed as to our arms.

ANDREI

Are we indeed?

NICHOLAI

Certainly insofar as no one present can envisage a future for Russia without revolutionary change.

GOLDENBURG

We will pour out our hearts blood to that end willingly and proudly.

NICHOLAI

We reject constitutionalism on the basis that it can profit only the ruling clique and encourage the emergence of a bourgeoisie that is, at the moment -

GOLDENBURG

Growing, comrade it is growing all the time and we must beware of it. Witness the fall of the Paris Commune, witness Germany witness - anywhere you like. Oh yes it is the great corrupter.

NICHOLAI

It is undeniably true that the ideal, the modern ideal instrument for the subjugation of the people is the bourgeoisie. I am aware that in Russia this class is so small that many might be deceived into thinking it negligible but once it is entrenched in power it will prove many times more difficult to remove than an autocracy. It is the deliberate policy of some advisors to the Tsar, Loris Melikov himself, to encourage the growth of this section of society. Encouraged by government or not, it could well be argued given our increasing links with the West, that the formation and dominance of this class is historically inevitable.

KARENNA

Interesting, very interesting, all that you're saying is probably true but where does it lead us ?

NICHOLAI

It reminds us that we must act swiftly.

ANDREI

Of course we should act swiftly, nothing is more obvious

KATENNA

You imply, comrade, that we have been doing nothing.

ANDREI

Books and leaflets, books and leaflets.

KATENNA

In Kiev we have done more than write and talk. Ten houses of the more notorious landlords have been burnt to ashes this year. And the governor of our province shot dead last year.

NICHOLAI But these can be seen only as skirmishes, we have not yet declared war.

KATENNA Eight comrades have been hung for these skirmishes.

VERA You need to explain y ourself, Nicholai.

KATENNA Does he talk for everyone, is no one else allowed to speak.?

VERA We must be ruthless in our criticism of ourselves, that does not deny the sacrifice of your comrades.

GOLDENBURG Braver men never lived.

KATENNA And they have not always exacted vengeance from our victories. As all know, Comrade Goldenburg here shot and killed Kropotkin, Governor of Kharkov and one of the cruellest men in Russia, shot him and was not apprehended.

GOLDENBURG I was merely an instrument of the revolution.

ANDREI (TO VERA) All the same, I wish he was less of a fool.

VERA I have never trusted him since Zurich. Still perhaps we have misjudged him.

ANDREI Katenna, it must be said, however painful it is to hear it, that we are bluntly losing. We have failed, but we can choose another path and to do that we must not be afraid to be critical, we must first analyse our mistakes and then we must act.

NICHOLAI It seems to me that if we are to cause the maximum upheavel and thereby createthe opportunity for revolution we must strike at the centre. Nothing else will do (PAUSE) I am proposing therefore that we direct ourselves not towards the various functionaries of the state but at the heart of the state itself. We must condemn Tsar Alexander to death.

GOLDENBURG Bravo!

KATENNA It has been attempted before.

NICHOLAI By isolated individuals, not by a group dedicated to that sole aim.

KATENNA Land and Liberty will not support you.

ANDREI We are old friends, Katenna, we have been through much together.

KATENNA Andrei, don't try -

ANDREI You know how close to my heart is the liberty of the Ukraine, but I know it is not possible to effect a separate uprising there without first disjointing the centre of Russian power. At ChirgnW hundreds died and we were no nearer to the revolution.

KATENNA You will kill the Tsar and then, what then?

DARYA If the Tsar is assassinated, it will never be the same in Russia again, will it?

VERA His power is very real, we have all experienced that but it is also what he symbolizes our little father, the holy and untouchable king. Without the Tsar how can the state be? He is the State.

KATENNA You remember he has a son, another Alexander.

SOFYA We do not just destroy one man, we destroy a myth. And we make it clear to everyone that nobody is exempt from the people's justice.

KATENNA But will the people accept this? If we have not prepared them what will result except confusion and fear. Nicholai if - if - I accept your idea, I do not disagree with you but we need more time.

DARYA Good God, how many times must it be said? They have us hamstrung. We lose more people every week. We are always on the defensive, always on the run. How much longer will we survive I ask and I answer maybe with luck one year and only that if we are not betrayed.

KATENNA The principle of our movement has always been to work with the people and not to act without them, otherwise what are we, a political conspiracy, Jacobins. They understand well enough and approve and participate when we burn landowners houses, the governor being assassinated they understand but the Tsar is too remote from them, he's like a god.

