



The Just Assassins, Albert Camus

The Just Assassins
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THE JUST ASSASSINS

A PLAY IN FIVE ACTS

O love! O life! not life, but love in death!

ROMEO AND JULIET ACT IV, SCENE 5

CHARACTERS IN THE PLAY

DORA DULEBOV

THE GRAND DUCHESS

IVAN KALIAYEV

STEPAN FEDOROV

BORIS (BORIA) ANNENKOV

ALEXIS VOINOV

SKURATOV

FOKA

THE GUARD

LES JUSTES (THE JUST ASSASSINS) was presented for the first time at the THÉÂTRE-HÉBERTOT, Paris, on December 15, 1949.

ACT I

The terrorists' headquarters: a sparsely furnished apartment of an ordinary type. The morning sun is shining through a window overlooking a main street in Moscow. When the curtain rises DORA DULEBOV and BORIS ANNENKOV are standing in the middle of the room. For some moments there is complete silence; then the front doorbell rings once. DORA seems about to say something, but ANNENKOV signals to her to keep quiet. Two more rings in quick succession.

ANNENKOV: It's he. [He goes out. DORA waits, still motionless; she has not moved at all since the curtain rose. ANNENKOV returns with STEPAN, whom he is grasping affectionately by the shoulders.] Here he is! Stepan's back again!

DORA [going toward STEPAN and clasping his hand]: Welcome back, Stepan.

STEPAN: Good morning, Dora.

DORA [gazing at him]: Three years—just think!

STEPAN: Yes, three long, empty years. That day when they arrested me I was on my way to join you.

DORA: We were expecting you every moment. I'll never forget how my heart sank, deeper and deeper, as the minutes ticked away. We didn't dare to look each other in the face.

ANNENKOV: And of course we had to move at once to a new apartment.

STEPAN: I know.

DORA: And over there, Stepan, how was it?

STEPAN: Over there?

DORA: In the prison, I mean.

STEPAN: One escapes ... with luck.

ANNENKOV: Yes. When we heard that you'd got through to Switzerland, well, you know how we felt.

STEPAN: Switzerland, too, is a prison.

ANNENKOV: Oh, come now! They're free there, anyhow.

STEPAN: Freedom can be a prison, so long as a single man on earth is kept in bondage. I myself was free, of course, but all the time I was thinking of Russia and her slaves.

[A short silence.]

ANNENKOV: I'm glad, Stepan, that the party sent you here.

STEPAN: They had to. That atmosphere of smug inertia was stifling me. Ah, to act, to act at last ...! [Looks at ANNENKOV.] We shall kill him, you're sure of that?

ANNENKOV: Quite sure.

STEPAN: We shall kill that bloodthirsty tyrant! Ah! You're the leader, Boria, and I shall obey you, never fear.

ANNENKOV: I don't need your promise, Stepan. We all are brothers.

STEPAN: But discipline's essential. That's something I learned in the convict prison. The Revolutionary Socialist Party cannot do without it.

We must be disciplined if we're to kill the Grand Duke and put an end to tyranny.

DORA [going up to him]: Sit down, Stepan. You must be tired after that long journey.

STEPAN: I'm never tired. [A short silence. DORA sits down.] Is everything ready, Boria?

ANNENKOV [in a different, brisker manner]: For a month now, two of our group have been watching the Grand Duke's movements hour by hour. Dora has compiled all the facts we need to know.

STEPAN: Has the proclamation been drawn up?

ANNENKOV: Yes. All Russia will know that the Revolutionary Socialist Party has executed the Grand Duke Serge so as to bring nearer the day when the Russian people are set free. And the Imperial Court will learn that we are resolved to carry on the reign of terror, of which this bomb is the beginning, until the land is given back to its rightful owners, to the people. Yes, Stepan, everything's set, and we won't have long to wait.

STEPAN: Where exactly do I come in on this?

ANNENKOV: To begin with, you will help Dora. You'll replace Schweitzer, who used to work with her.

STEPAN: Has he been killed?

ANNENKOV: Yes.

STEPAN: How?

ANNENKOV: In an accident.

[STEPAN looks at DORA. She lowers her eyes.]

STEPAN: And then?

ANNENKOV: Then ... we'll see. You must be on hand to replace me if the need arises, and to ensure our liaison with the Central Committee.

STEPAN: And our comrades here—who are they?

ANNENKOV: You met Voinov in Switzerland. He's only a youngster, but thoroughly dependable. Then there's Yanek; you don't know him, do you?

STEPAN: Yanek?

ANNENKOV: His real name is Ivan Kaliayev. "The Poet" is another name we have for him.

STEPAN: That's no name for a terrorist.

ANNENKOV [laughing]: Yanek wouldn't agree with you. He says all poetry is revolutionary.

STEPAN: There's only one thing that is revolutionary: the bomb. [A short silence.] Do you think, Dora, that I can be of help to you?

DORA: I'm sure you can. The great thing to be careful about is not to break the tube.

STEPAN: And if it breaks?

DORA: That's how Schweitzer died. [Again, a short silence.] Why are you smiling, Stepan?

STEPAN: Am I smiling?

DORA: Yes.

STEPAN: I sometimes do—not very often, though. [Pauses. He seems to be reflecting.] Tell me, Dora, would one bomb be enough to blow up this house?

DORA: To blow it up? Hardly that. But it would do quite a lot of damage.

STEPAN: How many bombs would be needed to blow up Moscow?

ANNENKOV: Have you gone crazy?... Or what do you mean?

STEPAN: Oh, nothing.

[A ring at the front doorbell. They wait, listening. Two more rings.

ANNENKOV goes out into the hall and comes back with VOINOV.]

VOINOV: Stepan!

STEPAN: Good morning, Voinov.

[They shake hands. VOINOV goes up to DORA and kisses her.]

ANNENKOV: Everything go off all right, Alexis?

VOINOV: Yes.

ANNENKOV: Have you studied the route from the palace to the theater?

VOINOV: I can make a sketch of it right away. Look! [He draws a plan.] Turnings, narrow streets, crossings.... The carriage will go by under our windows.

ANNENKOV: What do those two crosses mean?

VOINOV: One's a little square where the horses will have to slow down; the other's the theater where they will stop. Those are the best places in my opinion.

ANNENKOV: Right. Give it to me.

STEPAN: Many police spies around?

VOINOV [uneasily]: I'm afraid so.

STEPAN: Ah! Do they rattle you?

VOINOV: Well, I can't say I feel at ease when they're around.

ANNENKOV: Nobody does. You needn't worry over that.

VOINOV: It's not that I'm afraid; only somehow I can't get used to lying.

STEPAN: Everybody lies. What's important is to lie well.

VOINOV: That's what I find so hard. When I was at the university the other students were always teasing me because I never could hide my feelings. I always blurted everything out. Finally, I was expelled.

STEPAN: Why?

VOINOV: In the history course my tutor asked me how Peter the Great founded Saint Petersburg.

STEPAN: That's a good question.

VOINOV: I answered: "With blood and the knout." I was promptly expelled.

STEPAN: Yes? And then?

VOINOV: Then I realized that just to denounce injustice wasn't enough. One must give one's life to fighting it. And now I'm happy.

STEPAN: And yet—you have to lie?

VOINOV: For the present, yes. But I'll be done with lying on the day I throw the bomb.

[The bell purrs: two rings in quick succession, then a single ring. DORA runs out.]

ANNENKOV: That's Yanek.

STEPAN: It wasn't the same signal.

ANNENKOV: Oh, that's one of Yanek's little jokes. He has his private signal.

[STEPAN shrugs his shoulders. DORA is heard speaking in the hall. DORA and IVAN KALIAYEV enter arm in arm. KALIAYEV is laughing.]

DORA: Yanek, this is Stepan, who's replacing Schweitzer.

KALIAYEV: Welcome, brother.

STEPAN: Thanks.

[DORA and KALIAYEV sit down, facing the others.]

ANNENKOV: Yanek, are you sure you'll recognize the carriage?

KALIAYEV: Yes, I've had two good long looks at it. I'd recognize it among a thousand, a hundred yards away. I have noted every detail—for instance, that one of the panes of the left-hand lamp is chipped.

VOINOV: And the police spies?

KALIAYEV: A host of them. But we're old friends; they buy cigarettes from me. [Laughs.]

ANNENKOV: Has Pavel confirmed our information?

KALIAYEV: The Grand Duke is due to go to the theater this week. In a few minutes Pavel will know the exact day and leave a message with the door porter. [He turns to DORA with a laugh.] We're in luck, Dora!

DORA [Staring at him]: I see you've discarded your peddler's outfit. You're quite the grand gentleman today, and I must say it suits you. But don't you miss your smock?

KALIAYEV [laughing]: I certainly do. You can't think how proud of it I was. [To STEPAN and ANNENKOV.] I began by spending two months watching peddlers on their job; then another month or so practicing in my little bedroom. My colleagues never suspected a thing. I heard one of them saying: "He's a wonder! Why, he'd sell the Czar's horses and get away with it!" In fact they tried to learn my tricks.

DORA: And of course you laughed.

KALIAYEV: You know quite well I can't help laughing. Anyhow, it was all so entertaining—the plunge into a brand-new life, wearing that fancy dress....

DORA: I can't bear fancy dress. Look at what I'm wearing now. Some actress's castoff frock. Really, Boria might have chosen something else.

There's nothing of the actress about me. I've an incorrigibly simple heart.

KALIAYEV [laughing]: But you look so pretty in it.

DORA: Pretty! I'd like to be pretty ... but that's one of the things I mustn't think about.

KALIAYEV: Why not? Dora, there's always such a sad look in your eyes. But you should be gay, you should be proud. There's so much beauty in the world, so much joy. "In those quiet places where my heart once spoke to yours ..."

DORA [smiling]: "... I breathed eternal summer."

KALIAYEV: Oh, Dora, you remember those lines! And you're smiling! How glad I am!

STEPAN [brusquely]: We're wasting our time. Boria, hadn't we better go down and see the porter?

[KALIAYEV stares at him, puzzled.]

ANNENKOV: Yes. Would you go down, Dora? Don't forget the tip. Then Voinov will help you to get the stuff together in the bedroom.

[They go out by different doors. STEPAN moves toward ANNENKOV, with an obstinate expression on his face.]

STEPAN [fiercely]: I want to throw the bomb.

ANNENKOV: No, Stepan. That's already been decided.

STEPAN: Boria, I beg you to let me throw it—you know how much that means to me.

ANNENKOV: No. Orders are orders. [A short silence.] I'm in the same position; I have to stay here while others man the firing line. It's hard, but discipline must be maintained.

STEPAN: Who is to throw the first bomb?

KALIAYEV: I am. And Voinov the second.

STEPAN: You?

KALIAYEV: Why do you sound so surprised? Don't you feel I can be trusted?

STEPAN: Experience is needed.

KALIAYEV: Experience? But you know quite well that one throws a bomb just once—and then ... No one has ever had a second chance.

STEPAN: A steady hand is needed.

KALIAYEV [stretching out his hand]: Look! Do you think that hand will tremble? [Stepan looks away.] It'll be steady as a rock, I assure you, when the time comes. Or do you suppose I'd hesitate when I have that tyrant in front of me? No, you can't seriously imagine that. And even if for some reason my arm started shaking, I know a certain way of killing the Grand Duke.

ANNENKOV: What way?

KALIAYEV: I'd throw myself under the horses' feet. [With a petulant heave of his shoulders, STEPAN goes to the back of the room and sits down.]

ANNENKOV: No, that's not on the program. Your orders are to try to get away. The group needs you, and you must save your life, if you can.

KALIAYEV: Then—so be it! I realize the honor that's being done me, and I promise to be worthy of it.