SOFYA Exactly.

KATENNA If you succeed it will not be a revolution, it will be a coup because the people are not with you.

DARYA How many years must go by before the people will rise. The movement has existed 15 years how much longer can we survive?

KATENNA This is desperation, you are not discussing strategies, underneath all I hear is desperation.

ANDREI If we succeed in this, it will bring hope back to Russia it will be the end of despair.

KATENNA I will tell you finally that Land and Liberty will have nothing to do with this. I will have nothing to do with this. You must go your own way as I see you are determined to do.

SOFYA Can we reach no agreement.

KATENNA That is not possible we have moved too far apart.

(KATENNA GETS UP)

KATENNA I can think of nothing more to say. Goodbye comrades.

ANDREI Good fortune, Katenna.

(SHE EXITS)

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ANDREI

To hell with it!

NICHOLAI

It would have been extremely useful to have such a comrade especially one living in the South.

ANDREI

Its a very pretty stroke of fate that the first all Russian revolutionary group, that we have all been longing for, is rent in two within a matter of months. It's enough to make you spit.

GOLDENBURG

It is temporary, not a split we must remember that we are just different facets of the same coin.

ANDREI

Ah, are you still here Gregori?

DARYA

How many people do you suppose will be with us?

ANDREI

Why did you speak so little during the meeting Sofya, and so little now, it is most unlike you?

SOFYA

Because I agree completely with Nicholai, without hesitation, but still the idea of it - it horrifies me.

VERA

No one, no true revolutionary, can be complacent with the idea of killing. It is not possible to be so.

GOLDENBURG

Besides which, he, I refuse to acknowledge him as Tsar, he deserves to die.

ANDREI Thats a little convoluted comrade, at least for a simple fellow, like me. We kill this man because he is the Tsar, if we do not acknowledge him as that then why on earth would we wish to kill him?

DARYA We will have to leave shortly.

NICHOLAI We must decide first on the structure and name of our organisation and then discuss how we will achieve -

GOLDENBURG Success!

NICHOLAI As we take this action on behalf of the people and in the name of the people, I think it appropriate that that should be indicated in the name. Therefore I recommend Vera's suggestion "The People's Will".

DARYA Agreed.

ANDREI We have discussed this before, I think we all accept it.

VERA As to the structure of the organisation, we should contact all those who we believe will be with us.

SOFYA Geysa will be released soon.

GOLDENBURG Who is Geysa?

VERA

There will not be more than thirty. We will elect by secret ballot a central committee with complete organisational control. They will decide the time and place for the action.

GOLDENBURG

Death to the Tsar!

SOFYA

We do it because it is necessary, it is not a thing to be relished.

SCENE II

(LOCATION: ODESSA, A RAILWAYMAN'S HUT.
CHARACTERS: ANDREI, SOFYA, GODENBURG)

(ANDREI SITS SMOKING. SOFYA STUDYING
PAPERS)

ANDREI Definitely it is a wonderful way to live being a railway porter. Running around waving flags and shouting at people, we should tell Goldenburg about it. And when the train pulls in, there you are opening carriage doors for all these high born society ladies.

SOFYA You would enjoy that.

ANDREI And then home in the evening to your little missus. Without doubt a wonderful life (PAUSE) What are you doing?

SOFYA Going over the plans again of course.

ANDREI To hell with the plans,

SOFYA I would rather do that than listen to you.

ANDREI That is a very cruel thing to say.

SOFYA Is it , indeed?

ANDREI Besides which if Vera drew them up you may be certain they are accurate to an inch.

SOFYA Nevertheless we have already made too many mistakes we can afford to make no more. Remember this is the sixth attempt.

ANDREI Seventh. By God its the seventh but take hear they haven't caught us yet.

SOFYA If only we were more certain about the right quantities to use, Katunu would have succeeded but for that.

ANDREI As it was all he managed to do was spill the Tsar's soup. Well even Nicholai knows very little about nitroglycerine just enough to be able to make it (PAUSE) Imagine though, them all sitting down in the Winter Palace just about to ladle soup into their mouths and - womf - they get a face full of it.

SOFYA Your sense of humour -

ANDREI Is an absolute necessity for any serious revolutionary. Put those plans down for a moment and talk with me, I promise you I will be as serious, as serious as Nicholai discussing Hegel (PAUSE) Perhaps you will like me to sing for you, or dance, or tell you wild improbably Ukranian stories?