ANNENKOV: You, Stepan, will be in the street while Yanek and Alexis are waiting for the carriage. I want you to stroll up and down in front of our windows; we'll settle on the signal you're to give. I and Dora will wait here, ready to launch our manifesto when the moment comes. With any reasonable luck we'll lay the Grand Duke low.

KALIAYEV [excitedly]: Yes, I'll lay him low. And how glorious if it comes off! Though, of course, the Grand Duke's nothing. We must strike higher.

ANNENKOV: The Grand Duke to begin with.

KALIAYEV: And suppose we fail? Then, Boria, we must act like the Japanese.

ANNENKOV: What do you mean?

KALIAYEV: During the war the Japanese never surrendered. They killed themselves.

ANNENKOV: No, Yanek, don't think of suicide.

KALIAYEV: Of what, then?

ANNENKOV: Of carrying on our work, of terrorism.

STEPAN [speaking from the back of the room]: To commit suicide a man must have a great love for himself. A true revolutionary cannot love himself.

KALIAYEV [swinging round on him]: A true revolutionary? Why are you behaving to me like this? What have you got against me?

STEPAN: I don't like people who dabble with revolution simply because they're bored.

ANNENKOV: Stepan!

STEPAN [rising to his feet and coming toward them]: Yes, I'm brutal. But for me hatred is not just a game. We haven't joined together to admire each other. We have joined together to get something done.

KALIAYEV [gently]: Why are you being rude to me? Who told you I was bored?

STEPAN: There was no need to tell me. You change the signals, you enjoy dressing up as a peddler, you recite poems, you want to throw yourself under horses' feet, and now you're talking about suicide. [Looks him in the eyes.] No, I can't say you inspire me with confidence.

KALIAYEV [mastering his anger]: You don't know me, brother. I'm never bored, and I love life. I joined the revolution because I love life.

STEPAN: I do not love life; I love something higher—and that is justice.

KALIAYEV [with a visible effort to control himself]: Each of us serves the cause of justice in his own manner; you in yours and I in mine. Why not agree to differ? And let's love each other if we can.

STEPAN: We cannot.

KALIAYEV [losing control] : What then are you doing among us?

STEPAN: I have come to kill a man, not to love him, or to agree to differ from him.

KALIAYEV [passionately]: You will not kill him single-handed, or on behalf of nothing. You will kill him with us, on behalf of the Russian people. That is what justifies your act.

STEPAN [fiercely]: Don't prate of justification! I got all the justification I need three years ago, one night in the convict prison. And I refuse to tolerate ...

ANNENKOV: That's enough. Have you both gone off your heads? Have you forgotten what binds us together? That we all are brothers, working hand in hand, to punish the tyrants and set our people free? Together we shall kill, and nothing can divide us. [They are silent. He gazes at them for a moment.] Come along, Stepan, we'll have to settle on the signal. [STEPAN leaves the room. To KALIAYEV.] Don't take it to heart, Yanek. Stepan has suffered terribly. I'll talk to him.

KALIAYEV [who is very pale]: He insulted me, Boria. [DORA enters.]

DORA [after a glance at KALIAYEV] : What's wrong?

ANNENKOV: Nothing. [Goes out.]

DORA [to KALIAYEV]: What's wrong?

KALIAYEV: We've come to words already. He doesn't like me.

[DORA sits down. For some moments neither speaks.]

DORA: Stepan doesn't like anybody; that's how he is. But he will be happier when everything is over. Don't be sad, Yanek.

KALIAYEV: I am sad. I want you all to love me. When I joined the group I cut adrift from everything, and if my brothers turn against me, how can I bear it? Time and again I feel they do not understand me. Perhaps it's my fault. I know I'm often clumsy, I don't say the right things, I ...

DORA: They love you and they understand you. Only, Stepan's different.

KALIAYEV: No. I can guess what he thinks; I heard Schweitzer say much the same thing: "Yanek's too flighty, too eccentric for a revolutionary." I'd have them know that I'm not the least bit flighty. I imagine I strike them as being impulsive, crackbrained very likely. Yet I believe in our ideal quite as firmly as they do. Like them, I'm ready to give my life up for it. I, too, can be cunning, silent, resourceful, when it's called for. Only, I'm still convinced that life is a glorious thing, I'm in love with beauty, happiness. That's why I hate despotism. The trouble is to make them understand this. Revolution, by all means. But revolution for the sake of life—to give life a chance, if you see what I mean.

DORA [impulsively]: Yes, I do! [After a short silence, in a lower voice.]
Only—what we're going to give isn't life, but death.

KALIAYEV: We? Oh, I see what you mean. But that's not the same thing at all. When we kill, we're killing so as to build up a world in which there will be no more killing. We consent to being criminals so that at last the innocent, and only they, will inherit the earth.

DORA: And suppose it didn't work out like that?

KALIAYEV: How can you say such a thing? It's unthinkable. Then Stepan would be right—and we'd have to spit in the face of beauty.

DORA: I've had more experience than you in this work, and I know that nothing's so simple as you imagine. But you have faith, and faith is what we need, all of us.

KALIAYEV: Faith? No. Only one man had faith in that sense.

DORA: Well, let's say then that you have an indomitable soul, and you will see it through, no matter at what cost. Why did you ask to throw the first bomb?

KALIAYEV: When one's a terrorist can one talk of direct action without taking part in it?

DORA: No.

KALIAYEV: And one must be in the forefront, of course....

DORA [musingly]: Yes, there's the forefront—and there's also the last moment. We all should think of that. That's where courage lies, and the selfless ardor we all need ... you, too, need.

KALIAYEV: For a year now that has never left my thoughts; I've been living for that moment day by day, hour by hour. And I know now that I'd like to die on the spot, beside the Grand Duke. To shed my blood to the last drop, or blaze up like tinder in the flare of the explosion and leave not a shred of me behind. Do you understand why I asked to throw the bomb? To die for an ideal—that's the only way of proving oneself worthy of it. It's our only justification.

DORA: That's the death I, too, desire.

KALIAYEV: Yes, the happiest end of all. Sometimes at night when I'm lying awake on the thin straw mattress that's all a peddler can afford,

I'm worried by the thought that they have forced us into being murderers. But then I remind myself that I'm going to die, too, and everything's all right. I smile to myself like a child and go happily to sleep.

DORA: That's how it should be, Yanek. To kill, and to die on the spot. But, to my mind, there's a still greater happiness. [She falls silent. KALIAYEV gazes at her. She lowers her eyes.] The scaffold!

KALIAYEV [with feverish excitement]: Yes, I, too, have thought of that. There's something incomplete in dying on the spot. While between the moment the bomb is thrown and the scaffold, there is an eternity, perhaps the only eternity a man can know.

DORA [clasping his hands; earnestly]: And that's the thought which must help you through. We are paying more than we owe.

KALIAYEV: What do you mean?

DORA: We're forced to kill, aren't we? We deliberately immolate a life, a single life?

KALIAYEV: Yes.

DORA: But throwing the bomb and then climbing the scaffold—that's giving one's life twice. Thus we pay more than we owe.

KALIAYEV: Yes, it's dying twice over. Thank you, Dora. There's nothing with which anyone can reproach us. Now, I'm sure of myself. [A short silence.] What is it, Dora? Why are you silent?

DORA: I'd like to help you in another way as well. Only ...

KALIAYEV: Only ... what?

DORA: No, I'd better not....

KALIAYEV: Don't you trust me?

DORA: It's not that I don't trust you, darling; I don't trust myself. Ever since Schweitzer's death, I've been having ... queer ideas. And anyhow it's not for me to tell you what will be so difficult.

KALIAYEV: But I like things that are difficult. Unless you have a very low opinion of me, say what you have in mind.

DORA [gazing at him]: I know. You're brave. That, in fact, is what makes me anxious. You laugh, you work yourself up, you go forward to the sacrifice in a sort of rapture. But in a few hours' time you'll have to come out of your dream and face reality, the dreadful thing you are to do. Perhaps it's best to speak of this beforehand—so that you won't be taken by surprise, and flinch.

KALIAYEV: That's nonsense! I shall not flinch. But please explain ...

DORA: Throwing the bomb, the scaffold, dying twice over—that's the easier part. Your heart will see you through. But standing in the front line.... [She pauses, scans him again, and seems to hesitate.] You'll be standing in front, you'll see him....

KALIAYEV: See whom?

DORA: The Grand Duke.

KALIAYEV: Oh, only for a moment at most.

DORA: A moment during which you'll look at him. Oh, Yanek, it's best for you to know, to be forewarned! A man is a man. Perhaps the Grand Duke has gentle eyes, perhaps you'll see him smiling to himself, scratching his ear. Perhaps—who knows?—you'll see a little scar on his cheek where he cut himself shaving. And, if he looks at you, at that moment....

KALIAYEV: It's not he I'm killing. I'm killing despotism.

DORA: That's quite true. And despotism must be killed. I'll get the bomb ready and when I'm screwing in the tube—that's the moment when it's touch and go, and one's nerves are taut—I'll feel a queer little thrill ... of joy. But, then, I don't know the Grand Duke; it wouldn't be anything so easy if while I was screwing in the tube he were sitting in front of me, looking at me. But you'll see him quite near, from only a yard or two away.

KALIAYEV [vehemently]: I shall not see him.

DORA: Why? Will you shut your eyes?

KALIAYEV: No. But, with God's help, my hatred will surge up just in time, and blind me.

[A single ring at the bell. They keep very still. STEPAN and VOINOV enter. Voices in the hall. Then ANNENKOV, too, comes in.]

ANNENKOV: It's the porter. The Grand Duke's going to the theater tomorrow. [Looks at them.] Please see that everything is ready, Dora.

DORA [in a low, toneless voice]: Yes. [She walks slowly out.]

KALIAYEV [after watching her receding form, turns to STEPAN and says with quiet assurance.] I shall kill him. With joy!

CURTAIN

ACT II

Scene as before. Night has fallen. BORIS is at the window, DORA beside the table.

ANNENKOV: They're at their posts. Stepan has just lit his cigarette.

DORA: When is the Grand Duke expected to drive by?

ANNENKOV: Any moment now. Listen! Isn't that a carriage?... No.

DORA: Don't fidget like that! Do sit down.

ANNENKOV: What about the bombs?

DORA: Do sit down.... There's nothing more we can do.

ANNENKOV: Yes, there is. We can envy them.

DORA: Your place is here. You are the leader.

ANNENKOV: I'm the leader, yes. But Yanek's a better man than I, and perhaps he is the one who ...

DORA: The risk's the same for all. For the man who throws and for the man who doesn't throw.

ANNENKOV: In the long run, yes, the risk's the same. But at this moment Yanek and Alexis are in the firing line. Oh, I know I haven't the right to be with them. Still, I can't help fearing sometimes that I'm a little too ready to play my part; after all it ... it makes things easier, not having to throw the bomb oneself.

DORA: What if it does? The only thing that matters is for you to do your duty, to the end.

ANNENKOV: How calm you are, Dora!

DORA: I am not calm; I'm frightened.... Let me tell you something. I've been with the group for three years, haven't I? And for two years I've been making the bombs. I have done all I was told to do, and I don't think I ever let you down. That's so, isn't it?

ANNENKOV: Of course it is, Dora.

DORA: Well, all those three years I have been afraid; I have been haunted by that creeping fear that leaves you only when you go to sleep, and are lucky enough not to dream; but when you wake up, there it is, waiting at your bedside.... So the only thing was to get used to it. I've trained myself to keep calm just when I'm most afraid. But it's nothing to be proud of.

ANNENKOV: On the contrary, you should feel proud. Look at me! I've never mastered anything. Do you know, I often catch myself regretting the bad old days—a gay life, pretty women, and all the rest of it! Yes, I was fond of women, wine, dancing through the night....