SOFYA Why are you behaving in this fashion? You can judge for yourself that I am busy.

ANDREI No you are just fretting yourself unnecessarily. You need to stop worrying, Sofya, you are too tired for it to be of the least use.

SOFYA And perhaps because you are restless and want company

ANDREI Perhaps.

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SOFYA

Do you suppose Vera will be here soon?

ANDREI

To hell with - I suppose this long waiting and anxiety affects each one differently. Me, I become exuberant, and you huddle back into yourself and Vera - what a change in her, she was so nervous and uncertain when we first met her.

SOFYA

In four years, we have all changed since the beginning.

ANDREI

Only Nicholai has not solid as a rock and utterly the same. Come to that neither has Comrade Goldenburg. I would rather go swimming in quicksand than place any reliance on him.

SOFYA

He does his work well even though -

ANDREI

Even though he is an idiot.

SOFYA

Even though you despise him, a lesser man would have been offended, more than offended when we excluded him from the Central Committee.

ANDREI

We are still stuck with him even so. How he loves it, running round the countryside - courier extraordinary - very well we will not argue about him.

SOFYA

I am beginning to believe that you are an incurable gossip.

ANDREI

It is the oddest thing, with all this weighing down on us, I have truly never been so happy in my life as I am now. Why is that?

SOFYA Because now we know exactly what we must do, how can we be afraid now? Our fear was our uncertainty, we were never afraid of anything else.

ANDREI And what better time in all the world could there be to be in love .

SOFYA Now may I continue to study the plans?

ANDREI We will study them together comrade. Well, what worries you? We have the first mine laid a quarter of a mile from the station, the second tunnel just before the viaduct we will mine tonight. That is that, as foolproof a plan as we are likely to devise.

SOFYA We thought that before and then we blew up the wrong train.

ANDREI Ah but this time we know that always the Tsar's train goes first, we will not blow up his - what do you call it? - again.

SOFYA Entourage. I hope to God we do not.

ANDREI Do you know what I think, I think that our Nicholai is in love with Vera.

SOFYA Andrei!

ANDREI And the worst of it is, I do not believe she has even noticed.

SOFYA If she has not then you say nothing to her.

ANDREI But maybe -

SOFYA I have told you before that many of us, the women that is, have chosen to deny ourselves that kind of love as far as our natures permit. Think of Geysa who can never see her child. We have burdens enough.

ANDREI ^{why} And then have you changed, if that was your decision?

SOFYA Because now - what can it matter now? We have so little time.

ANDREI And that is the only reason?

SOFYA Andrei.

ANDREI IF We do not succeed this time, then we must abandon the whole idea of mining railways, it will be proved to be impracticable. No, I have a scheme myself to use in Petersburg where we have more comrades and can move about attracting less attention than newcomers do in a small town like Odessa.

SOFYA What is your plan?

ANDREI It is not yet fully prepared. Our main weakness has always been that we rely totally on one assault we should prepare a second attack should the first fail or only partially succeed. For instance, if we mine somewhere and for whatever reason it fails to blow we should use projectile bombs as a -

(GOLDENBURG ENTERS)

GOLDENBURG I must beg you comrades to lower your voices, who knows perhaps a police informer may have been listening behind that door and not myself. I distinctly heard the words projectile, mine, bomb -

ANDREI What in hell are you doing here?

(SOFYA LAUGHS)

GOLDENBURG (LOOKING ROUND) Not bad, not bad at all and you Comrade Sofya if I might say so, might be taken by the most discerning eye as nothing than the wife of a humble mechanic.

ANDREI Are you completely mad?

GOLDENBURG I am a courier from the Executive Committee. I understand you are perhaps a little taken aback by my sudden arrival but there is no need, no necessity to use intemperate and if I may say so, abusive language.

ANDREI Imbecile, have you not even managed to keep the sense you were born with? Idiot to arrive here just to walk through the door, dressed like a dandy, twenty neighbours might have seen you. And tonight of all nights when we have work to do.

GOLDENBURG That's all off.

ANDREI What do you mean? Sofya what does he mean? God grant me patience.

SOFYA Andrei stop ranting, Grogori sit down and explain to us why you have come.

GOLDENBURG My meaning I have encapsulated buy for your benefit comrade I will expand myself. I set out two days ago travelling on the express train from Petersburg unfortunately I was forced to make a detour due to a derailment at Penn-

ANDREI What is he talking about?

GOLDENBURG I must insist, yes insist, on being treated with some respect. I am aware that you, with no prov cation on my part, have seen fit to treat me like an inexperienced amateur. I am not, sir. No I am not. Why this is so, what are your motives I do not enquire. Do you hear me I do not enquire!

SOFYA That is enough. Comrade Goldenbrug if you have some message from Petersburg please deliver it.

GOLDENBURG It has been decided by those members of the Executive Council of the People's Will who have remained in Petersburg that the attempt on the Tsar's life due to take place sometime in this week in Odessa must be called indefinitely.

SOFYA The reason?

GOLDENBURG It was felt that the explosive substances that were to be used in this attempt might be more - we have had so many failures, comrades, mining the railways. It was felt that the explosive substances might be more successfully used in Petersburg itself.

ANDREI Damn.

GOLDENBURG The suggestion or rather the idea to use them in the capital came originally I believe from Comrade Andrei.

ANDREI To hell with it. This time I am certain, convinced we will succeed.

SOFYA Everything has been prepared. Everything. The Tsar's train is due tomorrow.

GOLDENBURG I am grieved to bring you these disconcerting tidings, comrades. Nevertheless it is an order. We are experiencing great difficulties in obtaining or rather manufacturing the explosive substances as I am sure -

ANDREI Yes, yes.

GOLDENBURG Also you have been instructed to ^{return} Petersburg.

SOFYA Immediately?

ANDREI No, that's impossible, we have first to remove the nitroglycerine and that will not prove easy. It may take two days before we are ready to transport it to Petersburg, we must not draw any further attention to ourselves. When is Vera due here?

SOFYA Not until ten.

GOLDENBURG I have been delegated with the responsibility to transfer or otherwise transport the explosive substances to Petersburg. You will remove it from where ever it is hidden or - er - disposed place it in my care and return instantly.

ANDREI There's no sense in that.

GOLDENBURG Sense or nonsense it is an order. You are bound without questions to obey instructions issued by the Executive Committee, even if you are a member of that Committee.

ANDREI Theres committees, if you like, without question -

SOFYA It would be easier for us to undertake the transportation. A couple travelling together is less conspicuous than one man travelling alone, besides which Andrei's position as a railway worker -

GOLDENBURG Naturally I have an adequate cover provided. My name is Ivan Streskovsky, an academy teacher from Petersburg who has journeyed to Odessa to collect his father's belongings, who has recently died. That will explain the trunk.

ANDREI If they look into^{say}the trunk you will^{the} explosives are a family heirloom? Never mind. Theres nothing more than needs discussion. As soon as its dark I'll be off to collect the stuff, it'll take me a few hours at least. I'll need to fill in the tunnels and put everything to rights as well as I can. Come back here at 7 in the morning.

SOFYA I'll remain here to inform Vera of the change in the plans.

GOLDENBURG Good, that's all agreed then. I suppose I may as well return to my hotel until the time indicated, would that be best?

ANDREI Yes but next time you visit a working class quarter try to wear less distinguished clothes. You look very nice but very obvious.

SOFYA All being well we will meet again in Petersburg.

GOLDENBURG Won't you still be here when I return?

ANDREI I will, Sofya has other work to do.

GOLDENBURG Now we are certain that we have discussed everything,
there are no confusions?

ANDREI None.

GOLDENBURG I may as well return then to the hotel?

SOFYA That would be best.

GOLDENBURG Then I will say farewell and wish you both good
fortune.

ANDREI I wish you the same comrade.

(GOLDENBURG EXITS)

ANDREI I begin to fear that this Tsar bears a charmed life.

SOFYA Poor Fellow.

ANDREI What?

SOFYA No, I was thinking of Goldenburg.

SCENE III

(LOCATION: - POLICE STATION.

CHARACTERS: GOLDENBURG, POLICE INSPECTOR, SERGEANT)

GOLDENBURG My name is Ivan Streskovsky -

INSPECTOR They always start by telling us their names, I've often wondered why.

GOLDENBURG Travelling, I was travelling on a train from Petersburg, no I was travelling to Petersburg. I was returning from Odessa, my father -

INSPECTOR And then they start interrogating themselves perhaps they are trying to do us out of a job, they probably think they'd be better at it themselves. Or maybe we look a little tired sergeant and they take pity on us.