DORA: I'd guessed as much, Boria, and that's why I am so fond of you. Your heart is not dried up. Even if it's still hankering after pleasure, surely that's better than the hideous silence that often settles in at the very place where voices used to rise—authentically human voices.

ANNENKOV: Dora! I can't believe my ears! You, of all people, feel like that?

DORA: Ssh! Listen. [She puts a finger to her lips, listening intently. A distant rumble of wheels; then silence.] No. It's not he, not yet. My heart's thumping. You see! I've still a lot to learn.

ANNENKOV [going to the window]: Ah! Stepan's made a sign. He's coming. [Again there is a rumble of wheels; it comes nearer and nearer, passes below the windows, then gradually recedes. A long silence.] In a few seconds ... [They listen.] How long it seems! [DORA makes a fretful gesture. A long silence. Suddenly, a peal of bells in the distance.] What can have happened? Yanek should have thrown his bomb by now. The carriage must have reached the theater. And what about Alexis? Look! Stepan's turned, now he's running toward the theater.

DORA [clinging to him]: Yanek's been arrested. I'm sure it's that. Oh, Boria, we must do something, we ...

ANNENKOV: Wait. [Listens.] No, nothing. That settles it.

DORA: I don't understand. How can Yanek have been arrested when he hasn't done anything? Oh, I know he was quite ready for it. In fact, prison, the trial, were what he wanted. But after he'd killed the Grand Duke. Not like this, not like this!

ANNENKOV [looking out]: Here's Voinov. Open, quick! [DORA opens the door. VOINOV enters; he is greatly agitated.] What's happened, Alexis?

VOINOV: I've no idea. I was waiting for the first bomb. Then I saw the carriage rounding the corner, and nothing'd happened. I was completely baffled. I thought a bit, then I concluded you had called it off at the last minute. So I ran back here.

ANNENKOV: What about Yanek?

VOINOV: I haven't seen him.

DORA: He's been arrested.

ANNENKOV [who is still looking out of the window]: No. There he is. He's coming back.

[Dora opens the door. KALIAYEV enters, his face streaming with tears.]

KALIAYEV: Brothers ... forgive me ... I couldn't bring myself ...

[DORA goes to him and clasps his hand.]

DORA [soothingly]: That's all right. Don't worry....

ANNENKOV: What happened?

DORA [to KALIAYEV]: Don't take it so hard, Yanek. Sometimes it's like that, you know; at the last minute everything goes wrong.

ANNENKOV: No, I can't believe my ears.

DORA: Let him be. You're not the only one, Yanek. Schweitzer, too, couldn't bring it off the first time.

ANNENKOV: Yanek, were you ... afraid?

KALIAYEV [indignantly]: Afraid? Certainly not—and you haven't the right ...

[A knocking at the door in the agreed code. At a sign from ANNENKOV, VOINOV goes out. KALIAYEV seems completely prostrated. A short silence. STEPAN enters.]

ANNENKOV: Well?

STEPAN: There were children in the Grand Duke's carriage.

ANNENKOV: Children?

STEPAN: Yes. The Grand Duke's niece and nephew.

ANNENKOV: But Orlov told us the Grand Duke would be by himself.

STEPAN: There was the Grand Duchess as well. Too many people, I suppose, for our young poet. Luckily, the police spies didn't notice anything.

[ANNENKOV speaks in a low tone to STEPAN. All are gazing at KALIAYEV, who now looks up and fixes his eyes on STEPAN.]

KALIAYEV [wildly]: I'd never dreamed of anything like that. Children, children especially. Have you ever noticed children's eyes—that grave, intent look they often have? Somehow I never can face it. I have to look away.... And, to think, only a moment before I was so gloriously happy, standing at the corner of that little side street, in a patch of shadow. The moment I saw the carriage lamps twinkling in the distance, my heart began to race. With joy, I can assure you. And as the rumble of wheels came nearer, it beat faster and faster. Thumping inside me like a drum. I wanted to leap into the air. I'm almost sure that I was laughing, laughing for joy. And I kept on saying: "Yes ... Yes ..." Do you understand? [Averting his gaze from STEPAN, he relapses into his dejected attitude.] I ran forward. It was then I saw the children. They weren't laughing, not they! Just staring into emptiness, and holding themselves very straight. How sad they looked! Dressed up in their best clothes, with their hands resting on their thighs, like two little statues framed in the windows on each side of the door. I didn't see the Grand Duchess. I saw only them. If they had turned my way, I think I might have thrown the bomb—if only to extinguish that sad look of theirs. But they kept staring straight ahead. [Raising his head, he looks at the others. Silence. Then, in a still lower voice] I can't explain what happened to me then. My arms went limp. My legs seemed to be giving way beneath me. And, a moment afterwards, it was too late. [Another

silence; he is staring at the floor.] Dora, did I dream it, or was there a peal of bells just then?

DORA: No, Yanek, you did not dream it.

[She lays her hand on his arm. KALIAYEV looks up and sees their eyes intent on him. He rises to his feet.]

KALIAYEV: Yes, look at me, brothers, look at me.... But I'm no coward, Boria, I did not flinch. Only I wasn't expecting them. And everything went with such a rush. Those two serious little faces, and in my hand that hideous weight. I'd have had to throw it at them. Like that! Straight at them. No, I just couldn't bring myself ... [He scans their faces.] In the old days when I used to go out driving on our estate in the Ukraine, I always drove hell-for-leather. I wasn't afraid of anything, except of running down a child—that was my one fear. I pictured a sort of brittle thud as the small head hit the roadway, and the mere thought of it made me shudder. [He is silent for some moments.] Help me ... [Another silence.] I meant to kill myself just now. I came back only because I thought I owed it to you; you were the only people who could judge me, could say if I was wrong or right, and I'd abide by your decision. But here I am—and you don't say anything. [DORA comes beside him, her hand brushing his shoulder. He looks round, then continues in a toneless voice] This is what I propose. If you decide that those children must be killed, I will go to the theater and wait till they are coming out. Then I shall handle the situation by myself, unaided; I shall throw the bomb and I can promise not to miss. So make your decision; I'll do whatever the group decides.

STEPAN: The group had given you orders to kill the Grand Duke.

KALIAYEV: That's so. But I wasn't asked to murder children.

ANNENKOV: Yanek's right. That wasn't on the program.

STEPAN: It was his duty to obey.

ANNENKOV: I was in charge of operations and I'm to blame. Every possibility should have been foreseen, so that no one could feel the least hesitation about what to do. Well, now we have to settle whether

we let this chance go by, or tell Yanek to wait outside the theater for them to come out. You, Alexis, what do you advise?

VOINOV: I don't know what to say. I suspect I'd have done as Yanek did. But I'm not sure of myself. [In an undertone] My hands—I can't trust them not to tremble.

ANNENKOV: And you, Dora?

DORA [emphatically]: I'd have behaved like Yanek. So how can I ask of others what I couldn't bring myself to do?

STEPAN: I wonder if you people realize what this decision means? Two solid months of shadowing, of hairbreadth escapes—two wasted months! Egor arrested to no purpose. Rikov hanged to no purpose. Must we start that all over again? Weeks and weeks of harrowing suspense without a break; of sleepless nights, of plotting and scheming, before another opportunity like this comes our way. Have you all gone crazy?

ANNENKOV: In two days' time, as you know quite well, the Grand Duke will be going to the theater again.

STEPAN: Two days during which we run the risk of being caught at any moment; why, you've said so yourself!

KALIAYEV: I'm off!

DORA: No, wait. [To STEPAN] You, Stepan, could you fire point blank on a child, with your eyes open?

STEPAN: I could, if the group ordered it.

DORA: Why did you shut your eyes then?

STEPAN: What? Did I shut my eyes?

DORA: Yes.

STEPAN: Then it must have been because I wanted to picture ... what you describe, more vividly, and to make sure my answer was the true one.

DORA: Open your eyes, Stepan, and try to realize that the group would lose all its driving force, were it to tolerate, even for a moment, the idea of children's being blown to pieces by our bombs.

STEPAN: Sorry, but I don't suffer from a tender heart; that sort of nonsense cuts no ice with me.... Not until the day comes when we stop sentimentalizing about children will the revolution triumph, and we be masters of the world.

DORA: When that day comes, the revolution will be loathed by the whole human race.

STEPAN: What matter, if we love it enough to force our revolution on it; to rescue humanity from itself and from its bondage?

DORA: And suppose mankind at large doesn't want the revolution? Suppose the masses for whom you are fighting won't stand for the killing of their children? What then? Would you strike at the masses, too?

STEPAN: Yes, if it were necessary, and I would go on striking at them until they understood.... No, don't misunderstand me; I, too, love the people.

DORA: Love, you call it. That's not how love shows itself.

STEPAN: Who says so?

DORA: I say it.

STEPAN: You're a woman, and your idea of love is ... well, let's say, unsound.

DORA [passionately]: Anyhow, I've a very sound idea of what shame means.

STEPAN: Once, and once only, in my life I felt ashamed of myself. It was when I was flogged. Yes, I was flogged. The knout—you know what that is, don't you? Vera was there beside me and she killed herself, as a protest. But I ... I went on living. So why should I be ashamed of anything, now?

ANNENKOV: Stepan, all of us love you and respect you. But whatever private reasons you may have for feeling as you do, I can't allow you to say that everything's permissible. Thousands of our brothers have died to make it known that everything is not allowed.

STEPAN: Nothing that can serve our cause should be ruled out.

ANNENKOV [angrily]: Is it permissible for one of us to join the police and play a double game, as Evno proposed to do? Would you do it?

STEPAN: Yes, if I felt it necessary.

ANNENKOV [rising to his feet]: Stepan, we will forget what you've just said, for the sake of all that you have done for us and with us.... Now, let's keep to the matter in hand. The question is whether, presently, we are to throw bombs at those two children.

STEPAN: Children! There you go, always talking about children! Cannot you realize what is at stake? Just because Yanek couldn't bring himself to kill those two, thousands of Russian children will go on dying of starvation for years to come. Have you ever seen children dying of starvation? I have. And to be killed by a bomb is a pleasant death compared with that. But Yanek never saw children starving to death. He saw only the Grand Duke's pair of darling little lapdogs. Aren't you sentient human beings? Or are you living like animals for the moment only? In that case by all means indulge in charity and cure each petty suffering that meets your eye; but don't meddle with the revolution, for its task is to cure all sufferings present and to come.

DORA: Yanek's ready to kill the Grand Duke because his death may help to bring nearer the time when Russian children will no longer die of hunger. That in itself is none too easy for him. But the death of the Grand Duke's niece and nephew won't prevent any child from dying of hunger. Even in destruction there's a right way and a wrong way—and there are limits.

STEPAN [vehemently]: There are no limits! The truth is that you don't believe in the revolution, any of you. [All, except KALIAYEV, rise to their feet.] No, you don't believe in it. If you did believe in it sincerely, with all your hearts; if you felt sure that, by dint of our struggles and sacrifices, some day we shall build up a new Russia, redeemed from despotism, a land of freedom that will gradually spread out over the whole earth; and if you felt convinced that then and only then, freed from his masters and his superstitions, man will at last look up toward the sky, a god in his own right—how, I ask you, could the deaths of two

children be weighed in the balance against such a faith? Surely you would claim for yourselves the right to do anything and everything that might bring that great day nearer! So now, if you draw the line at killing these two children, well, it simply means you are not sure you have that right. So, I repeat, you do not believe in the revolution. [There is a short silence. KALIAYEV, too, rises to his feet.]

KALIAYEV: Stepan, I am ashamed of myself—yet I cannot let you continue. I am ready to shed blood, so as to overthrow the present despotism. But, behind your words, I see the threat of another despotism which, if ever it comes into power, will make of me a murderer—and what I want to be is a doer of justice, not a man of blood.

STEPAN: Provided justice is done—even if it's done by assassins—what does it matter which you are? You and I are negligible quantities.

KALIAYEV: We are not, and you know it as well as anyone; in fact it's pride, just pride, that makes you talk as you are doing now.

STEPAN: My pride is my concern alone. But men's pride, their rebellion, the injustice that is done them—these are the concern of all of us.

KALIAYEV: Men do not live by justice alone.

STEPAN: When their bread is stolen, what else have they to live by?

KALIAYEV: By justice, and, don't forget, by innocence.

STEPAN: Innocence? Yes, maybe I know what that means. But I prefer to shut my eyes to it—and to shut others' eyes to it, for the time being—so that one day it may have a world-wide meaning.

KALIAYEV: Well, you must feel very sure that day is coming if you repudiate everything that makes life worth living today, on its account.

STEPAN: I am certain that that day is coming.

KALIAYEV: No, you can't be as sure as that.... Before it can be known which of us, you or I, is right, perhaps three generations will have to be sacrificed; there will have been bloody wars, and no less bloody revolutions. And by the time that all this blood has dried off the earth, you and I will long since have turned to dust.

STEPAN: Then others will come—and I hail them as my brothers.

KALIAYEV [excitedly, raising his voice]: Others, you say! Quite likely you are right. But those I love are the men who are alive today, and walk this same earth. It's they whom I hail, it is for them I am fighting, for them I am ready to lay down my life. But I shall not strike my brothers in the face for the sake of some far-off city, which, for all I know, may not exist. I refuse to add to the living injustice all around me for the sake of a dead justice. [In a lower voice, but firmly] Brothers, I want to speak to you quite frankly and to tell you something that even the simplest peasant in our backwoods would say if you asked him his opinion. Killing children is a crime against a man's honor. And if one day the revolution thinks fit to break with honor, well, I'm through with the revolution. If you decide that I must do it, well and good; I will go to the theater when they're due to come out—but I'll fling myself under the horses' feet.

STEPAN: Honor is a luxury reserved for people who have carriages-and-pairs.

KALIAYEV: No. It's the one wealth left to a poor man. You know it, and you also know that the revolution has its code of honor. It's what we all are ready to die for. It's what made you hold your head up, Stepan, when they flogged you, and it's behind what you have been saying to us today.

STEPAN [shrilly]: Keep quiet! I forbid you to speak of that!

KALIAYEV [angrily]: Why must I keep quiet? I took it lying down when you said I didn't believe in the revolution. Which was as good as telling me that I was ready to kill the Grand Duke for nothing; that I was a common murderer. I let you say that—and somehow I kept my hands off you!

ANNENKOV: Yanek!

STEPAN: It's killing for nothing, sometimes, not to kill enough.

ANNENKOV: Stepan, none of us here agrees with you. And we have made our decision.

STEPAN: Then I bow to it. Only, let me tell you once again that squeamishness is out of place in work like ours. We're murderers, and we have chosen to be murderers.

KALIAYEV [losing all self-control]: That's a lie! I have chosen death so as to prevent murder from triumphing in the world. I've chosen to be innocent.

ANNENKOV: Yanek! Stepan! That's enough of it. The group has decided that the slaughter of these children would serve no purpose. We must start again from the beginning, and be ready for another try at it in two days' time.

STEPAN: And supposing the children are there again?

KALIAYEV: Then we shall await another opportunity.

STEPAN: And supposing the Grand Duchess is with the Duke?

KALIAYEV: Her I shall not spare.

ANNENKOV: Listen!

[A rumble of carriage wheels. KALIAYEV is drawn irresistibly to the window. The carriage approaches, rattles past, recedes.]

VOINOV [looking at DORA, who has come toward him]: Well, Dora, that settles it; we'll have to make another try ...

STEPAN [disdainfully]: Yes, Alexis, another try!... But of course we must do something for our precious honor!

CURTAIN

ACT III

Two days later; the same place, at the same hour.

STEPAN: What's Voinov up to? He should be here.

ANNENKOV: He needs some sleep, and we've still a good half hour before us.

STEPAN: Suppose I went down to see if there's any news?

ANNENKOV: No. We must take no unnecessary risks. [A short silence.] Yanek, why are you so silent?

KALIAYEV: I've nothing to say. But you needn't feel any anxiety about me. [A ring at the bell.] Ah, here he is. [VOINOV enters.] Did you sleep?

VOINOV: Yes, a bit.

ANNENKOV: Did you sleep all night?

VOINOV: No, not quite all the night.

ANNENKOV: Well, you should have. There are ways of making oneself sleep.

VOINOV: I tried them. But I must have been overtired.

ANNENKOV: Your hands are shaking.

VOINOV: No. [All gaze at him.] Why are you eying me like that? Surely there's nothing so terrible about one's feeling tired?

ANNENKOV: That's not the point. It's about you we're troubled.

VOINOV [with sudden vehemence]: You should have thought about all that two days ago. If the bomb had been thrown then, we wouldn't be feeling tired today.

KALIAYEV: I'm sorry, Alexis; it's all my fault. I've made things harder for everybody.

VOINOV [in a quieter tone]: What do you mean? Why harder? I'm tired, and that's all there is to it!

DORA: Well, it won't be long now. In an hour's time all will be over.

VOINOV: Yes, all will be over. In an hour's time. [He glances uneasily round the room. DORA goes up to him and clasps his hand. He leaves his hand in hers for a moment, then snatches it away.] Boria, I want to talk to you.

ANNENKOV: In private?

VOINOV: Yes, in private.

[They exchange glances; then KALIAYEV, DORA, and STEPAN leave the room.]

ANNENKOV: Yes? What is it? [VOINOV keeps silent.] Out with it, Alexis!

VOINOV: I'm ashamed, Boria. [Silence.] Bitterly ashamed. But I must tell you the truth.

ANNENKOV: You don't want to throw the bomb, is that it?

VOINOV: I ... I can't bring myself to do it.

ANNENKOV: Do you mean you've panicked at the last moment? Is that all? There's nothing shameful in that.

VOINOV: I'm afraid, and I'm ashamed of my fear.

ANNENKOV: I can't understand. The day before yesterday you were so gay—and brave. Your eyes were sparkling when you went out.

VOINOV: I've always been afraid. Only somehow, the day before yesterday, I'd screwed up my courage. When I heard the carriage in the distance I said to myself: "Good! Only a minute more!" I gritted my teeth, every muscle in my body was taut as steel, and if I'd flung the bomb at that moment I really believe its mere impact would have killed the Grand Duke. I waited, waited, for the first explosion, which was going to release that pent-up energy. But it never came. The carriage rumbled by. How fast it went! It was past me in a flash. And then I realized that Yanek hadn't thrown his bomb. I went cold all over, icy cold. And suddenly all the strength went out of me and I felt weak as a child.

ANNENKOV: Don't take it to heart, Alexis. That was just a passing lapse; life and strength come back.

VOINOV: Two days have gone by but they haven't come back to me. Just now I lied to you; I couldn't sleep a wink last night. My heart was racing, racing.... Oh, Boria, I'm so miserable, so sick of everything!

ANNENKOV: Don't let what's happened get you down, Alexis. We've all had the same experience at some time or another. You won't be asked to throw the bomb. You must take a month's rest in Finland, and then come back to us.

VOINOV: No, it's not so simple as all that. If I don't throw the bomb today I shall never throw one.

ANNENKOV: Oh, come now! You're exaggerating.

VOINOV: No, Boria, it's the simple truth. I'm not made for terrorism; I realize that now. The best thing is for me to leave you. I'll do my bit in propaganda, on committees, and so forth.

ANNENKOV: The risk's the same.

VOINOV: Yes. But you can keep your eyes shut; you don't know—and that makes all the difference.

ANNENKOV: I don't follow.

VOINOV: One doesn't see what happens. It's easy to attend meetings, work out plans, and then pass orders for their carrying out. You risk your life of course, but there's a sort of veil between you and the—the real thing. It's a very different matter going down into the street when night is falling on the city, taking your stand among the crowds of people hurrying home to their evening meal, their children, the wife who's watching on the doorstep—and having to stand there, grim and silent, with the weight of the bomb tugging at your arm—and knowing that in three minutes, in two minutes, in a few seconds, you will dash out toward a carriage, bomb in hand. That's what terrorist action means and I know now that I couldn't start it all over again without feeling all the blood drained from my veins. Yes, I'm bitterly ashamed. I aimed too high. I must be given the place I am fit for. Quite a humble place, in the rank and file. The only one of which I am worthy.

ANNENKOV: There's no such place for any of us. All our paths lead to the same end: jail, the gallows.

VOINOV: Yes, but you don't see them as you see the man you have to kill. You have to imagine them. And, luckily for me, I have no imagination. [With a brief, nervous laugh] Do you know, I've never really believed in the secret police! Absurd, isn't it, for a terrorist? I'll believe they exist only when I get my first kick in the belly. Not before.

ANNENKOV: And when you are in prison? In prison you can't help knowing, and seeing. There's no more shutting your eyes to the facts.

VOINOV: In prison you have no more decisions to make. What a relief to feel that everything's decided for you! You haven't got to tell yourself: "Now it's up to you, you must decide on the moment when to strike." One thing I'm sure of now is that I shall not try to escape; for escaping, too, you need to make decisions, you have to take the initiative. If you don't try to escape, the others keep the initiative—they do all the work!

ANNENKOV: Sometimes the work they do is—hanging you!

VOINOV: I know that. But dying won't be so hard as carrying my life and another man's in the hollow of my hand and having to decide on the moment when I fling them both into a fiery death. No, Boria, the only way I have of making good is to accept myself as—what I am.

[ANNENKOV keeps silent.] Even cowards can help the revolution. It's up to them to find out in just what way they can be useful.

ANNENKOV: Then, in the last analysis, we all are cowards. Only, we don't always have opportunities of showing ourselves up.... That's settled then, Alexis; you'll do as you prefer.

VOINOV: I prefer to leave at once. I don't think I could bring myself to face them. But you'll tell them, won't you?

ANNENKOV: I'll tell them. [Moves toward VOINOV.]

VOINOV: Tell Yanek it's not his fault. And that I love him, as I love you all.

[A short silence. ANNENKOV embraces him.]

ANNENKOV: Good-by, brother. All things have an end. One day Russia will be a happy land.

VOINOV [as he hurries out of the room]: Yes, yes! May she be happy! May she be happy!

ANNENKOV [going to the door]: Come.

[All enter.]

STEPAN: What's happened?

ANNENKOV: Voinov will not throw the bomb. He's exhausted and he might muff it.

KALIAYEV: It's my fault, isn't it?

ANNENKOV: He asked me to tell you that he loves you.

KALIAYEV: Shall we see him again?

ANNENKOV: Perhaps. For the present, he's leaving us.

STEPAN: Why?

ANNENKOV: He'll be more useful on the committees.

STEPAN: Did he ask for this? Has he lost his nerve?

ANNENKOV: No. The decision was mine and mine only.

STEPAN: So at the eleventh hour you are changing all our plans?

ANNENKOV: At the eleventh hour, I've had to come to a decision, by myself. It was too late to talk it over with you. I shall take Voinov's place.

STEPAN: No. I have first claim to it.

KALIAYEV [to ANNENKOV]: You are our leader. Your duty is to stay here.

ANNENKOV: Sometimes a leader's duty is to act the coward. But on condition that he proves his courage when the need arises. I've made my decision. You, Stepan, will replace me for as long as is needed. Now, you must hear the program I've fixed up for each of you. Come!

[They go out. KALIAYEV sits down. DORA goes up to him, stretches out her hand; then thinks better of it.]

DORA: It's not your fault.

KALIAYEV: I've hurt him, hurt him cruelly. Do you know what he said to me the other day?

DORA: He was always saying how happy he was.