GOLDENBURG I don't know anything.

INSPECTOR And before anyone accuses them of anything off they go protesting their innocence. Its very odd.

GOLDENBURG Please -

INSPECTOR Mark my words sergeant, he'll be in tears in a few minutes. It is all very boring isn't it. Still perseverance is a policeman's motto, perseverance and patience. To be perfectly frank with you sergeant, I've already taken quite a dislike to this fellow which is unfortunate considering how much time I'm going to spend with him.

GOLDENBURG You cannot intimidate me. I am not afraid of you. Never.

INSPECTOR It's his voice I think, I've never taken kindly to shrill voices or perhaps its his nasty habit of rubbing his sweaty greasy hands down his trousers when he thinks I'm not looking. Do you suppose he'll come up with an interesting explanation of what he was doing with a trunk full of nitroglycerine?

GOLDENBURG The trunk, someone must have, it wasn't my trunk at all. It's a mistake. I've never seen that trunk before in my life. I'm a teacher.

INSPEC Neither convincing nor original still sergeant we must not be disappointed, we must remember that not everyone has your skill as a raconteur.

GOLDENBURG Its true I swear to you. I'm telling you the truth as God is my witness I never -

INSPECTOR Do I look like an idiot sergeant? I will admit freely that I am not an especially handsome man but still do I look like an idiot?

GOLDENBURG My God, why do you not speak directly to me, this is intolerable.

INSPECTOR Your name is Gregori Goldenburg, you were born twenty seven years ago in Moscow. Your father was an academy teacher. Your mother died when you were fifteen, a relief to everyone as her morals were less than unimpeachable.

GOLDENBURG That's not true!

INSPECTOR

We keep very exhaustive files on you people. You were a great disappointment to your father, a man of some taste. He sent you to live with a sister of his in Hamburg.

You attended the university there and became infected with socialism. After failing your degree you travelled to Paris, Zurich etcetera running around after various intellectual emigre groups in the hopes that someone would take

GOLDENBURG

Lies! You're lying.

INSPECTOR

Sadly for your self esteem I'm not. You will appreciate that we keep ourselves very well informed as to the activities, the politics and the personalities of our emigres. The majority of the groups have been infiltrated by us, your comrades and our agents are sometimes one and the same. But you know all this already. Perhaps you are more astute than you appear, there is something on your file here that indicates you were very helpful to us in Paris.

GOLDENBURG

I don't know what you're talking about.

INSPECTOR

Surely you recall Yartsev, yes I see you do. All those interesting chats you used to have with him? Personally I believe him to be one of the worst agents we have, very clumsy, but it appears that he convinced you. Or maybe he didn't. Perhaps it was an insurance policy or were you trying to play both ends?

GOLDENBURG

I hardly knew him, I never told him anything of importance.

INSPECTOR

True, but you told him everything you knew. Well he certainly was convinced that it would be the easiest thing in the world to recruit you, and idiot that he is, he would not make that kind of mistake.

GOLDENBURG

I will never betray -

INSPECTOR He probably felt it was scarcely worth the effort, a very understandable mistake but a mistake nevertheless. Still, we mustn't be too hard on him sergeant we must just take note that our young revolutionaries are desperate for personnel. Infinitely more desperate than we are. We appear to have rather lost sight of you when you returned to Russia, but I suppose one can assume you joined 'Land and Liberty'

GOLDENBURG I refuse to answer your questions.

INSPECTOR I think I've hurt his feelings sergeant so now he is determined to impress me with a display of resolute courage. Its the predictability that maddens me more than anything. We are aware that the organisation disintegrated into two factions at Lipetsk and that the smaller faction calling themselves "The People's Will" have made various cowardly attempts on the life of our Tsar.

GOLDENBURG I want a glass of water.

INSPECTOR Sergeant, fetch the prisoner a glass of water.

(THE SERGEANT DOESN'T MOVE)

INSPECTOR The People's Will can have no more than fifty members at best. At the moment we are unable to locate any of it's members and to be frank we are not entirely sure who any of them are. There now isn't that an admirable display of honesty?

GOLDENBURG You're trying to trick me.

INSPECTOR Every day there are after fifty house searches in Petersburg alone, we have informers on every street, the rope is tightening round their throats. You're running out of time Gregori.

GOLDENBURG I won't tell you anything, I won't.

INSPECTOR I haven't asked you to tell me anything now have I?
(PAUSE) Have I?