KALIAYEV: Yes. But he told me there was no happiness for him outside our comradeship. This is what he said: "We—the organization—stand for all that matters in the world today. It's like an order of chivalry come back to earth." Oh, Dora, what a shame this has happened!

DORA: He'll come back.

KALIAYEV: No. I can picture how I'd feel if I were in his position. I'd be heartbroken.

DORA: And now? Aren't you heartbroken?

KALIAYEV: Now? But I'm with you all, and I am happy—as he was happy.

DORA [musingly]: Yes, it's a great happiness.

KALIAYEV: None greater. Don't you feel as I do?

DORA: Yes ... But why then are you so depressed? Two days ago you looked so cheerful. Like a schoolboy going on vacation. But today ...

KALIAYEV: [rising to his feet; with a rush of bitterness]: Today I know something I did not know then. You were right, Dora; it's not so simple as it seems. I thought it was quite easy to kill, provided one has courage and is buoyed up by an ideal. But now I've lost my wings. I have realized that hatred brings no happiness. I can see the vileness in myself, and in the others, too. Murderous instincts, cowardice, injustice. I've got to kill—there are no two ways about it. But I shall see it through to the end. I shall go beyond hatred.

DORA: Beyond? There's nothing beyond.

KALIAYEV: Yes. There is love.

DORA: Love? No, that's not what is needed.

KALIAYEV: Oh, Dora, how can you say that? You of all people, you whose heart I know so well!

DORA: Too much blood, too much brutal violence—there's no escape for us. Those whose hearts are set on justice have no right to love. They're on their toes, as I am, holding their heads up, their eyes fixed on the heights. What room for love is there in such proud hearts? Love bows heads, gently, compassionately. We, Yanek, are stiff-necked.

KALIAYEV: But we love our fellow men.

DORA: Yes, we love them—in our fashion. With a vast love that has nothing to shore it up; that brings only sadness. The masses? We live so far away from them, shut up in our thoughts. And do they love us? Do they even guess we love them? No, they hold their peace. Ah, that silence, that unresponsive silence!

KALIAYEV: But surely that's precisely what love means—sacrificing everything without expecting anything in return?

DORA: Perhaps. Yes, I know that love, an absolute, ideal love, a pure and solitary joy—and I feel it burning in my heart. Yet there are times when I wonder if love isn't something else; something more than a lonely voice, a monologue, and if there isn't sometimes a response. And then I see a picture floating up before my eyes. The sun is shining, pride

dies from the heart, one bows one's head gently, almost shyly, and every barrier is down! Oh, Yanek, if only we could forget, even for an hour, the ugliness and misery of this world we live in, and let ourselves go—at last! One little hour or so of thinking of ourselves, just you and me, for a change. Can you see what I mean?

KALIAYEV: Yes, Dora, I can; it's what is called love—in the simple, human sense.

DORA: Yes, darling, you've guessed what I mean—but does that kind of love mean anything to you, really? Do you love justice with that kind of love? [KALIAYEV is silent.] Do you love our Russian people with that love—all tenderness and gentleness and self-forgetting? [KALIAYEV still says nothing.] You see. [She goes toward him. Her voice is very low.] And how about me, Yanek? Do you love me—as a lover?

KALIAYEV [after gazing at her in silence for some moments]: No one will ever love you as I love you.

DORA: I know. But wouldn't it be better to love—like an ordinary person?

KALIAYEV: I'm not an ordinary person. Such as I am, I love you.

DORA: Do you love me more than justice, more than the organization?

KALIAYEV: For me, you, justice, the organization are inseparable. I don't distinguish between you.

DORA: Yes. But do, please, answer me. Do you love me all for yourself ... selfishly ... possessively?—oh, you know what I mean! Would you love me if I were unjust?

KALIAYEV: If you were unjust and I could love you, it wouldn't be you I loved.

DORA: That's no answer. Tell me only this; would you love me if I didn't belong to the organization?

KALIAYEV: Then what would you belong to?

DORA: I remember the time when I was a student. I was pretty then. I used to spend hours walking about the town, dreaming all sorts of silly daydreams. I was always laughing. Would you love me if I were like that now—carefree, gay, like a young girl?

KALIAYEV [hesitantly, in a very low voice]: I'm longing, oh, how I'm longing to say Yes.

DORA [eagerly]: Then say Yes, darling—if you mean it, if it's true. In spite of everything: of justice, of our suffering fellow men, of human bondage. Do try to forget for a moment all those horrors—the scaffold, the agony of little children, of men who are flogged to death.

KALIAYEV: Dora! Please!

DORA: No, surely for once we can let our hearts take charge. I'm waiting for you to say the word, to tell me you want me—Dora, the living woman—and I mean more to you than this world, this foully unjust world around us.

KALIAYEV [brutally]: Keep quiet! My heart yearns for you, and you alone.... But, a few minutes hence I'll need a clear head and a steady hand.

DORA [wildly]: A few minutes hence? Ah, yes, I was forgetting.

[Laughing and sobbing at once] No, darling, I'll do as you want. Don't be angry with me—I was talking nonsense. I promise to be sensible. I'm overtired, that's all. I, too, I couldn't have said—what I wanted you to say. I love you with the same love as yours: a love that's half frozen, because it's rooted in justice and reared in prison cells.... Summer, Yanek, can you remember what that's like, a real summer's day? But—no, it's never-ending winter here. We don't belong to the world of men. We are the just ones. And outside there is warmth and light; but not for us, never for us! [Averting her eyes.] Ah, pity on the just!

KALIAYEV [gazing at her with despair in his eyes]: Yes, that's our lot on earth; love is ... impossible. But I shall kill the Grand Duke, and then at last there will be peace for you and me.

DORA: Peace? When shall we find peace?

KALIAYEV [violently]: The next day.

[ANNENKOV and STEPAN enter. DORA and KALIAYEV move away from each other.]

ANNENKOV: Yanek!

KALIAYEV: I'm ready. [Draws a deep breath.] At last! At last!

STEPAN [going up to him]: Brother, I'm with you.

KALIAYEV: Good-by, Stepan. [Turning to DORA] Good-by, Dora.

[DORA comes toward him. They are standing very close, but neither touches the other.]

DORA: No, not good-by. Au revoir. Au revoir, mon chéri. We shall meet again.

[They gaze at each other in silence for some moments.]

KALIAYEV: Au revoir, Dora. I ... I ... Russia will be free.

DORA [weeping]: Russia will be free.

[KALIAYEV crosses himself as he passes the icon; then walks out of the room with ANNENKOV. STEPAN goes to the window. DORA remains statue-still, staring at the door.]

STEPAN: How straight he's walking! Yes, I was wrong not to feel confidence in Yanek. But his enthusiasm was too ... too romantic for my liking. Did you notice how he crossed himself just now? Is he religious?

DORA: Well, he's not a churchgoer.

STEPAN: Still, he has leanings toward religion. That's why we didn't hit it off. I'm more bitter than he. For people like me, who don't believe in a God, there is no alternative between total justice and utter despair.

DORA: To Yanek's mind there's an element of despair in justice itself.

STEPAN: Yes, he has a weak soul. But happily he's better than his soul, his arm won't falter. Yanek will kill the Grand Duke, I'd swear to it. And it will be a good day's work, a very good day's work. Destruction, that's what's wanted. But you're not saying anything. [Scans her face attentively.] Are you in love with him?

DORA: Love calls for time, and we have hardly time enough for— justice.

STEPAN: You are right. There's so much still to do; we must smash this world we live in, blast it to smithereens! And after that ... [Looks down

into the street.] They're out of sight. They must have reached their posts by now.

DORA: Yes? "After that," you said. What will happen after that?

STEPAN: After that we shall love each other.

DORA: If we are still alive.

STEPAN: Then others will love each other. Which comes to the same thing.

DORA: Stepan, say hatred.

STEPAN: What?

DORA: I just want you to utter that word: hatred.

STEPAN: Hatred.

DORA: Yes, that's right. Yanek could never say it well.

[A short silence. Then STEPAN comes toward her.]

STEPAN: I understand; you despise me. Still, are you quite sure you're right to despise me? [Pauses. Then goes on speaking, with rising passion.] You're all alike. Counting the cost of what you do in terms of your despicable love! I'm different, I love nothing, and I hate, yes I hate my fellow men. Why should I want their precious love? I learned all about it three years ago, in the convict prison. For three years I've borne its marks on me. And you want me to turn sentimental, and carry the bomb as if it were a cross. But I'm damned if I will! [He tears his shirt open. DORA makes a gesture of horror and shrinks away when she sees the marks of the lash.] There you are! There are the marks of their love! Now, do you still despise me?

[She goes up to him, and kisses him hastily.]

DORA: Who could despise suffering? I love you, too.

STEPAN [gazing at her, murmurs]: Sorry, Dora. [After a short silence he turns away.] Perhaps it's only weariness, the burden of all those years of struggle and suspense, of police spies, hard labor in the prison and—to crown everything!—this. [Points to the scars.] How could I have the energy to love? But, anyhow, I still have the energy to hate. And that's better than feeling nothing at all.

DORA: Yes, you're right, it's better.
[He looks at her. A clock strikes seven.]

STEPAN [swinging round]: The Grand Duke will be going by. [DORA goes to the window, pressing her forehead against a pane. A long silence. Then, in the distance, a rumble of carriage wheels. It grows louder, then recedes.] Let's hope he is by himself.... [The rumble of wheels dies into the distance. A violent explosion rattles the windows. DORA gives a start and buries her head in her hands. A long silence.] Boria hasn't thrown his bomb. That means Yanek has brought it off! The people have triumphed!

DORA [bursting into tears and flinging herself against him]: And it's we who have killed him. It's we who have killed him. It's I!

STEPAN [shrilly]: What do you mean? Killed whom? Yanek?

DORA: The Grand Duke.

CURTAIN

ACT IV

A cell in the Pugatchev Tower of the Butirki Prison. Morning light is filtering through a barred window. When the curtain rises Kaliayev is looking toward the door. A GUARD enters, followed by a prisoner carrying a mop and bucket.

THE GUARD: Now then! Get down to it!

[The GUARD takes his stand at the window. FOKA, the prisoner, begins to wash the floor; he takes no notice of KALIAYEV. A short silence.]

KALIAYEV: What's your name, brother?

FOKA: Foka.

KALIAYEV: Are you a convict?

FOKA: What else should I be?

KALIAYEV: What did you do?

FOKA: I killed.

KALIAYEV: You were hungry, no doubt?

THE GUARD: Ssh! Not so loud!

KALIAYEV: What?

THE GUARD: Don't speak so loud. It's really against the rules for you to talk. So I'd advise you to talk quietly, like the old man.

KALIAYEV: Is that why you killed—because you were hungry?

FOKA: No. I was thirsty.

KALIAYEV: Yes? And then?

FOKA: There was a hatchet lying around and I laid about with it good and proper. I killed three people, so they tell me. [KALIAYEV gazes at him.] Ah, my young gentleman, I see you don't call me brother any more. Cooled off, have you?

KALIAYEV: No. I, too, have killed.

FOKA: How many?

KALIAYEV: I'll tell you, brother, if you want me to. But tell me first; you're sorry for ... for what happened, aren't you?

FOKA: Sure, I'm sorry. Twenty years' hard, that's a long stretch. Enough to make anyone feel sorry.

KALIAYEV: Twenty years. I come here when I'm twenty-three—and when I go out, my hair is gray.

FOKA: Oh, cheer up! There's no knowing with a judge; depends on whether he's married, and what his wife is like. Maybe he'll be in a good humor and let you off easy. And then you're a fine gentleman. It ain't the same for a gentleman and people like me. You'll get off lightly.

KALIAYEV: I doubt it. And anyhow I don't want to. Feeling shame for twenty years—how horrible that would be!