GOLDENBURG No but you're threatening me.

INSPECTOR Calm down for God's sake, nobody's threatening you. What would be the point, surely you can see that for yourself. You're an intelligent man and if you're not it scarcely matters. I don't have to threaten you it is perfectly clear what is going to happen. You'll either spend the rest of your life in prison or you'll be hung.

GOLDENBURG I am not afraid.

INSPECTOR Oh yes you are, you're terrified. Still if it comforts you, you will even be of use to your cause for once as a martyr. A solitary martyr as most of your comrades will flee abroad once the news of your arrest filters through.

GOLDENBURG You said I could have a glass of water.

INSPECTOR Yes, so I did.

SCENE IV

LOCATION - A SAFE HOUSE IN ETERSBURG
CHARACTERS: NICHOLAI, VERA, DARYA AND SOFYA)

(NICHOLAI IS HOLDING ONE OF THE PROJECTILE BOMBS
VERA PACES THE ROOM RESTLESSLY.)

NICHOLAI The dynamite is loaded in this chamber here -

VERA I'm 'sorry Nicholai, what were you saying?

NICHOLAI The main consideration I had in designing them was to
limit the explosion to a small area, thereby to ensure
that nobody passing by not even his own escort would
be hurt. This, of course, without limiting their
effectiveness.

VERA I hope they are not too complicated remember the young
men that Andrei recruited are not likely to be
technically minded.

NICHOLAI Operationally they are very simple. Once the fuse is
ignited all that is required is an accurate aim.

VERA I cannot understand why I am feeling so distracted today.

NICHOLAI Perhaps if you were to sit down and talk -

VERA Still one way or another it will all be finished with
soon.

NICHOLAI It is important not to exhaust ourselves prematurely
we have still three more days work before we are fully -

(DARYA ENTERS)

DARYA I will stay only a moment. First, everything goes well, we have managed to print five hundred leaflets, some are already on their way out of Russia the rest -

VERA Only five hundred Darya that will never -

DARYA We were lucky to manage even so many, I have never worked with a worse printing press.

VERA I was not criticising -

DARYA We will have to rely on comrades in Kiev and Kazan, Moscow and so on to print more if they are able to.

NICHOLAI What are your instructions now?

DARYA Andrei insists that the press is removed from Petersburg immediately I am to take it to a safe place, where I cannot tell you, he was very strict about that.

NICHOLAI A wise precaution, the less any of us know -

DARYA I'll have to leave now. I had to lock Ivan in the apartment, that and not the printing has been my greatest problem. I'm terrified that he might say something inadvertently during one of his drinking bouts. Thanks to God he provides me with an excellent excuse for keeping to myself with the neighbours. As well as giving us such an ordinary appearance, an harassed looking woman and a drunken man. Anyway has there been any news from Geysa?

VERA She was here earlier and reported that all goes well at the cheese shop. The tunnel under the road is completed but they are worried that there might not be enough nitroglycerine. -.

DARYA Has Goldenburg not arrived yet?

VERA No but we do have another three days as Nicholai was just reminding me.

NICHOLAI He will have needed to exercise a great degree of caution in the route he is taking to Petersburg. As he well knows all the main railway stations and staging posts will have numerous informers and police agents vigilantly on the lookout for anything suspect.

VERA Anyway to cheer your spirits Darya, I will tell you something that is almost unbelievable. Yesterday, three Health Board Officials, obviously police agents, called at the cheese shop and said they had received complaints about the quality of the cheese. They insisted on a complete tour of the premises.

DARYA What did Yuri do?

VERA What could Yuri do? He took them round the shop, complaining all the while of the decline in trade and the terrible taxation just like a proper shopkeeper. He delayed as long as he could taking them down into the cellar where the others were frantically hiding all the evidence of the tunnel excavation. Eventually they insisted and so he is forced to take them down. Everything appears perfectly normal until one of the officials observed a small pile of fresh damp earth in the corner. Whats that, he says and Yuri immediately answers very loftily as though the man is an ignorant fool, that doesn't he know all cheese store rooms have a pile of damp earth in them to keep the cheese moist? Magnificent wasn't it?

DARYA AND that was believed?

VERA They have not returned since and if they were suspicious he would have been arrested and imprisoned that day. No the explanation of it is this. They are so inundated with denunciation and accusations, hundreds a day probably, that -

(SOFYA ENTERS AND SITS DOWN QUIETLY)

VERA - they lack the time to investigate anything very thoroughly.