FOKA: Shame? Where does the shame come in? That's just one of those crackbrained notions you gentlemen have.... How many people did you kill?

KALIAYEV: One man.

FOKA: One man? Why, that's nothing!

KALIAYEV: I killed the Grand Duke Serge.

FOKA: The Grand Duke? Well, I'll be damned! You fine gentlemen never know where to draw the line. Yes, it looks black for you.

KALIAYEV: Very black. But I had to do it.

FOKA: Why? What business does a man like you have getting himself into trouble like that? Ah, I see. Over a woman, wasn't it? A good-looking young lad like you ... I see!

KALIAYEV: I am a socialist.

THE GUARD: Not so loud.

KALIAYEV [deliberately raising his voice]: I am a revolutionary socialist.

FOKA: What a story! And why the hell did you have to be ... what you said just now? You had only to stay put, and you were on velvet. The world is made for bright young noblemen like you.

KALIAYEV: No. It is made for you, my friend. There are too many crimes, there's too much poverty in the world today. When some day there is less poverty, there will be fewer crimes. If Russia were free you would not be here.

FOKA: That's as it may be. One thing's sure: whether one's free or not, it doesn't pay to take a drop too much.

KALIAYEV: That's so. Only a man usually takes to drink because he is oppressed. A day will come when there's no more point in drinking, when nobody will feel ashamed, neither the fine gentleman, nor the poor devil who is down and out. We shall all be brothers and justice will make our hearts transparent. Do you know what I'm talking about?

FOKA: Yes. The Kingdom of God, they call it.

THE GUARD: Not so loud.

KALIAYEV: No, you're wrong there, brother. God can't do anything to help; justice is our concern. [A short silence.] Don't you understand? Do you know that old tale about Saint Dimitri?

FOKA: No.

KALIAYEV: He had made a date with God, far out in the steppes. When he was on his way to keep the appointment he came on a peasant whose cart was stuck in the mud. And Saint Dimitri stopped to help him. The mud was thick and the wheels were so deeply sunk that it

took him the best part of an hour, helping to pull the cart out. When this was done Dimitri made haste to the appointed place. But he was too late. God had left.

FOKA: And then?

KALIAYEV: Then—there are some who always arrive too late, because there are too many bogged carts on the way, too many brothers to help out. [FOKA is fidgeting uneasily.] What's the matter?

THE GUARD: Not so loud. And you, my man, don't dawdle!

FOKA: I don't feel easy! It ain't natural, all this stuff you're telling me about saints and carts and whatnot. Sounds to me crazy, getting oneself put in prison for ideas like that. And then, there's something else.

KALIAYEV [looking at him]: Something else? What do you mean?

FOKA: What's done to people who kill Grand Dukes?

KALIAYEV: They're hanged.

FOKA: You've said it!

[He begins to move away. The GUARD, who has been grinning, gives a loud guffaw.]

KALIAYEV: Stop! What have you got against me?

FOKA: Nothing. Only, fine gentleman as you are, I wouldn't like to make a fool of you. It's all right talking like we've been doing just to pass the time—but if you're going to be hanged, no, it ain't playing fair, like.

KALIAYEV: Why not?

THE GUARD [laughing]: Come on, old man! Spit it out!

FOKA: Because all this talk about you and me being brothers just won't wash. I'm the hangman.

KALIAYEV: Oh! I thought you were a prisoner, like me.

FOKA: So I am. But they've given me that job, and I get a year knocked off my sentence for every man I hang. It's gravy for nothing!

KALIAYEV: So, to atone for your crimes, they make you commit new ones?

FOKA: Oh, come now, you can't call them crimes; I'm only carrying out orders. And anyhow, crimes or not, they don't care. If you want to know what I think, they ain't Christians.

KALIAYEV: And how many times have you officiated since you came here?

FOKA: Twice. That's two years to the good.

[KALIAYEV shrinks away from him. The GUARD shepherds FOKA toward the door.]

KALIAYEV: So you're an executioner?

FOKA [from the doorway]: And you, sir—what about you?

[FOKA goes out. A sound of footsteps, words of command, in the corridor. Followed by the GUARD, SKURATOV enters; he is very spick and span.]

SKURATOV [to the GUARD]: You can go. [To KALIAYEV] Good morning. You don't know who I am, do you? But I know you. [Laughs.] Quite a celebrity, aren't you? May I introduce myself? [KALIAYEV keeps silent.] Ah, you don't feel like talking—I understand. That's the effect of solitary confinement: seven days and nights. It wears a man down. Well, we've put a stop to that; from now on you may have visitors. Indeed, you've had one already—that old fellow, Foka. A queer customer, isn't he? I thought he'd interest you.... You must be pleased at the change; it's good to see a human face again after a week's solitary confinement, isn't it?

KALIAYEV: That depends on the face.

SKURATOV: Ah, a neat retort! I see you know your own mind, my young friend. [A short silence.] So, unless I am much mistaken, my face displeases you?

KALIAYEV: Yes.

SKURATOV: That's a great pity. Still, I have hopes that you may change your mind. For one thing, the lighting here is bad; these basement cells make everyone look ghastly. And then, of course, you don't know me. Sometimes a man's face puts one off at first, later, when one gets to know the man himself ...

KALIAYEV: That's enough. Who are you?

SKURATOV: Skuratov, Chief of Police.

KALIAYEV: In other words, a flunky.

SKURATOV: Have it your own way. Still, if I were in your position, I wouldn't throw my weight around. But perhaps you will find that out for yourself, by and by. One begins by wanting justice—and one ends by setting up a police force. Anyhow, I'm not afraid of the truth, and I shall talk to you quite frankly. You interest me. I'd like to help you to get off.

KALIAYEV: What do you mean?

SKURATOV: Surely it's obvious. I can get you a free pardon. I am bringing you a chance for your life.

KALIAYEV: Who asked you for it?

SKURATOV: One doesn't ask for life, my friend. One's given it. Have you never let anybody off? [A short silence.] Think hard.

KALIAYEV: Well, I don't want your pardon, and that's an end of it.

SKURATOV: Anyhow, please hear what I have to say. Appearances notwithstanding, I am not your enemy. I won't even say that your ideas are wrong. Except when they lead to murder.

KALIAYEV: I forbid you to use that word.

SKURATOV: Ah, your nerves are out of order, that's the trouble?

[Pauses.] Quite honestly, I want to help you.

KALIAYEV: To help me? I am ready to pay the price of what I've done.

But I refuse to tolerate this familiarity on your part. Leave me in peace.

SKURATOV: The accusation you have to face....

KALIAYEV: That's incorrect.

SKURATOV: I beg your pardon?

KALIAYEV: Accusation is not the word. I am a prisoner of war, not an accused person.

SKURATOV: Put it that way, if you prefer. Still, there's been damage done, you must admit. Let's leave politics out of it and look at the

human side. A man has been killed—and killed in a particularly horrible manner.

KALIAYEV: I threw the bomb at your tyranny, not at a man.

SKURATOV: Perhaps. But it was a living human being whom it blew to bits. It wasn't a pretty sight, let me tell you, my young friend. When they had pieced the body together, the head was missing. Completely disappeared! And as for the rest, an arm and a bit of a leg were all that had escaped undamaged.

KALIAYEV: I carried out a verdict.

SKURATOV: That's as it may be. Nobody blames you for the verdict. What's a verdict? Just a word about which one might wrangle endlessly. What you're accused of—sorry, I know you don't like that word—is, let's say, a sort of amateurishness, doing a messy job in fact. The results, anyhow, were plain enough to see; there's no disputing them. Ask the Grand Duchess. There was blood, you know, a lot of blood.

KALIAYEV: Keep quiet, damn you!

SKURATOV: Very well. All I want to say is that if you persist in talking about a "verdict" and asserting that it was the party, and the party alone, that tried and executed the victim—that, in short, the Grand Duke was killed not by a bomb but by an idea—well, in that case, you don't need a pardon. Suppose, however, we get down to brass tacks; suppose we say that it was you, Ivan Kaliayev, who blew the Grand Duke's head to pieces—that puts a rather different complexion on the matter, doesn't it? Then undoubtedly you stand in need of pardon. And that's where I can be of aid, out of pure fellow feeling, I assure you. [Smiles.] That's how I'm built; I am not interested in ideas, I'm interested in human beings.

KALIAYEV [furiously]: But, damn it, I don't recognize your right or the right of your employers to sit in judgment on me. You can kill me if you think fit, and that is the only right you have over my person. Oh, I can see what you're leading up to. You are trying to find a chink in my armor, you are hoping to make me feel ashamed of myself, burst into

tears, repent of what you call my crime. Well, you won't get anywhere; what I am is no concern of yours. What concerns me is our hatred, mine and my brothers'. And you are welcome to it.

SKURATOV: That, too, is an idea, or rather, an obsession. But murder isn't just an idea; it is something that takes place. And, obviously, so do its consequences. Which are repentance for the crime, and punishment. There we get down to the heart of the matter, and that in fact is why I joined the police. I like being at the heart of things. But you don't want to hear me talking about myself.... [Pauses. Then moves slowly toward KALIAYEV.] All I wish to say is that you should not forget, or profess to forget, the Grand Duke's head. If you took it into account, you would find that mere ideas lead nowhere. For instance, instead of feeling pleased with yourself, you'd be ashamed of what you did. And, when once you felt ashamed, you would want to live, in order to atone. So the great thing is that you decide to live.

KALIAYEV: And suppose I decided to live, what then?

SKURATOV: A pardon for you and for your comrades.

KALIAYEV: Have you arrested them?

SKURATOV: No. As a matter of fact we haven't. But if you decide to live, we shall arrest them.

KALIAYEV: I wonder if I've really understood....

SKURATOV: Certainly you have. Don't lose your temper—that would be premature. Think it over first. Obviously from the standpoint of the idea—the ideal, if you prefer the word—you cannot hand them over to us. But from a practical point of view you'd be doing them a service. You would be preventing them from getting into further trouble, and by the same token, you'd be saving them from the gallows. And, best of all, you would regain your peace of mind. So, from whatever angle you look at it, you'd be doing the best thing. [KALIAYEV is silent.] Well?

KALIAYEV: My friends will give you the answer before long.

SKURATOV: Another crime! Decidedly, it's a vocation! Very well, I have had my say. And I confess I'm disappointed. It's all too obvious that you cling to your ideas like a lamprey; there's no detaching you.

KALIAYEV: You cannot detach me from my brothers.

SKURATOV: Au revoir. [He starts to go out, then turns back.] Why then did you spare the Grand Duchess and her nephews?

KALIAYEV: Who told you about that?

SKURATOV: Your informer. He was informing us as well—up to a point. But, I ask you, why did you spare them?

KALIAYEV: That's no concern of yours.

SKURATOV [laughing]: Oh, come now! ... Well, I'll tell you why. An ideal can murder a Grand Duke, but it balks at murdering children. That was the discovery you made that day. But let's carry it a stage further. If an ideal balks at murdering children, is one justified in murdering a Grand Duke on its behalf? [KALIAYEV makes a fretful gesture.] No, don't answer me. It's not I who am concerned in this. You will give your answer to the Grand Duchess.

KALIAYEV: The Grand Duchess?

SKURATOV: Yes, she wants to see you. And my chief reason for coming here was to make sure that this was feasible. It is. It may even make you change your mind. The Grand Duchess is a very Christian lady. Indeed one might say she makes a hobby of the soul. [Laughs.]

KALIAYEV: I refuse to see her.

SKURATOV: I'm sorry, but she will not take No for an answer. And, after all, you owe her some consideration. What's more, it seems that since her husband's death she has become—how shall I put it?—mentally unbalanced. So we thought it better not to oppose her wishes.

[Standing in the doorway.] If you change your mind, don't forget my proposal. I shall be seeing you again. [A short silence. He is listening.] Here she comes. You certainly can't complain of being neglected! But it all hangs together. Imagine God without prisons! One would be lost without the other.

[He goes out. Voices and words of command in the corridor. The GRAND DUCHESS enters. She stands silent, unmoving, for some moments. The door remains open.]

KALIAYEV: What do you want?

THE GRAND DUCHESS [lifting her veil]: Look! [KALIAYEV says nothing.]
Many things die with a man.

KALIAYEV: I knew it.

THE GRAND DUCHESS [in a faint, weary, but quite natural voice]: No, murderers do not know that. If they did, how could they bring themselves to kill? [A short silence.]

KALIAYEV: I have seen you. Now I wish to be alone.

THE GRAND DUCHESS: No. I, too, must look at you. [KALIAYEV shrinks away. The GRAND DUCHESS sits down; she seems exhausted.] I can't remain alone any longer. In the old days when I was sad, he used to share my sorrow—and I did not mind suffering ... then. But now ... No, I cannot bear being alone and keeping silent any longer. But to whom am I to speak? The others do not know. They pretend to be distressed. And perhaps they really are, for an hour or two. Then they go off to eat—or to sleep. To sleep especially. Somehow, I felt you must be like me. You, too, don't sleep, I am sure. And to whom could I speak of the crime, except to the murderer?

KALIAYEV: What crime? All I remember is an act of justice.

THE GRAND DUCHESS: The same voice! You have exactly the same voice as his. But, I suppose, all men use the same tone when they speak of justice. He used to say "That is just," and nobody had a right to question it. And yet perhaps he was mistaken; perhaps you, too, are mistaken.

KALIAYEV: He was an incarnation of that supreme injustice under which Russia has been groaning for centuries untold. And in return for this he was given privileges, rewards, and honors. But, as for me, even if I am mistaken, my wages are imprisonment and death.

THE GRAND DUCHESS: Yes, you are suffering. But he is dead, you killed him.

KALIAYEV: He died suddenly, unaware, A death like that is nothing.

THE GRAND DUCHESS: Nothing? [In a lower voice] That's true. They took you away immediately. I'm told that you made speeches while the police officers were surrounding you. I understand. That must have helped you. But it was different for me. I came some minutes later, and I saw! I put on a bier all that I could collect. What quantities of blood! [Pauses.] I was wearing a white dress.

KALIAYEV: Keep silent.

THE GRAND DUCHESS: Why? I am telling the truth, only the truth. Do you know what he was doing two hours before he died? He was sleeping. In an armchair with his feet propped up on another chair—as he often did. He was sleeping, and you—you were waiting for him in the cruel twilight. [She is weeping.] Oh, help me now, please help me! [He stiffens up, and moves away.] You are young, surely you can't be wicked.

KALIAYEV: I have never had time to be young.

THE GRAND DUCHESS: Oh, why are you so hard, so callous? Do you never feel pity for yourself?

KALIAYEV: No.

THE GRAND DUCHESS: You're wrong. It consoles. Yes, that's my last, miserable consolation—pity for myself. But it doesn't stop my suffering. Ah, you should have killed me with him, instead of sparing me.

KALIAYEV: It was not you I spared, but the children you had with you.

THE GRAND DUCHESS: I know ... I didn't like them much. [Pauses.] They were the Grand Duke's niece and nephew. Weren't they guilty, like their uncle?

KALIAYEV: No.

THE GRAND DUCHESS: How can you be so sure? My niece is a heartless little girl When she's told to give something to poor people, she refuses. She won't go near them. Is not she unjust? Of course she is.

But my poor husband was very fond of the peasants. He used to drink with them. And now you've killed him! Surely you, too, are unjust. The world is empty, cruel as the desert....

KALIAYEV: You are wasting your time. You want to sap my strength and drive me to despair. But you will not succeed. So let me be.

THE GRAND DUCHESS: Won't you join with me in prayer, and repent? Then we should be less lonely.

KALIAYEV: Let me prepare myself to die. If I did not die—it's then I'd be a murderer.

THE GRAND DUCHESS [rising to her feet]: To die? You want to die? No. [Going toward KALIAYEV, with rising emotion.] It is your duty to accept being a murderer. Did you not kill him? God alone will justify you....

KALIAYEV: What God? Yours or mine?

THE GRAND DUCHESS: The God of our Holy Church.

KALIAYEV: What has the Church to do with it?

THE GRAND DUCHESS: It serves a Master who, like you, had experience of prison.

KALIAYEV: The times have changed. Don't forget the Church has chosen what it wanted from its Master's legacy.

THE GRAND DUCHESS: I don't follow.

KALIAYEV: The Church has kept to itself the exercise of grace, and left to us the exercise of charity.

THE GRAND DUCHESS: Whom do you mean by us?

KALIAYEV [with shrill exasperation]: Why, those you hang!

[A short silence.]

THE GRAND DUCHESS [gently]: I am not your enemy.

KALIAYEV [passionately]: You are! You are! And so are all your kind. There is something even fouler than being a criminal; it's forcing into crime a man who is not made for it. Look at me! I swear to you I wasn't made to be a murderer.

THE GRAND DUCHESS: Please do not talk to me as if I were an enemy. Look! [She goes to the door and shuts it.] Now I am in your hands. I

trust you. [Weeping] There is a man's blood between us. But, even though we are parted in this world of sin and suffering, we can meet in God.... Will you pray with me?

KALIAYEV: No, I will not. [Goes toward her.] The only feeling I have toward you is pity; you have touched my heart. And now I will speak quite frankly, for I would like you to understand. I have given up counting on the agreement that I once made with God. But, in dying, I shall keep the agreement I made with those I love, my brothers, who are thinking of me at this moment. And it would be betraying them to pray.

THE GRAND DUCHESS: What do you mean?

KALIAYEV [excitedly]: Nothing—except that I shall soon be happy, gloriously happy! An ordeal lies before me, but I shall see it through. Then, when sentence has been pronounced and all is ready for the execution—ah, then, at the foot of the scaffold, I shall turn my back on you and on this loathsome world forever, and at last my heart will flood with joy, the joy of love fulfilled.... Can you understand?

THE GRAND DUCHESS: There is no love where God is not.

KALIAYEV: Yes, there is. Love for His creatures.

THE GRAND DUCHESS: His creatures are ... abject! One can forgive them or destroy them—what else is there to do?

KALIAYEV: To die with them.

THE GRAND DUCHESS: One always dies alone. He died alone.

KALIAYEV [desperately]: No, no! One can die with them. Those who love each other today must die together if they wish to be reunited. In life they are parted—by injustice, sorrow, shame; by the evil that men do to others ... by crimes. Living is agony, because life separates.

THE GRAND DUCHESS: God reunites.

KALIAYEV: Not on this earth. And the only meetings that mean anything to me take place on earth.

THE GRAND DUCHESS: This earth is the meeting place of dogs, who keep their noses to the ground, sniffing here and there, and never finding what they want.

KALIAYEV [looking away, toward the window]: Soon I shall know the truth. [He is silent for some moments.] And yet—cannot one picture a love existing here and now on this sad earth between two people, people who have abandoned any hope of joy and love each other in sorrow; people whose only meeting place, whose only link is sorrow? [Looks at her.] Cannot we picture them being bound together thus, in life no less than in death?

THE GRAND DUCHESS: A love whose only link is sorrow! What sort of love is that?

KALIAYEV: The only sort of love that you and your kind have ever allowed us.

THE GRAND DUCHESS: I, too, loved—the man you killed.

KALIAYEV: I know. That is why I forgive you for the wrongs that you and your kind have done me. [Pauses.] Now leave me, please.

[A long silence.]

THE GRAND DUCHESS [rising]: Yes, I will leave you. I came here to lead you back to God, but now I realize that you wish to be your own judge; to save yourself, unaided. That is beyond your power. But God can do it, if you live. I will ask that you be given a pardon.

KALIAYEV: Oh, I beg you, don't do that! Let me die—or else I shall hate you, hate you!

THE GRAND DUCHESS [on the threshold]: I shall ask for your pardon—from man and from God.

KALIAYEV: No, no! I forbid you! [He runs to the door. SKURATOV confronts him. KALIAYEV shrinks away, closing his eyes. A short silence. Then he opens his eyes and looks at SKURATOV.] I am glad you have come.

SKURATOV: Delighted to hear it. May I know why?

KALIAYEV: Because I needed to despise again.

SKURATOV: A pity!... Well, I've come for your answer.

KALIAYEV: You have it.

SKURATOV [in a different tone]: No, you're wrong there. Now, listen well. I authorized this meeting between you and the Grand Duchess so as to be able to publish an account of it in the papers. The report will be correct, except on one point. It will contain a statement that you repented of your crime. Your friends will think you have betrayed them.

KALIAYEV [quietly]: They will not believe it.

SKURATOV: I will stop publication of this report on one condition: that you make a full confession. You have the night in which to decide.

[Goes back to the doorway.]

KALIAYEV [louder]: They will not believe it.

SKURATOV [turning round]: Why not? Have they never had their lapses?

KALIAYEV: You do not know their love.

SKURATOV: No. But I know that a man cannot believe in brotherhood a whole night through without faltering for a moment. So I shall wait for you to falter. [Shuts the door and plants himself with his back to it.] Take your time, my friend. I am patient [They remain face to face.]

CURTAIN

ACT V

A week later. The terrorists' apartment: not the same as in the first act, but furnished in much the same style. The time is night, a little before daybreak. DORA is walking to and fro, her nerves on edge. For some moments no one speaks.

ANNENKOV: Do try to rest, Dora.

DORA: I'm cold.

ANNENKOV: Come here and lie down for a while. Put the rug over you.

DORA [still pacing to and fro]: The night is long. Oh, Boria, I'm so dreadfully cold. [A knocking at the door: one knock, then two. STEPAN

enters, followed by VOINOV, who goes up to DORA and kisses her. She hugs him to her breast.] Oh, Alexis!

STEPAN: Orlov thinks it's for tonight. All the junior officers who are not on duty have been told to report to the prison. That's how he'll be present.

ANNENKOV: Where are you to meet him?

STEPAN: At the restaurant in Sophiskaya Street. He'll wait for us—Voinov and myself—there.

DORA [who has at last sat down, utterly exhausted]: So it's for tonight, Boria.

ANNENKOV: There's still a chance. It depends on the Czar's decision.

STEPAN: It depends on the Czar, if Yanek has asked for clemency.

DORA: He hasn't.

STEPAN: Why should he have seen the Grand Duchess if it wasn't about a pardon? She's been telling everybody that he repented. How is one to know the truth?

DORA: We know what Yanek said at the trial, and we have his letter. Didn't he say that his one regret was that he had not another life, so as to hurl it, too, in the face of the autocrats? Could the man who said that plead for a pardon, or repent? No, he wanted, and he still wants, to die. There can be no going back on what he's done.

STEPAN: All the same he should have refused to see the Grand Duchess.

DORA: He is the sole judge of that.

STEPAN: No. According to our principles it was his duty not to see her.

DORA: Our duty is to kill, and that's the end of it. So now he is free; free at last.

STEPAN: Not yet.

DORA: He's free, I tell you. Now that he is on the brink of death, he has the right to do exactly as he chooses. For he is going to die, my friends—you won't be disappointed.

ANNENKOV: Really, Dora!

DORA: Why shirk the issue? If he were pardoned that would be another matter. It would prove that the Grand Duchess had told the truth, that he has repented and betrayed. But if he dies all will be well. You will believe in him and you'll be able to love him still. [Gazes at them.] Ah, your love costs dear!

VOINOV [going toward her]: You're wrong, Dora. We never doubted him.

DORA [pacing the room again]: Didn't you? Well, perhaps not. I'm sorry. Still what does it matter after all? We shall know the truth tonight, in a few hours' time.... But Alexis, my poor dear, why have you come back like this?