DARYA Yuri would have enjoyed playing the disgruntled shop-keeper. There is a man who would have been a great actor.

VERA Its strange to imagine what any one of us might have been, if circumstances had allowed. I would have been a doctor, perhaps even a surgeon, I would have enjoyed that. And Nicholai would have been a great scientist, an inventor of marvellous things.

NICHOLAI Do you think so Vera?

VERA Certainly.

NICHOLAI I know I would have preferred not to have been a designer of bombs.

SOFYA Are they ready Nicholai?

NICHOLAI Yes, all they require now is to be given their explosive charges. To ensure there are no accidents I will not do that until the night before the assassination.

SOFYA You will have to do it tonight.

NICHOLAI I don't understand you.

SOFYA

The plans have been changed, the Tsar will be assassinated tomorrow.

NICHOLAI

But we are still expecting the nitroglycerine, Goldenburg -

SOFYA

We will have to manage with the quantities we have already.

VERA

Sofya, what has happened?

SOFYA.

Andrei has been arrested.

(PAUSE)

DARYA

Andrei.....?

SOFYA

Last night, they came for him last night.

NICHOLAI .

My dear Sofya.

SOFYA

Geysa went to his apartment this afternoon, He wouldn't let me stay with him there, he said it entailed too much risk. She went there this afternoon, there were still police in the house. She realized immediately how important it was to know if all has been discovered or was it ^{just} chance? She stayed near by, gossiping with everyone and anyone to find out how he had been arrested.

DARYA

That was brave of her.

VERA

And did she, did she learn anything?

SOFYA

Goldenburg.

NICHOLAI

What? Are you saying that -

SOFYA It was not chance that he was taken, somebody close to him betrayed him.

DARYA But why haven't we -

SOFYA Andrei's address was the only one he knew. He was to deliver the nitroglycerine there. Andrei gave him that address in Odessa so he was forced to remain there knowing it was a risk. He wouldn't let me stay with him for that reason.

VERA This is a terrible blow for all of us but for you Sofya.....

SOFYA We had six months together, I have that to be grateful for.

DARYA Does it mean that Goldenburg was a police agent? What does it mean?

SOFYA In a way that scarcely matters, the main thing we have to console ourselves with is that he knows nothing of the plan.

NICHOLAI Unfortunately in that sense our position is not so very different from his. The only person who knew all the details and arrangements, particularly timing was Andrei. Without him we are in fragments.

DARYA Then we must start from the beginning - again.

SOFYA I know the plan

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VERA

Forgive me Sofya but we can afford no -

SOFYA

I know the plan.

VERA

Are you sure, every detail of it?

SOFYA

I have said I do. This time tomorrow the Tsar will be dead.

VERA

Then you must give us our instructions.

SOFYA

Geysa has informed our comrades at the cheese shop to be in readiness. I myself will go to the bomb throwers to warn them to be prepared for tomorrow. Darya, you will leave Petersburg. And Nicholai, Vera will assist you in priming the bombs: now. You will take them tomorrow at nine o'clock in the morning to the cafe where they will be collected. Darya it would be better if you were to leave now.

DARYA

I understand, though I wish to God I could stay here with you.

VERA

We will meet soon enough, never fear.

SOFYA

Tomorrow when you hear the bells you will know we have succeeded.

(THEY ALL KISS DARYA GOODBYE, SHE LEAVES)

SOFYA

The man who will collect the bombs is named Rysakov, he has a moustache and will be wearing a green cloth coat with brass buttons. The parcel should be wrapped with brown paper. After passing them to him do not leave the cafe immediately, sit awhile, read the newspaper. Is that all settled then?

VERA

What am I to do tomorrow?

SOFYA

position yourself near the cheese shop with a clear view of the road, if you see the Tsar's carriage approaching signal to Yun, he must remain within the shop. If he does not take that route then he will have to cross over the bridge in order to return to the Winter palace. I will position the bomb throwers along the railings of the canal. There will be four of them. I will give the signal to begin the attack. If by a miracle they do not succeed in killing the Tsar they will at least create sufficient confusion to allow me to get close enough to shoot him.

NICHOLAI

It is a well devised plan, for Andrei's sake we will succeed.

SOFYA

It must be understood that every individual completing his or her task is to remove from the scene as fast as possible.

VERA

And afterwards?

SOFYA

Remain in Petersburg for two days at least before you attempt to leave, then make your own time back to Moscow. You must work on your own initiative until we can re establish contact.

NICHOLAI

And I?

SOFYA Kazan. Forgive me, I must leave immediately to contact Rysakov, is everything clear to you?

VERA You will need a warm coat on that bridge tomorrow, it is very cold by the river.

(SOFYA LAUGHS)

SOFYA My dear friends.

(SHE LEAVES, THE OTHERS BEGIN WORK ON THE BOMBS)

(THE ASSASSINATION - MIMED - POSSIBLY USING SOUND)

SCENE V

LOCATION: PRISON VAN
CHARACTERS: SOFYA, ANDREY, NICHOLAI, RYSAKOV AND TINOFEY
(SAT WITH HANGMAN HOODS OVER THEIR FACES)

RYSAKOV How much longer?

ANDREY Soon enough, do not be anxious.

RYSAKOV God help me.

ANDREY This is no time to be a coward.

RYSAKOV What do I care now? Go on in you like playing the man
of iron til the last but I made of flesh and blood and
I am afraid.

SOFYA We are all afraid Rysakov but we are not all abject

RYSAKOV They said imprisonment, they promised me imprisonment
if I confessed.

TINOFEY Young man do you have to talk so much?

Rysakov Yes, I want to talk and talk and hear my voice and feel
my heart beating as long as I am able.

ANDREY Its a great pity now that one cannot choose the company
one dies in, having lived with fools all my life it
would have been good to die without them eh Sofya.

SOFYA

Hold my hand Andrey.

Rysakov

Why have they hooded us. I want to see. I want to see.
(SCREAMS) Guards take this thing from my face, you have
no right -

NICHOLAI

I regret only that I did not live to see the revolution
come.

Rysakov

My god even now, even now you still donot realise anything.
Revolution who cares about revolution. You are going to
be hung you fool, does that mean nothing to you.

ANDREY

Tiresome isn't he, Nicholai?

NICHOLAI

Of course I would prefer not to die -

Rysakov

Prefer?!

NICHOLAI

But having succeeded in our aim I can at least console
myself with the knowledge that we have cleared the
people's path of a great tyrant.

RYSAKOV

You're mad thats what you are, your mad - who cares if
the Tsar is dead I don't give a damn if they Tsar is dead.

ANDREY

Rysakov, it is hard to forgive you for the way you
behaved during the trial and for the fact that you
were prepared to be chief witness for the prosecution
against us your comrades. Nevertheless I do forgive
you indeed I blame myself as it was my responsibility
that you were recruited. But now I beg you do not
betray yourself, be firm in y our beliefs, it will aid
you with what is to come.

SOFYA

We must remember also that with luck it will be only us
that are executed.

NICHOLAI

And some escaped altogether. I am very glad they did not capture Vera, that eases me.

SOFYA

And we have gained -

RYSAKOV

Please, please tell me what we have gained.

SOFYA

For myself the distinction of being the first woman political prisoner ever to be hung in Russia.

Rysakov

Are you joking?

NICHOLAI

She will continue our work, never fear, new organisations will spring up, having gained knowledge from our experiences. From such a blow as we have delivered the state will never recover, perhaps it will only be months until the people rise. And they will mark March 1st, 1881 the day the Tsar was assassinated, as the first day of their freedom.

Rysakov

What will that matter to us?

SOFYA

Are you cold Andrey? Your hands are very cold.

ANDREY

He is right about the hoods anyway, I wish I could see your face.

SOFYA

Why have they hooded us, no one can see us it's a closed carriage not even the air can get it.

ANDREY

For when we arrive the crowds will pity us less if they cannot see our faces, no detail is too small for our authorities. As we are now we will strike them with horror and revulsion or so they hope.

Rysakov

Will it - hurt very much do you suppose?

(SILENCE)

ANDREY

It will not take long.

SOFYA

I can bear this better than a lifetime in Schullenburg fortress.

RYSAKOV

I do not want to die believe me I want to live.

(RYSAKOV BEGINS TO CRY)

SOFYA

The carriage has stopped, we have arrived.

(TINOFEY STANDS, NICHOLAI HELPS RYSAKOV TO HIS FEET.
ANDREY AND SOFYA KISS ONE ANOTHER THROUGH THE HOODS)

SOFYA

Come then comrades, let's not keep them waiting.

T H E E N D