VOINOV: To replace him. When I read what he'd said at the trial I shed tears—how proud I was! You remember his words? "Death will be my supreme protest against a world of tears and blood." When I read that my hands shook, I could hardly hold the paper....

DORA: "A world of tears and blood." Yes, he said that.

VOINOV: He said it. Oh, Dora, what glorious courage! And at the end of his speech, those words that rang out like a trumpet call: "If I have proved equal to the task assigned, of protesting with all the manhood in me against violence, may death consummate my task with the purity of the ideal that inspired it!" It was then I decided to return to you.

DORA [burying her face in her hands]: Yes, it was purity he longed for. But oh the cruelty of that consummation!

VOINOV: Don't cry, Dora. Remember what he asked—that none of us was to weep for him. How well I understand him—now! All my doubts are swept away.... I was miserable because I'd played the coward. And then I threw the bomb at Tiflis. So now I am like Yanek. When I learned he had been sentenced to death, I had only one idea: to take his place, since I had been unable to take my stand beside him.

DORA: Who can take his place tonight? Tonight he stands alone, Alexis.

VOINOV: We must uphold him with our pride, as he upholds us with his example. Don't cry, dear.

DORA: Look! My eyes are dry. But proud—ah, no, never again can I be proud.

STEPAN: Dora, don't misjudge me. I want Yanek to live. We need men like him.

DORA: But Yanek does not want to live. So it's our duty to wish that he may die.

ANNENKOV: You're crazy, Dora.

DORA: I tell you, it's our duty. I know his heart. Only in death will he find peace. So—let him die! [In a lower voice] But quickly ... oh, let him die quickly!

STEPAN: Well, Boria, I'm off. Come, Alexis. Orlov's expecting us.

ANNENKOV: Yes, you'd better be off now. But come back as soon as you can.

[STEPAN and VOINOV walk to the door. On the way STEPAN casts a glance at DORA.]

STEPAN: In a few minutes we shall know everything.... Look after her, Boria.

[DORA is standing at the window. ANNENKOV keeps his eyes fixed on her.]

DORA: Death! The gallows! Always, death! Oh, Boria ...!

ANNENKOV: Yes, little sister. But there's no other solution.

DORA: Don't say that. If death is the only solution, then we have chosen the wrong path. The right path leads to life, to sunlight.... One can't bear feeling cold all the time.

ANNENKOV: The path we have chosen, also, leads to life. To life for others. Russia will live, our children's children will live. Do you remember what Yanek used to say? "Russia will become the land of our dream."

DORA: Our children's children, others—yes. But Yanek is in prison and the rope is cold. He is facing death. Perhaps he is already dead—so that

others, after him, may live. And, Boria, suppose ... suppose that, after all, the others did not live? Suppose he is dying for nothing?

ANNENKOV: Keep silent!

[A short silence.]

DORA: Oh, how cold it is! And yet spring has come. There are trees in the prison yard, aren't there? I expect he's looking at them.

ANNENKOV: Don't give way to your imagination, Dora. And do please try to stop shivering.

DORA: I'm so cold that I've the impression of being dead already.

[Pauses.] All this ages one so quickly; never, never again shall we feel young again. With the first murder youth ends forever. One throws a bomb and in the next second a whole lifetime flashes by, and all that remains is death.

ANNENKOV: Thus we die like brave men, fighting to the end.

DORA: You have gone about it too fast. You are no longer men.

ANNENKOV: Don't forget that human misery and injustice go fast as well. In the world of today there's no scope for patience and quiet progress. Russia is in a hurry.

DORA: I know. We have taken on our shoulders the sorrows of the world. He, too, took them on his shoulders, and went forth alone. That called for courage. Yet I sometimes can't help thinking such pride will be punished.

ANNENKOV: It's a pride we pay for with our lives. No one can go farther. It's a pride to which we are justly entitled.

DORA: Are you so sure that no one can go farther? Sometimes when I hear what Stepan says, I fear for the future. Others, perhaps, will come who'll quote our authority for killing; and will not pay with their lives.

ANNENKOV: That would be shameful.

DORA: Who knows? Perhaps that is what justice means—in the long run. And then nobody will want to look justice in the face again.

ANNENKOV: Dora! [She is silent.] Are you losing faith? I've never known you like this before.

DORA: I'm cold, oh, so cold! And I'm thinking of him—how he's trying to keep himself from shivering, so as not to seem afraid.

ANNENKOV: Are you no longer with us, Dora?

DORA [flinging herself against him]: Oh, no, Boria, don't imagine that! I am with you. With you to the end. I loathe tyranny and I know we can't act otherwise than as we do. Only—it was with a happy heart that I embarked on our great adventure, and it's with a sad heart that I keep to it. That's where the difference lies; we are prisoners.

ANNENKOV: All Russia is in prison. But we shall shatter her prison walls.

DORA: Only give me the bomb to throw, and then you'll see! I shall walk among the flames and I swear I shall not flinch. It's easy, ever so much easier, to die of one's inner conflicts than to live with them. Tell me, Boria, have you ever loved anyone—really loved?

ANNENKOV: Yes. But so long ago that I've forgotten all about it.

DORA: How long ago?

ANNENKOV: Four years.

DORA: And how long have you been head of the organization?

ANNENKOV: Four years. [Pauses.] Now it's the organization that I love.

DORA [walking to the window]: Loving, that's very well ... but to be loved, that's another matter.... No! We must go on and on and on. How good it would be to rest a bit! But that's impossible. On and on! Sometimes one wants to let oneself relax and take things easy. But that foul thing injustice sticks to us like a leech. Onward! So, you see, we're doomed to being greater than ourselves. Human beings, human faces—that's what we'd like to love. To be in love with love, instead of justice. But no! There's no respite for us. Forward, Dora! Forward, Yanek! [She bursts into tears.] But, for him, the end is near.

ANNENKOV [taking her in his arms]: He'll be pardoned.

DORA: You know quite well he won't be. You know quite well that's ... unthinkable. [ANNENKOV averts his eyes.] Perhaps at this very moment he is going out into the prison yard. And all the people there are falling silent as he approaches. Let's only hope he isn't feeling cold, like me.... Boria, do you know how men are hanged?

ANNENKOV: With a rope.... Dora, that's enough.

DORA [wildly]: And the hangman leaps onto their shoulders, doesn't he? The neck cracks, like a broken twig. Ghastly, isn't it?

ANNENKOV: Yes ... in one sense. In another sense it's happiness.

DORA: Happiness?

ANNENKOV: To feel a man's hand on you just before you die. [DORA flings herself into a chair.] When it's over, you must go away, and take a short rest.

DORA: Go away? With whom?

ANNENKOV: With me, Dora.

DORA [gazing at him intently]: To go away? Ah! [Turns to the window.] The day is breaking. Yanek is dead by now—I'm certain of it.

ANNENKOV: I am your brother.

DORA: Yes, you're my brother; all of you are my brothers, my brothers whom I love. [There is a patter of rain outside. The light is growing. In a low voice, hardly more than a whisper] But what a foul taste brotherhood has, sometimes!

[A knock at the door. VOINOV and STEPAN enter. Both stand quite still.

DORA sways, then with an effort steadies herself.]

STEPAN [In a low voice]: Yanek was faithful to the end.

ANNENKOV: Could Orlov see?

STEPAN: Yes.

DORA [coming forward with firm steps]: Sit down. Now tell us....

STEPAN: What's the use?

DORA: Tell everything. I have the right to know, and I insist on hearing all. Down to the last detail.

STEPAN: I couldn't do it. And, anyhow, we must leave at once.

DORA: No. You must tell me first. When was he notified?

STEPAN: At ten last night.

DORA: When was he hanged?

STEPAN: At two in the morning.

DORA: So he remained waiting in his cell for four hours?

STEPAN: Yes, without a word. After that, everything went with a rush.... It's all over now.

DORA: Four hours without speaking, you say? Wait a moment. How was he dressed? Had he his fur-lined coat?

STEPAN: No. He was in a black suit, without an overcoat. And he was wearing a black felt hat.

DORA: What was the weather like?

STEPAN: A pitch-black night. The snow was dirty. Then a shower came and turned it into slush.

DORA: Was he shivering?

STEPAN: No.

DORA: Could Orlov catch his eye?

STEPAN: No.

DORA: Whom was he looking at?

STEPAN: At everyone, and no one in particular—so Orlov told me.

DORA: And then? What happened next?

STEPAN: That's enough, Dora.

DORA: No, I have to know. If nothing else, his death belongs to me.

STEPAN: The judgment of the court was read out to him.

DORA: What did he do while it was being read?

STEPAN: Nothing. Except that at one moment he moved his leg, so as to shake off a fleck of mud that had settled on his shoe.

DORA [burying her face in her hands]: A fleck of mud!...

ANNENKOV [sharply]: How do you know all this? [STEPAN keeps silent.]
So you asked Orlov to tell you every detail. Why was that?

STEPAN [looking away]: There was something between Yanek and myself.

ANNENKOV: What do you mean?

STEPAN: I was jealous of him.

DORA: Go on, Stepan. What happened next?

STEPAN: Father Florenski held the crucifix to him. He refused to kiss it. This is what he said: "I have already told you that I am through with life, and have squared up accounts with death."

DORA: In what sort of voice did he say it?

STEPAN: In his usual voice. Except that the note of fretfulness we used to hear in it was gone.

DORA: Did he look happy?

ANNENKOV: Are you crazy, Dora?

DORA: No, but I'm sure he looked happy. Really it would be too unfair if, after rejecting happiness in his life so as to prepare himself the better for the sacrifice, he did not win through to happiness in the hour of his death. He was happy, and he walked quite calmly to the scaffold, didn't he?

STEPAN: He walked straight ahead. Someone was singing to an accordion on the river down below. And just then some dogs barked.

DORA: Then he climbed the steps....

STEPAN: He climbed, and was swallowed up by the darkness. One had vague glimpses of the shroud with which the hangman covered him from head to foot.

DORA: And then?...

STEPAN: Queer muffled sounds.

DORA: Muffled sounds! Oh, Yanek! And then?... [STEPAN keeps silent.]
Tell me what happened next. [STEPAN is still silent.] I insist. What came next?

ANNENKOV: A hideous crash!

DORA: Ah! [Flings herself against the wall. STEPAN looks away uneasily. ANNENKOV is silently weeping. DORA swings round and gazes at them, her back to the wall. Her voice is changed, tense with emotion as she continues speaking.] No, do not cry. There is no need for tears. Don't you realize this is the day of our justification? Something has come to pass which testifies for us; a sign for all the revolutionaries of the world. Yanek is a murderer no longer. A hideous crash! That was enough to plunge him back into the carefree joy of childhood. Do you remember his laugh? Often he'd laugh for no reason at all. How young he was! Well, I am sure he's laughing now, his face pressed to the earth. [Goes toward ANNENKOV.] Boria, you are my brother, aren't you, and you promised to help me?

ANNENKOV: Yes.

DORA: Then do something for me. Give me the bomb. [ANNENKOV stares at her.] Yes, give me the bomb ... next time. I want to throw it. I want to be the first to throw.

ANNENKOV: You know quite well it's against our rules for women to be in the firing line.

DORA [shrilly]: Am I a woman ... now?

[They gaze at her. A short silence.]

VOINOV [softly]: Let her have her way, Boria.

STEPAN: Yes, agree.

ANNENKOV: It was your turn, Stepan.

STEPAN [looking at DORA]: Give your consent, Boria. She is as I am, now.

DORA: You will give it to me, won't you? Then I shall throw it. And, after that, one cold night ...

ANNENKOV: Yes, Dora.

DORA [weeping]: Yanek! A cold night ... and the same rope. Everything will be easier now.

CURTAIN

The End